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Revaluing Readers and Reading in a College Support Program

Introduction

I RECENTLY HAD A CONVERSATION ABOUT READING WITH ONE OF MY STUDENTS, JASON, a charismatic, 18 year-old, college freshman from New Jersey. He was diagnosed with a language-based learning disability in the fifth grade and had received academic support services ever since. Jason was a freshman enrolled in the PALS program (Program for Academic Learning Skills) at Hofstra University during the fall of 2005. I asked Jason to describe himself as a reader, and he said, "Horrible . . . Lost . . . Like a lost dog." I then asked him to describe his feelings about reading, and he stated, "I hate reading . . . Reading doesn't like me and I don't like it." Over the last 16 years or so, I have heard many of my college freshmen who had been classified as Learning Disabled (LD) say similar things about their abilities as readers. And, in addition to doubts about their abilities as readers and negative attitudes toward reading, many worry that they will not be successful college students. Jason also talked about the negative expectations placed on him. He said, "They stereotype and they label you almost as like you are second best, because you have that title [LD]. You're not expected to achieve what others [non-LD] can achieve."

It is estimated that almost 67% of high school students diagnosed as LD are planning to attend college. As a result, approximately 3.5% of college freshman are classified as LD (Scott et al.). The executive director of the Association on Handicapped Student Service Programs in Postsecondary Education (AHSSPPE) states that the "population of individuals with learning disabilities is the largest contingent of students with disabilities being served on American campuses" (qtd. in Morris and Leuenberger 355). For the majority of those college students, the classification is the diagnosis of a language-based learning disability, in other words, a "reading disability" (RD). The terms "learning disability" and "reading disability" are used interchangeably in the field of special education because the majority of students (75%-80%) classified as LD have been diagnosed with a "specific reading disability" or dyslexia (Rath and Royer 354-355; Gaffney et al. 119-120). Difficulties with reading, spelling, and writing, as well as problems with organization, time management, and self-esteem, are the "most common deficits in adults with LD" (Vogel and Adelman) in post-secondary education.

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Other issues surrounding the LD classification, including social and emotional problems, anxiety, depression, motivational issues, low self-esteem, low self-efficacy, low confidence levels, and cycles of repeated failure, have been documented in children and adults diagnosed as LD/RD (McNulty 363; Wright-Strawderman and Lindsey 262-263; Elbaum and Vaughn; Linnenbrink and Pintrich 128; McCabe and Margolis 241; Stone and May 370). In addition, students diagnosed as LD/RD often view their own academic and reading self-concept as significantly weaker than those of their peers (Stone and May 370).

Students' pessimism about their abilities as readers certainly affects their motivation to read and often becomes "the most powerful obstacle that teachers face in helping those students to become better readers" (McCabe and Margolis 45). Many students enter the PALS program with low self-efficacy, believing that they cannot learn or that they do not read well no matter how hard they try. It is not uncommon for a PALS student to say, "My problem is reading . . . I can't do it . . . I'm dyslexic." For teachers who work with students who struggle with reading, enhancing self-efficacy is an important goal.

In addition to the academic and emotional issues of classified college students, "adult readers who seek support from remedial reading centers [including college support programs] often possess misconceptions about the nature of the reading process and their accomplishments relative to that process" (Marek 51). Instructors not only need to address students' beliefs about themselves as readers and learners, but they must attend to the beliefs students have about the reading process itself. Unfortunately, many students believe that reading is sounding out words and that good reading means getting all of the words on the page correct (Marek 51). That belief is the basis of how students actively approach reading tasks. Bartholomae and Petrosky state: "Our students are bound by the model of reading they carry to the act of reading. These stories of reading are what a teacher must attend to, not isolated reading 'skills'" (18-19).

Kenneth Goodman uses the term "readers in trouble" to refer to those students who are not doing as well as they think (or someone else thinks) they should be doing in the development of reading proficiency:

> The common denominator among such readers is that they have become their own worst enemies. They have acquired a view that the world is populated by two kinds of people: those who can read and those who cannot, those who can learn and those who cannot. They believe that if they can just learn the phonics rules, just get enough word attacks, or just master the skills, they could do what good readers [and learners] do easily and well. However, they know they cannot because something is wrong with them; they just do not learn like normal people. (421)

Goodman believes that the key to helping "readers in trouble"—and I believe this would also

benefit college students labeled LD/RD—is to "help them revalue themselves as language users and learners, and revalue the reading process as an interactive, constructive language process" (421) and not just "the sounding-out of words," which many students believe to be the act of reading. Several other goals of revaluing are to support learners in risk-taking, self-monitoring, and confidence-building.

Overview of this Study

This qualitative study began several years ago when I first became interested in critically examining the instructional practices of the college support program I had been working in for the past 16 years. I was an instructor in the Program for Academic Learning Skills (PALS), which is considered a comprehensive support program (providing literacy skills instruction and academic accommodations) for students who have been diagnosed with language-based learning disabilities. PALS is specifically designed as a skills-development program (reading skills, writing skills, study skills, etc.), utilizing one-to-one instructional sessions and small group workshops for university freshmen.

In an effort to find a new way to support my struggling readers, during the fall 2005 semester, I implemented a reader and reading revaluing protocol using Retrospective Miscue Analysis (RMA), as proposed by Yetta Goodman and Ann Marek, with several of my PALS students. RMA is an assessment and instructional tool that involves students in a process whereby they listen to and analyze their reading in an effort to gain insight into how they process language. One of the procedures of RMA is the analysis of miscues. Miscues are considered unexpected responses the reader produces that change, disrupt, or enhance the meaning of a text. Miscues are chosen for analysis by either the reader or the teacher. The discussion that follows is directed "toward understanding why certain miscues were made, what they reveal about the reader and reading in general, and how this knowledge can lead toward gains in reading skill" (Paulson, "The Discourse" 114). The idea is that students will gain more control over their reading process and become more effective readers on their own. Instructors use knowledge gained through RMA to support students as they develop more effective reading strategies, as well as to revalue their abilities as readers.

According to Goodman, Watson, and Burke, the most important use of Miscue Analysis is to help teachers and students gain insight into the reading process (3-4). The information gained from Miscue Analysis allows instructors to plan individualized reading instruction that builds on a particular student's strengths rather than focuses solely on his/her weaknesses. I believe that this strength-based pedagogy can be very helpful when working with classified students because it allows both the student and the teacher to move beyond the limitations of a deficit focus.

Utilizing RMA not only can help challenge the negative reading self-concept that is so prevalent in college students labeled RD, but it is also a tool that helps students recognize the useful reading strategies they already employ. Analyzing and discussing miscues with students helps them build on the productive reading strategies they already possess and to develop new ones to aid in improving their reading skills.

Brief Overview of RMA Process

To begin, the teacher/researcher establishes a rapport with the student and then conducts a reading interview. I used the Burke Interview Modified for Older Readers (Goodman and Marek 213) in order to acquire information regarding the student's literacy history and view of him/herself as a reader. After the reading interview, the student reads a suitable yet challenging and unfamiliar short story or article aloud and unaided. The teacher/researcher marks the reader's miscues on a typescript of the story or article the student is reading according to one of the procedures in the *Reading Miscue Inventory* (Goodman, Watson, and Burke). Once the student finishes reading, he/she is asked to retell the story. Both the reading and retelling are recorded to ensure accuracy. Shortly after the initial reading, the student and teacher/researcher meet again to begin the revaluing/RMA procedure, which involves the reader and the teacher listening to, thinking about, and talking about the miscues the student made during the initial read-aloud.

"helps them build on the productive reading strategies they already possess and to develop new ones"

Revaluing with Jason:

My work with Jason began in early September 2005. It was his first semester at the university, and he was excited and nervous. When I first approached him with the idea of participating in my study, he jumped at the opportunity. He told me that reading was a big concern and that he didn't think he would be able to keep up with it in college. He said, "This is the real deal . . . I really need to read." I explained that we would be meeting on a weekly basis to "work on his reading" using RMA. I explained that he would be reading several short stories aloud, along with a retelling of the stories, and that he would be tape-recorded. After each of his readings, I would listen to the tape and follow along with the typescript documenting exactly how he read each text. I told him this would give us a lot of information about the way he read, and that we would use that information to figure out which reading strategies

worked for him and to discover and change the ones that were not. Jason felt that the RMA sessions would help him, so we scheduled two one-hour sessions each week for the entire semester. In total, Jason and I worked together for 13 sessions. We did not follow the typical RMA protocol in which Jason normally would have read approximately 10-12 texts in those 13 weeks. Instead, I chose five texts, including three short stories (one Jason read twice), a textbook chapter, and a magazine article. I had decided that I would let the sessions determine where we would go and when.

During our first session together, I interviewed Jason using the aforementioned Burke Interview Modified for Older Readers (Goodman and Marek 213). The interview with Jason explored his perceptions about his abilities as a reader, his attitudes toward reading, his reading strategies, his perceptions/beliefs of what "good reading" meant to him, his early reading experiences, and his reading habits. As the interview progressed and evolved, we explored some of his feelings about the experiences he'd had with the diagnostic procedures and subsequent reading remediation. Even though those questions are not part of the Burke Interview, I felt that it was important for me to have an understanding of Jason's experiences as a student diagnosed with a learning disability.

The first question I asked Jason was to explore the strategies that he normally used as he read.

> **Pamela:** When you are reading and you come to something that gives you trouble, what do you do?
>
> **Jason:** I usually read it over again . . . either read it over or skip it because it frustrates me . . . Either I'll read it over twice, sometimes three times, and if I don't understand something, I'll either ask somebody or just skip it. Usually, I just skip it because I'm usually reading alone. Yeah, I usually just skip it and then see if I can put it together with something else in the beginning, or I go back and read what was before and after that and see if I can get it then using context clues.

Jason used a strategy of re-reading text when he came to something that was confusing or did not make sense to him. This could have been a useful strategy when he was focusing in on an important point while reading a difficult text, but in Jason's case, his re-reading strategy may actually have been hindering his reading process. As I later found out, after listening to Jason's first reading for our RMA sessions, he re-read and repeated words and parts of sentences frequently, even when he read the sentences correctly. When Jason found his re-reading strategy frustrating, he moved to another strategy, such as "skip it and read on." This too could have been a productive strategy for him. Jason recognized that he didn't need to read every word on the page to comprehend the text. He also stated that he used the con-

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text of the story to help him when he ran into trouble. Again, that is another productive strategy. However, at that point, Jason didn't see that his re-reading strategy, "skip it and read on," as well as using context cues, as useful. Jason saw these strategies not as productive, but as weak attempts at reading that only caused him frustration.

After a short discussion about Jason's use of reading strategies, we explored his beliefs about what constituted "good reading." What started to emerge was that Jason seemed to be in conflict regarding his beliefs about good reading, his beliefs about his own reading strategies, as well as his perceived competence as a reader. Unfortunately, he didn't believe that he possessed any positive traits as a reader.

Pamela: So, who is a good reader you know?

Jason: My best friend . . . He read *The Da Vinci Code*. He sat down and read it and that was that. He was interested . . . He doesn't like reading, but he was able to read it completely and tell me word for word what happened. I was really impressed. He liked it and understood it and that was not an easy book. It was amazing to me because that is very hard. I'm reading *Clockwork Orange* now and I can't get through the first five pages.

Pamela: So, getting back to your friend . . . Do you think that he ever comes to something that gives him trouble?

Jason: Oh, sure. I'm sure no one's perfect.

Pamela: So what do you think he does?

Jason: He uses a dictionary. I know that. He sits there and opens the dictionary and looks for a word. If he gets to a paragraph that he doesn't know . . . I really don't know.

Pamela: Do you think he uses any other strategies?

Jason: No . . . It seems like I'm the only one in this . . . I'm alone and I just don't know how to read. I don't understand it easily and if I do read, it takes me forever and I get very frustrated easily. So, I think that I am one of the very few. I don't think that my best friend has any problems.

Here, Jason revealed a little more about his beliefs. To begin, Jason felt that his friend was a good reader because he was "able to read it completely and tell me *word for word* what

happened." So, for Jason, good reading meant being able to decode and recall just about every word in a text; consequently, it was not surprising that he felt his "skip it and read on" strategy was not very good. I felt that Jason's belief that he should "get every word" was influencing his inefficient use of his "re-read" strategy. I believed that as he was reading and trying to recall every word on the page perfectly, Jason reinforced his memory by re-reading most of the text over again, regardless of the circumstances. While Jason read several of the texts used for our RMA sessions, he re-read text often, even if he read it correctly the first time around.

Another of my revaluing goals was to show Jason that he has strengths as a reader and that he uses many strategies that good readers use. One such goal was to show him that he used these good strategies naturally, although they may have contradicted the strategies he had been taught during his years of reading remediation, which focused more on slowly decoding letters and words than on constructing meaning. I believed he needed to understand that he was not alone, that all readers make miscues, and that he had the ability to make improvements.

I asked Jason to describe himself as a reader.

Pamela: Can you describe yourself as a reader?

Jason: Horrible . . . Lost . . . Like a lost dog. Umm, I can read and I can get the job done, but it takes me a long time. I'm not accurate and my speed is not very good. I'll read very fast and then very, very slow. I'm all over the place . . . I'm like a heart monitor going up and down.

Pamela: Is there anything that you would like to change about your reading?

Jason: Speed and accuracy . . .being able to read quicker and more efficiently and to be able to read for enjoyment, almost.

Jason saw himself as a reader in a negative light, feeling lost and frustrated. He recognized that he *could* read, but felt that the way he read was basically unacceptable. He made comments about his accuracy and speed, both of which he wanted to improve. His desire for speed and accuracy was not unreasonable; however, he had spent more than eight years in reading remediation by that point, which traditionally "emphasizes a need for readers to look more carefully at the letters in words and to read more slowly, more cautiously" (Goodman and Marek 23). In addition, many remedial reading students are expected to incorporate the isolated skills and strategies into new reading experiences. According to Sheila Macrine, the literacy activities in many remedial reading programs are inauthentic and mechanistic, which in turn may lead to slow, labored reading for those students enrolled (386). Constance Weaver states that "difficulty in reading coherent and connected text may often be instruc-

tionally induced, through an overemphasis on skills for identifying words in isolation" (23). So, it is possible that Jason's "reading disability" had been learned.

Jason and I moved on to the RMA sessions by the second week of September, when we began the slow process of exploration and insight into his reading process. Jason subsequently termed our sessions his "Reading Therapy." By the end of our sessions, I concurred. I tried to be compassionate, supportive, and open to the process of discovery and change. I did not have strict lesson plans because this was a student-centered approach, which meant that I needed to remain flexible and supportive. I did, however, identify specific strength-oriented, high quality miscues as avenues for discussion of Jason's specific reading strategies.

For our first three RMA sessions together, Jason and I analyzed his reading process using a short story entitled "The Prisoner" by Edward Wellen. I chose this as the first text because it has been rated by the Reading and Writing Clinic at Hofstra University specifically for use with adults and has been used frequently by the literacy specialists at the University's Reading/Writing Learning Clinic. On September 23, 2005, I conducted the first Miscue Analysis with Jason. He read "The Prisoner" aloud and I tape-recorded the reading and retelling. I then marked the transcript of the text using Miscue Analysis Procedure III (Goodman, Watson, and Burke 115). I chose several high-quality miscues (miscues that did not change the meaning of the sentence) to begin our exploration of Jason's reading process.

The results of the statistical analysis of Jason's reading of "The Prisoner" indicated that Jason was reading at a proficient level. However, the statistics did not tell the whole story. As Jason read the text, it became clear to me that he was very focused on word accuracy, which in my opinion caused him a tremendous amount of frustration. "The Prisoner" has 111 sentences and Jason repeated sentences, parts of sentences, and individual words 58 times. For example, on lines 21 and 22, Jason repeated four different parts of the two sentences:

> ®He started guiltily from his trance, hearing the siren of an ambulance, nearing, nearing, then on the spot and ®moaning into silence. ®He had known instantly, by the terrible fling and the rag doll fall, and by the mangled bike, the ®the boy was past saving.

Our discussion directly after he read the story confirmed Jason's focus on word accuracy. Before Jason gave his retelling, he said, "That was the worst reading I've ever done. See how I stutter and I can't get it out and then I don't know the words and then I skip and then I go too far." Jason mentioned that he did not like how he sounded when he read aloud. However, he also said that he "had the same problems" when he read silently.

After the retelling, I asked Jason to think more about his comprehension of the story.

Pamela: I know you feel that you read the story poorly, but do you think

that it affected your ability to understand the story?

Jason: No . . . [he smirks] . . . because I understand it. I totally understand it.

I wanted Jason to discover, based on his retelling, that he did understand the story even though his reading did not flow well. I wanted him to begin focusing more on the most important aspect of reading—making meaning—rather than on word accuracy. But we did discuss the fact that Jason frequently re-read words, parts of sentences, and full sentences. This was getting in his way and caused him a tremendous amount of frustration. The following dialogue came from the discussion of a miscue from "The Prisoner." We discussed lines 8 through 11 where Jason repeated himself four times in four sentences. He also substituted "the" for "and" and "his" for "the" in two different sentences and reconstructed the syntax of the first sentence successfully.

The text read:

It was just past dawn, and traffic was light in the streets outside his prison. He focused the binoculars. At the nearest intersection came the young paperboy riding his bike no-handedly. He could not hear, of course, but from the cant of the head he knew the boy was whistling or singing.

Jason read:

It was just past dawn. **The** traffic was ®light in the streets outside his prison. He focused **his** binoculars. At the nearest intersection came the young paperboy riding his bike ®no-handedly. ®He could not hear, of course, ®but from the cant of the head he knew the boy was whistling or singing.

First, we addressed the issue of re-reading and then we discussed the word substitutions, which I considered high-quality miscues because they did not change the meaning of the sentence. One of my goals, at that point, was for Jason to recognize the strategies that were not working for him, but also to recognize those strategies that were. Initially, I wanted to focus on Jason's strengths and discuss only high-quality miscues, but as soon as we listened to the audio tape, the repetition and re-reading were so apparent that we needed to explore that issue right away.

Pamela: So, now let's talk a little about your repeating.

Jason: Like I told you . . . When I read and then all of a sudden my eyes are down here. And it's like I'm trying to read too fast. My eyes are down here and I'm trying to read what's up here and I just can't process both at the same time and it's like overload and then I have to reset and start again. And that is what happens when I get going. Like when I start to flow and really start to read, I find myself skipping ahead and then I say to myself, "STOP!" and then, "Okay, start again." I feel like I am trying to read too much at once.

Pamela: And that's getting in your way?

Jason: Yes.

Pamela: Even though your comprehension of this was very good?

Jason: I think everything gets in the way of my reading because I want to read like . . . normal. I want to flow and it to be very fluent and I want to be able to understand it. I know that I can comprehend it and that has gotten better over the years. This was part of my learning disability, but the comprehension is not really what I'm concerned about. It's the matter of speed, the articulation and the perfect pronunciation. This repeating just pisses me off more than anything.

"What Jason saw as a weakness caused by his 'learning disability' is something that all good readers do."

I sympathized with Jason's feelings of frustration and told him that I understood how it would be getting in his way. Jason's description of what went on "in his head" as he read was very important to our understanding of his reading process. I got the feeling that once Jason found himself "flowing," he would get nervous that he might miss something or that he might make a mistake. Then the alarms would go off in his head and he told himself "STOP!" Then, once he realized everything was okay, he gave himself permission to keep reading.

It concerned Jason that his eyes moved all over the page and that he felt as if he couldn't process all of the information quickly enough while reading. I explained to Jason some of eye-movement studies that Eric Paulson ("Are Oral Reading") has conducted. I told Jason that as he actively engaged in comprehension, it was normal for his eyes to move around the text. He seemed to be worried that he was skipping words and subsequently unable to get an accurate reading of the text. But eye-movement studies show that in normal reading, anywhere from 20% to 40% of the words in a given text is skipped. This is not carelessness on the part of the reader. It happens as a natural process of reading whereby the reader uses predictions, from the context of the story, to direct his/her eye to either fixate on or skip over a word or even multiple words (Paulson 49-50). What Jason saw as a weakness caused by his "learning disability" is something that all good readers do. It is not abnormal, or considered a symptom of a disability. It is normal and showed that Jason was transacting with the text. Next, I pushed Jason to begin thinking about why he re-read text so much.

Pamela: So why do you think you do it? Why do you repeat yourself even

when you've gotten it correct? Ninety percent of these you got correct the first time.

Jason: Sometimes it doesn't sound right to me or I think that I have said it wrong . . . Sometimes I'll have to read a sentence four times before I get it. A lot of the time, I think it has to do with my mind not being on the page.

Pamela: Okay . . . When you are reading, do you make a movie in your head?

Jason: Yes.

Pamela: So, when you are making a movie in your head . . . Are you more focused?

Jason: Yes! That is something else I noticed with this and that is something I'm starting to learn. With this type of reading, I was able to make a movie . . . some type of visual connection in my head. But when I read *Clockwork Orange*, I read words and I'm lucky if I understand anything.

Jason then went on to talk a little about his confidence level as he was reading.

Jason: I just wasn't confident on the words and that screwed up the whole sentence.

Pamela: Well, I do think that making a movie in your head can be helpful if you can engage in the story right off the bat and just start envisioning it. Maybe it will help to keep you focused.

Jason: Absolutely! I sometimes VERY, VERY rarely . . . this has only happened to me a few times . . . have I ever found myself reading, but not realize that I'm reading.

Jason not only believed that he was careless, but unfocused as well. However, Jason seemed to begin to make the connection that when he was focused on the words, he did not understand the text very well. But as he visualized the action in the text, not only did he understand it better, he actually enjoyed it, not even realizing that he was reading. Jeffrey Wilhelm states that the visualization of text has many positive effects for readers: "It has been demonstrated that visual imaging encourages students to access and apply their prior knowledge as they read, increases comprehension, and improves their ability to predict, infer, and remember what has been read" (117). I believe that when Jason was not focused on words, he engaged in comprehension, which allowed him to visualize the text.

Jason was so worried about producing a perfect rendition of the text that he overcorrected high-quality miscues. For example, the following is part of the discussion we had about another miscue where Jason engaged in high-quality word substitutions and a word omission

that did not alter the meaning of the sentence, yet he corrected the miscues.

The text read:

> And each time he had smiled a twisted smile knowing . . . he was inside these walls of gray sandstone painted white and Pardee was on the outside.

Jason read the text as (but did self-correct):

> And each time he had [omitted **smiled**] a twisted smile knowing . . . he was inside these walls of gray **stone** painted white and Pardee was on the outside.

Jason corrected what I considered high-quality miscues—miscues that were semantically and syntactically acceptable. Goodman, Watson, and Burke state that readers who correct high-quality miscues may be paying too close attention to the graphic cues in the text. I believe that this was the case with Jason. He paid too close attention to word accuracy, which led to inefficient reading and frustration.

Jason had made it clear that word substitutions were unacceptable in his eyes. He worked very hard to read exactly what was on the page. He argued that the word substitutions, regardless of the fact that most of them were high-quality word substitutions that did not change the meaning of the sentence, were caused by carelessness or by reading too fast. At that point, I explained to Jason that good readers substitute words all the time and that good readers substitute words that may be different from those on the page, but that it is not caused by inattention. It is caused by the fact that the reader is making sense of what "sounds better" to him or her using the context of the story or text. I then linked this to the fact that he engaged in overcorrecting high-quality miscues, which in turn made reading inefficient and unpleasant. We began to move from the exploration of miscues to insight about the "hows" and "whys" of his reading process.

At that point in our conversation, I thought that if Jason and I could just increase his confidence by recognizing his strengths as a reader and challenging those unproductive beliefs about the reading process, then he could minimize the repetitions and over-corrections of high-quality miscues. This, in turn, would help to lower his frustration levels and increase his ability to focus and, ultimately, enable him to "make a movie in his head." As he comprehended the texts better, Jason might even begin to enjoy reading, which might help to motivate him to do it (read) again. This is not a linear process. It is an interdependent cycle that can build over time.

As our sessions progressed, we continued to discuss issues including word substitutions, maintaining focus, and miscue overcorrection. Insights made during the RMA sessions marked a shift in Jason's beliefs about reading and about himself as a reader. In addition, Jason made adjustments in his reading strategies as well. I found that Jason and I engaged in

long discussions about his reading from analyzing just one or two miscues. Of course we discussed many more, but it was amazing how just analyzing the miscues together opened up a forum for exploration and an opportunity to make changes. For each miscue we discussed, Jason divulged a little more of his beliefs about reading, and as each belief became apparent I was able to challenge it, if necessary. It was those points in the RMA sessions that I considered "teachable moments," where I saw an opportunity to explore, analyze, challenge, and teach not *to* Jason, but *with* Jason. It was very powerful.

On October 28, Jason summed up what he had learned about his reading process up to that point.

> **Jason:** That when I get frustrated, I'm focusing more on the words than on the context of the sentence. I need to focus more on reading and not sounding out the words. Reading and taking in what the paragraph or sentence is saying rather than what each word is saying or how each word is pronounced. Skipping words that aren't always necessary is okay and going through it and letting it flow rather than getting stuck on one thing.

I was so impressed. Jason moved from a word-focused view of reading to a meaning-centered view of reading. This was at the core of what I felt he needed to shift. Once he was able to recognize and articulate this, I felt a weight lift from my shoulders, and I think he felt the same way. He understood that reading is a meaning-making process, one in which he is in transaction with the text. He was insightful about himself as a reader. And he was brave to travel down this path with me. He told me that it was difficult for him "to talk about this stuff," but that he really wanted "to work on it."

"a forum for discussion, insight, challenge, and change"

The data suggest that Jason's "reading problem," i.e. re-reading text often, was a learned response based on all his years of reading remediation, which focused on part-to-whole reading instruction and word accuracy. He was doing what he had been taught to do. In addition, that instruction served to reinforce his belief that good reading meant producing a perfect rendition of the text. Throughout the semester, we were able to discuss Jason's reading process and, at the same time, uncover some of those beliefs about reading that were influencing his reading behavior. The RMA revaluing sessions served as a forum for discussion, insight, challenge, and change. Jason's "reading problem" improved significantly by the end of our sessions, and he reported in our closing interview that he felt much more confident as a reader as a result of our sessions together.

A Final Thought for Now

Learning-assistance centers that support under-prepared, developmental, and non-traditional college students (including those diagnosed as RD/LD) must be willing to break from traditional instructional models in order to serve their students well (White and Schnuth 161). White and Schnuth call for a more individualized and student-centered approach to instruction and support services. I agree that educators need to move in that direction. However, I believe that in order to truly break from tradition, we must shift our views regarding the entire concept of reading disabilities. It will not be enough to just blindly change educational practices. We need to critically examine, and I believe change, the epistemologies that serve as the foundation for our program's educational mission.

I am advocating for revaluing as a cornerstone of reading instruction for classified students seeking literacy support in college. As Alan Flurkey writes, "Revaluing is a shift toward viewing learners as purposeful users of the language process and a corresponding shift away from relying on reductionistic diagnostic tests that promote a deficit view of learners" (219). I would like to see instructors in college support programs move in this direction helping students change some of the fundamental negative beliefs they hold about themselves as readers, as well as challenge their misconceptions about the reading process and in turn develop more productive reading strategies.

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