Informally Assessing Reading Comprehension for Students Who Are Non-Verbal

Establishing Reliable Results

- Goal: Obtain reliable and accurate results for listening and reading comprehension levels by utilizing best practice and making appropriate professional judgments
  - When determining a starting point, use best professional judgment and adjust accordingly. This is informal so it may take some moving around. The comprehension level may only be as sophisticated as his expressive and receptive language levels.
  - Utilize a consistent behavioral response for all items across all tasks (i.e.: hand me, find, show me, choose, etc)
  - Know that the data collected from this performance based assessment will support your findings
  - Know this is not standardized
  - Determine if the student is consistent across individuals, no matter who is assessing
  - Maintain a tight presentation format (including the cueing) across individuals
  - Consider 80% accuracy as mastery
  - Don’t use his greatest motivator without embedding it in the text/story/task. For example, if we give the student an Elmo pointer b/c Elmo is his greatest motivator, it’s not embedded in the task.
  - It’s understood that in order to obtain a high level of “buy in” from the student, we may need to utilize a motivator that is not age appropriate for this task and for that, it’s okay.

Embedding Meaning/Establishing Purpose from Student Perspective

- Identify the greatest motivator for the student. Doing so allows us to tease out the “won’t do b/c the student won’t buy in” from the “can’t do”
- Embed the student’s greatest motivator as part of the activity and/or reading passage. Insure that what’s being used isn’t considered a manipulative (i.e: pointers, etc) or a tangible reinforcer.
- Utilize a consistent behavioral response for all items across all tasks (i.e.: hand me, find, show me, choose, etc)

Establishing Print Awareness Skills

- Goal: Identify presence of print awareness skills, necessary in order to assess reading comprehension
  - PACE Checklist for Emerging Literacy Skills (Adapted by Kelly Madderom, self-contained teacher) filled out by staff, including but not limited to the classroom teacher and the SLP

Informally Assessing Phonics and Phonological Awareness

- Goal: Although we know for many of our kids that this skill may be underdeveloped or lacking in development altogether, keep in mind that because the students may not demonstrate typically developing milestones/patterns, it is appropriate to move forward in the assessment process even if scores here indicate a lack of phonics and/or phonological awareness skills.
  - ALL Program: components related to phonics and phonological awareness

Originally developed in Spring 2011, Sabrina Beaudry (Autism Specialist, DST), Sharine Carver (Psych), Lisa Hauffman (District Problem Solving coach, Liz Molter (Self-contained teacher), Kristy Saar (SLP), Linda Warning (Spec. Ed Prog. Spec, DST)

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Non-Verbal Reading Comprehension & Listening Comprehension Assessment

We will be assessing both the reading comprehension and listening comprehension levels for Student X.
Reading Comprehension = what the student reads and understands
Listening Comprehension = what the student listens to and understands

Reading & Listening Comprehension
Things to keep in mind:
1. Determine a starting point and adjust accordingly.
2. Know that this is NOT standardized. This method was/is created specifically for this student.
3. Determine if the student is consistent across individuals (teacher, SLP, TAs, etc)
4. Maintain a tight presentation format across individuals.
5. Consider 80% accuracy as mastery.

We will be using Rigby PM Benchmark as a framework for assessing at the passage level. Rigby PM includes 30 accurately leveled readers. While Rigby PM is a “formal” assessment when given in its original format, the assessment for this student is being modified and therefore is considered an “informal” assessment tool.

Reading Comprehension
- Begin at Rigby Level ?. Level ? in Rigby correlates with Level ? in Reading A-Z.
- Adjustments will be made if needed.

Listening Comprehension
- We will begin at Rigby Level ? (typically higher than reading comp). Level ? in Rigby correlates with Level ? in Reading A-Z.
- Adjustments will be made if necessary.

The same formats explained below will be used for both reading and listening comprehensions.

Determine Print Awareness Skills (see previous handout)

Assessing at the Word Level
We will be using Rigby PM Benchmark books for assessing Student X’s comprehension of words, maintaining reliability and consistency. For example, can Student X place the meaning for an isolated vocabulary word?

Assessment Structure
1. Word level will also begin at determined levels above.
2. Words will be pulled from the leveled reader he is being assessed for passage comprehension (5 words).
3. Vocabulary words will correlate with The DataWorks List of Words that all K-6th Grade Students Must Know (compilations of Marzano, Dolch, and Fry lists)
4. Student X will be given a word (visual model) and asked to locate the picture it represents in a field of 5.
5. 80% accuracy will be considered mastery.
6. If Student X locates the correct word/picture with 80% accuracy, he will move up to the next level.
7. If Student X is unable to locate the correct word/picture with 80% accuracy, it will be considered that the level he stops on is his current word level.
Assessing at the Phrase Level
We will be using Rigby PM Benchmark books for assessing Student X’s comprehension of phrases, maintaining reliability and consistency. For example, can Student X place the meaning of a phrase?

Assessment Structure
1. Phrase level will also begin at determined levels above.
2. Phrases will be pulled from the leveled reader he is being assessed for passage comprehension (5 phrases).
3. Student X will be given a phrase (visual model) and asked to locate the picture it represents in a field of 5.
4. 80% accuracy will be considered mastery.
5. If Student X locates the correct phrase/picture with 80% accuracy, he will move up to the next level.
6. If Student X is unable to locate the correct phrase/picture with 80% accuracy, it will be considered that the level he stops on is his current word level.

**Words selected for Word Level and phrases selected for Phrase Level will NOT include the same words**
(For example – vocabulary word is cat...selected phrase will not by “sees a cat”)

Assessing at the Passage Level
Assessment Structure
1. Student X will be given the determined leveled book and asked to read it.
2. Following the completion of his reading, Student X will be asked a number of comprehension questions.
   a. He will always be asked at least 1 question from the Rigby Assessment Record (formal question).
   b. Given a storyboard (Boardmaker pictures) representative of the who’s, what doing’s, where’s, and when’s in a passage (as appropriate to the passage) and scripted staff questions, Student X will be asked to provide answers to comprehension questions with 80% accuracy.
   c. If Student X answers the questions with 80% accuracy, he will be given the next level up story in the same format.
   d. If Student X is unable to answer the questions with 80% accuracy, it will be considered that the level he stops on is his current reading comprehension level.

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