Sam is an eight-year old African-American boy who has been in my classroom since the Fall of 2009. He was first placed in my room as a 1st grade student and is now in 2nd grade. Sam is a 2nd grade student who has a cognitive impairment and is placed in a Cognitively Impaired basic classroom. He progresses in a modified curriculum for Reading, Writing, and Math. He attends a second grade classroom for Science and Social Studies. While in the general education classroom he completes the curriculum with accommodations. He lives with his mom and sister (9 years old). He has moved between Michigan and Mississippi multiple times in his short school life. Below is an explanation of where Sam has been throughout his school life.

Sam's first evaluation for special education support occurred in July 2004 while he was living with his mom and sister in Mississippi. His mother had concerns with his limited speech at this time. An Individualized Family Service Plan was completed to provide special services for Sam. As of February 2005, Sam attended an Early On program in Michigan and continued through May of 2005. There is no evidence of schooling during the 2006-2007 school year. Sam would have been 4 years old at this time. His mother decided to keep him home during this time instead of sending him to school for the Early On program. Sam attended school during the 2007-2008 school year in Michigan. In December 2007 Sam was referred for a Special Education Evaluation. Starting in February of 2008 he received Special Education services under the eligibility of Early Childhood Developmental Delay with a secondary eligibility of Speech Impairment. He received Resource Room support 3-4x a week for 20 minutes at a time, speech services 1-2x a week, Occupational Therapy 3-4x a month and social work services 1x a week. During the 2008-2009 school year, Sam was living and going to elementary

school in Mississippi. In Mississippi, an evaluation was completed again as the eligibility of ECDD was not appropriate anymore. These assessments found Sam to be "mentally retarded". At this time an IEP was implemented that provided Sam with services provided in a general education class implementing a modified curriculum. No services outside the classroom were noted in the IEP. When the 2009-2010 school year started he was enrolled in Holt Public Schools in Michigan and has remained in this setting to the current date. At the start of the 2009 school year he was placed in a general education 1st grade classroom based on the information received from Mississippi. Based on his beginning of the year assessments he was immediately brought to the School Support Team meetings and was recommended for evaluation of academic, achievement, and cognitive assessments. In October 2009, he was placed in a K-2 classroom for students with Cognitive Impairments. Throughout the past few years he has made great gains in the classroom both academically and socially. Due to the many changes in living situations and school settings Sam has had a challenge placed upon him that most struggling students never have to deal with.

Before beginning this assignment with Sam, I talked to him about school and how he likes the classroom he is currently placed (my room). I also asked him about his new living situation, he recently moved out of the apartment with his aunt and cousins and now lives in a townhouse with his mom and sister only. He was very proud and enjoyed talking about his room that he does not share and how they have a big living area where they play. Starting this project with Sam at this time seemed like great timing because he seemed to be feeling really good about his living situation as well as returning to the same school and to the same classroom as he attended last year. When I explained to

Sam that I would be working with him on a few new lessons that I had found, he seemed a little concerned. The look on his face seemed to show me that he wasn't sure what this work really meant for him. I explained to him that I had chosen him because I wanted to show him how far he has come in the last few months and how proud I am of him and his success. All of the work we completed for this assignment was completed during the school day. I asked Sam if he preferred to complete the work in the classroom or in our back work room. He chose to work in the back workroom. This provided a quieter setting and it was a one-on-one setting which he typically prefers.

Prior to choosing books to use for the comprehension portion of this assignment I had Sam fill out a Reading Interest Inventory (artifact 1). I read the statements to him and he answered. I provided a Yes/No inventory for him and a few fill in responses. Based on the information provided in this inventory I learned that Sam enjoys reading, likes to read with a partner but does not like reading aloud. He does not prefer having someone read stories to him, he likes reading both fiction and non-fictions books. He does not enjoy magazines and does not like to talk to friends about what he reads. His favorite book is one about Halloween (he did not recall the name of the book) that is funny. He responded by saying he enjoys books about dinosaurs and heroes. He says he is good at sounding out words but has trouble with new words. He enjoys reading because "it is fun". Based on his responses, I chose both fiction and non-fiction books for him to read. I also tried to find books that were about dinosaurs or heroes. Unfortunately, his reading level is very low at this time and the books I had to choose from at his level I could not find either of those two topics.

I also completed a word reading assessment on Sam. I had him complete the List 1 and 2 of the Dolch Sight Word List. I took this assessment at both the beginning of the interventions and at the end.

As I continue to work with Sam in the special education classroom I will research more options in which I can find a wider selection of books to choose from for Sam. All students in my class could use a wider variety of subjects to read about. I would also look into getting both non-fiction and fiction books for my classroom as well since it will benefit all of them. I'm glad I had the opportunity to really delve into a student's specific wants/needs through this experience. I think in the future I will ask all students to start the year off by filling out a reading interest inventory so I know exactly what students are interested in.

Another inventory I should have completed but did not is the topic of motivation and how students are motivated extrinsically and intrinsically. I have not put much time into motivating my students while reading. I have started a system of tracking students' word reading success on a weekly basis and this seems to motivate the students when they can see the growth they have made. This system alone seems to motivate the students so I can only imagine how much more motivation could be brought in if I had provided a motivation questionnaire.

Next , I had to gather some baseline data from Sam. I used the Dolch Word Lists and completed a running record to determine his comprehension skills. First, Sam was given a List 1 of the Dolch Word List (artifact 2). As he read the words, he confidently read the known words and when he approached an unknown word he was stuck and

struggled to create a sensible word. He read 11/20 words correctly. When given the 2nd

list from the Dolch Word List he again struggled to come up with unknown words

(artifact 2). He was able to read 5/20 words correctly. Prior to this assessment, Sam

has been working on the 25 Kindergarten word list which includes some of the Dolch

words. I then gave Sam a running record based on the Reading a-z program. I started

him out at a level aa which does not come with comprehension questions but I wanted

to assure myself that he was capable of reading this level fluently and building from

there. He read this level with no problems. The text was 1-3 words on each page and

did not really follow a story line it was more of a repetitive reading. When Sam read

level A, there were comprehension questions provided. He read the book Carlos Has

Kittens (artifact 3-4). He read fairly fluently but did stumble upon some words. The

level was an instructional level for Sam regarding fluency but was frustrational based on

his comprehension question responses. The questions required Sam to pay attention to

the pictures within the book as well as read the text. The results of the running records

told me that he could read a level A book at an instructional level. This was enough

information for me to know that I should begin my instruction with Sam at level A. My

newest challenge was to find books that Sam would be interested in reading at his

instructional level.

Based on the information I gained from the assessments I then went through the

Michigan Grade Level Content Expecations (GLCEs) at the Kindergarten level.

Because it is imperative that students build their skills upon each other I moved 2 steps

down from his actual grade level in order to first become familiar with these skills and

then move up from this point in the future. After looking through all the Kindergarten ELA GLCEs I chose to focus on three:

R.WS.00.06 Make progress in automatically recognizing a few of the 220 Dolch basic sight words.

R.CM.00.02 Retell up to three events from familiar text using their own words or phrasing.

I had the challenge now of finding texts that were at Sam's level but that also had enough events throughout the story that would help us to work on recalling events from the story. I also had to find stories that Sam would find interesting based on his interest inventory that would provide a narrative text to build on.

Due to the difficulty of using the Reading a-z books and finding books on dinosaurs or heroes, I chose a few books that I though Sam might be interested in and gave him a choice of which book he wanted to read to start our instruction. By giving him a choice, I was hoping to motivate him to want to do well and to show me he enjoys reading as he had stated on the interest survey.

In the article by Gay Ivey, he states that "when thinking about comprehension, it is critical to consider not only the level of difficulty of the text but also the richness of meaning". This is one area in which I felt I could have motivated Sam more. He is reading at such a level that is difficult to find easy readers with interesting topics to him. There has to be more books out there that are interesting to students of this reading ability.

When we met again to complete our lesson I had a choice of 3 books for Sam to choose from. He chose the book about a child going to school. When asked why he chose that book he said "because I go to school". I think he was most interested in it because it is a similar situation to his own daily routine. First I asked Sam to go on a "picture walk" with me. This is a routine that is typical whenever we choose to read a new book. After the picture walk, we read *Carlos Goes to School*. After the reading was done I asked Sam to recall as many of the things Carlos had to get before he could leave for school. The book was all about the items Carlos had to get from home before leaving for school. Sam was able to recall about 3 of the items from the middle to end of the story. Next I presented Sam with a strategy that would help him recall more information from the story. I gave him an "In My Head" worksheet from the *Teaching Reading to English Language Learners* article (artifact 5). Prior to him filling out the form, I modeled for him what it might look like as he was reading. I showed him how I would stop every 1-2 pages and draw a picture or write a few words that would be key for me to remember what I wanted to share about the story after I was done reading. Modeling and thinking aloud are two important contributors to learning. I find that some students not only need to hear the strategy explained to them but also need to see the strategy completed. There are many visual learners as well as auditory learners so it is important to always use a variety of teaching strategies to meet all learners. After my modeling and thinking aloud for Sam, I asked him to do the same while he read the story a second time. As Sam worked through the story on his own for the first time I noticed that he would stop and draw after each page. He also drew more of the whole picture presented in the book than I had modeled. I had hoped that he would be able to recall 2-3 pages of text

at a time. My expectation was set a little high for Sam as he was just starting to use this concept. After he completed the story, I asked him to recall some of the events from the book. He was able to go back and tell me 4-5 important things that happened throughout the book. My adjustment for the next meeting time would be to show him a simpler way of drawing ideas on the paper so he wouldn't take up so much time or space on his paper.

The next time we met, I had a few more books available for Sam to choose from. We again worked on the idea of writing/drawing important details from stories. One thing about the level of books Sam was reading is that all details in the story seem relevant as there is no added text to make him decide whether or not text was important. I see as he gets into a higher reading level that this strategy will have to be approached again to determine between important facts and fill-in information that is not necessarily important for the information provided in the story. Sam chose to read a book called

We Can Make Sounds. This was very similar to the first book Sam read for this lesson. This book incorporated a repetitive text with a list of things that "we" can do. Before reading, I provided the "in my head" worksheet for Sam. I asked him to first explain to me what he was going to use the worksheet for. He said "to draw what happens in the story so I can tell you". While reading the book on his own, I observed him stopping every 1-2 pages to draw/write information from the text. When he was done I asked him to tell me what he remembered from the text. He shared with me 4-5 pieces of information from the book. I was happy to see his improvement already from only practicing this a few times between our 2 "official" meetings.

One thing I would change with this lesson is incorporating work completed by other students. I think it would have been beneficial to teach this strategy to two students at one time and compare the results of the information each student gathered from the same text. Students would then be able to discuss what they found important and also explain to each other some of the information they wrote down or drew about. Students always seem interested in what each other is doing and it always helps to hear it from a peer as well as from a teacher. Although my relationship with Sam improved through this specific instruction I should have worked on also building peer to peer relationships. This is a skill I have been working on in my classroom as a whole and it would help the classroom environment even more if I could incorporate it in small instruction as well.

While building upon Sam's reading comprehension I also worked on his word reading ability and improving his Dolch sight words. For this instruction I used a daily practice which included reading known and unknown sight words every morning during routine morning work. This strategy is called incremental practice. The first time we sat down to work on sight words, Sam read 10 known words for me that I had chosen at random according to the baseline assessment I had taken. To start each day I will review all of Sam's known words by reading the words in isolation on flashcards. By doing this I am hoping to build his confidence in knowing he can already read 16 words without any assistance or reminders. Next I will choose 5 words from the words he knows. I will then add new words to this pile of cards. Words will be added one at a time. I will place the new word in front of the 5 known words. I will tell him the word, ask him to repeat it and then go to the first of his known words so he says the new word and one known word. Then I will go back to the beginning so he says the new word then reads 2 known

words. This routine will continue until he reads the new word and all 5 known words. After he gets through this set I will then take out one known word and add a second new word to the front of the pile. Now Sam has to read 2 unknown words and 4 known words. By the time the session is done, Sam has read 3 new words and 3 known words.

When this practice first began, Sam would get frustrated with having to repeat the same words over and over again but as he realized how quickly he was remembering words, he became more interested in continuing this process. For about the first 3 days Sam worked on recalling the 3 new words. Once he could add the new words to his known words by reading the word within 3 seconds of seeing it; I would add words as fit. Three words was the most we added at one given time.

Sam and I worked together on these two strategies over a span of about a month. When I met with him his final time I saw that he had made great gains. When working with new books or even familiar books, Sam would often ask for a piece of paper or the "in my head" worksheet so he could write down the important information. When reading some familiar books, I realized he wouldn't have to ask for any paper, he was beginning to recall information on his own. Sam's sight word reading went from knowing 16 dolch words from lists one and two to knowing 24 words from the lists. When I pointed out these successes to him, he said he felt proud. He had a big smile on his face when I told him and I witnessed him sharing this information with his classmates after we had talked. It made me feel so good inside to see this success and pride in Sam.

In the end, Sam continues to read 1-2 grades below grade level. Although I am seeing great gains in his reading, I hope to see much more before the end of the school year. With these strategies learned and more strategies to come, I believe Sam could increase his reading level from A to about a C by the end of the year. I found that specific modeling and practice proved to be two bits of instruction that seemed to work for him. He seemed to understand much more when I was able to work through the sample aloud and he was able to see exactly how the strategy was to be used. One thing I would definitely go back to and practice more on is motivating Sam. I did not work specifically on figuring out what motivates him intrinsically or extrinsically. I have a feeling I would see much more growth and a better attitude if I really focused on what motivates Sam to do his best.

References

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Artifact 1 (page 1 of interest inventory)

I enjoy reading.	(YES)	(NO)
I like to read with a partner.	(YES)	NO
I like to read aloud.	(YES)	(NO)
I like it when someone reads to me.	YES	(NO)
I like to read books that are true.	(YES)	NO
I like to read books that are make believe.	(YES)	NO
I like magazines.	(YES)	(NO)
I like to talk to my friends about what I read.	YES	(NO)

Artifact 2 (page 2 of interest inventory)

My favorite book is __Halloween__

I like this book because __it's funny__

I enjoy reading books about __dinosaurs and heroes__

When I read I am good at __sounding out words__

When I read I have trouble __with new words__

I like to read because __it is fun__

Artifact 3

DOLCH BASIC SIGHT WORD LIST

List 1		List 2		List 3	List 4
1. the	1. at	1. do	1. big
2. to	2. him	2. can	2. went
3. and	3. with	3. could	3. are
4. he	4. up	4. when	4. come
5. a	5. all	5. did	5. if
6. I	6. look	6. what	6. now
7. you	7. is	7. so	7. long
8. it	8. her	8. see	8. no
9. of	9. there	9. not	9. came
10. in	10. some	10. were	10. ask
11. was	11. out	11. get	11. very
12. said	12. as	12. them	12. an
13. his	13. be	13. like	13. over
14. that	14. have	14. one	14. your
15. she	15. go	15. this	15. its
16. for	16. we	16. my	16. ride
17. on	17. am	17. would	17. into
18. they	18. then	18. me	18. just
19. but	19. little	19. will	19. blue
20. had	20. down	20. yes	20. red
/20	/20	/20	/20

Artifact 4

Carlos Counts Kittens
Concept (fiction), 33 words, Level A (Grade K)

Carlos has two kittens.

Artifact 5

In My Head

Name _____

What are you thinking about as you read _____ (name of book)?

I think . . .