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# Literacy Instruction for Young Learners with Moderate to Severe Disabilities

Nancy McKinley Lecture Series

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## What We Know About Literacy and Students With Moderate and Severe Intellectual Disability

- ▶ Literacy has been underemphasized.
- ▶ Sight words have been overemphasized.
- ▶ Some students with moderate and severe intellectual disability can learn to read.
- ▶ Other students can learn to gain meaning from text.
- ▶ Read alouds can promote literacy skills for all students.



## Some of Our Research on Shared Stories

- ▶ Browder, D. M., Mims, P., Spooner, F., Ahlgrim-Delzell, L., & Lee, A. (2008). Teaching elementary students with multiple disabilities to participate in shared stories. *Research and Practice in Severe Disabilities, 33*, 3-12.
- ▶ Mims, P., Browder, D., Baker, J., Lee, A., & Spooner, F. (2009). Increasing comprehension of students with significant intellectual disabilities and visual impairments during shared stories. *Education and Treatment in Developmental Disabilities, 44*, 409-420.
- ▶ Browder, D., Lee, A., & Mims, P. (2011). Literacy for students with disabilities: Using individualized responses, systematic instruction, and assistive technology. *Education and Treatment in Developmental Disabilities, 46*, 339-351.
- ▶ Hudson, M. E., & Test, D. W. (2011). Evaluating the evidence base for using shared story reading to promote literacy for students with extensive support needs. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities, 36*, 34-45.

## Learner Outcomes

- ▶ After this course, participants will be able to:
  1. Describe how to provide successful access to literature through the use of appropriate response options.
  2. Describe how to use read-alouds to conduct literacy lessons in a systematic fashion.
  3. Explain how to adapt books and instruction to meet the needs of students who are visually impaired.
  4. Explain how to implement effective instruction using systematic prompting.

## Case Studies

- Donna—Eye gaze response
  - Eight-year-old girl
  - Primarily uses eye gaze to familiar objects to communicate; no speech
  - Has been exposed to read alouds, but no clear responses
- Denise—Object response
  - Nine-year-old girl
  - Visually impaired; she uses auditory skills and tactile exploration to respond to request
  - Beginning to use objects to represent daily activities; no speech
  - Teachers have been unsure how to engage her with books
- Ralph—Touch response
  - Six-year-old boy
  - No speech, has functional vision, and uses a wheelchair for mobility
  - Responds to request by grabbing what he wants
  - Ralph's teacher often reads books to her students; this is Ralph's first experience with interactive story based lessons

## Materials



- Two adapted books: *Earth Dance* and *Dewey McGee Loves a Good Game*
  - ▶ One is commercial book; one is teacher-made story with photos.
  - ▶ Each book has been adapted by adding objects to the story, pictures or objects to complete a repeated storyline, an object to be used for an anticipatory set, and summary question.
- A story-based lesson script (task analysis) individualized to the response mode of the student
- A photograph of the student or symbol labeled with the student's name

## Target Skill One: Comprehension

The number of independent correct listening comprehension responses, including:

- ▶ answering literal questions throughout the story
- ▶ answering a summary question
- ▶ completing the repeated storyline



## Target Skill Two: Engagement

- ▶ The student score reflects the level of engagement in the literacy activity.
- ▶ How students engage with the read aloud:
  - ▶ Choose a book
  - ▶ Select own picture
  - ▶ Engage with anticipatory set
  - ▶ Prediction
  - ▶ Engage with objects in story
  - ▶ Find symbol representing a word



## General Task Analysis for the Read Aloud

1. Choose a book when shown two options.
2. Select my picture to go with my choice.
3. Interact with object that goes with story theme.
4. Select object/picture to predict what story is about.
5. Look at object as teacher reads page.
6. Select this same object from array of two to answer literal recall question.
7. Look at second object as teacher reads page.
8. Select this second object to answer literal recall question.
9. Use switch to "read" repeated story line.
10. Select object from array to answer summary question.

### Example of Script With Systematic Prompting and Error Correction

| Teacher Says:   | Teacher Does  | Student Does   | Prompting   |
|---|---|--|---|
| <p><i>Now, let me ask you a question about what we just read. What flew off of Dewey's head? A hat or _____?</i></p> <p><i>That's right! His hat flew off his head.</i></p> | <p>Present the student with the hat and a distracter that has been velcroed to an eye gaze board.</p> | <p>Looks at both objects and then at hat for 3 seconds</p> | <p><b>Prompting</b><br/> <b>If no response</b>, Say "<i>Let's read that again.</i>" Read the text again, present the two answer choices and repeat the question. If correct, praise.<br/> <b>If no response</b>, 5 seconds attempt, Say "<i>Listen to the question again, 'What flew off of Dewey's head?'</i>" Hold up or touch the hat and say, "<i>Here's the answer: the hat flew off Dewey's head.</i>" Put the hat back down with the distracter and say, "<i>Now you try. What flew off of Dewey's head?'</i>"<br/> <b>If no response</b> after 5 seconds, place student's hands on the hat and say, "<i>Here it is. The hat flew off of Dewey's head.</i>"<br/> <b>Error correction</b><br/>                     If student clearly chooses the wrong object, remove the distracter and say: "<i>This is the answer: a hat flew off of Dewey's head. Look at the hat.</i>" Remove the hat and show it to the student.</p> |

## Example of Reinforcement and Error Correction

**Skill:** Choose a book

After both book choices have been presented, the student clearly indicates which book she would like to read.

Teacher provides reinforcement: Great! You chose \_\_\_\_\_.

If an error occurs:



When asked to choose a book, this student tapped both books at the same time.



The teacher responds by choosing a book and making sure the student eye gazes to the choice.

## Example of Least Intrusive Prompts

**Skill:** Repeated story



Student: Uses assistive technology to complete a repeated story line that the teacher has begun.

Great job! You helped me read!

If student does not press switch within allotted time, follow this prompting sequence:



1. Provide a cue, such as tapping the switch. Then wait for the student to respond. If student presses switch after cue, PRAISE and continue reading.



2. If no response, provide hand over hand assistance. Reinforce by saying, "Good job! You helped me read."

## Individualize the Story-Based Lesson

- ▶ **FIRST:** Plan how student will make each response on the task analysis (eye gaze, select object, touch picture).
- ▶ Increase difficulty of steps of task analysis:
  - ▶ Delay question
  - ▶ Use more symbolic objects or pictures
  - ▶ Ask inferential questions
  - ▶ Have student scan text as you read



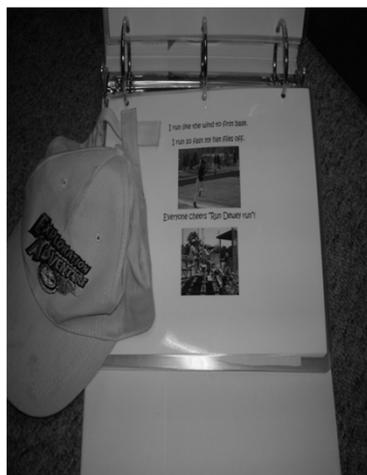
## Some Examples of Individualization

- ▶ Donna—Eye gaze response
  - ▶ Objects were attached to a clear board for selection.
- ▶ Denise—Object response
  - ▶ Cover of book had raised title (puff paint).
  - ▶ Objects were put on voice output device for the repeated storyline.
  - ▶ Objects were attached to table with Velcro for consistency of placement.
  - ▶ When making a choice, Denise was given an opportunity to feel each object before making a selection.

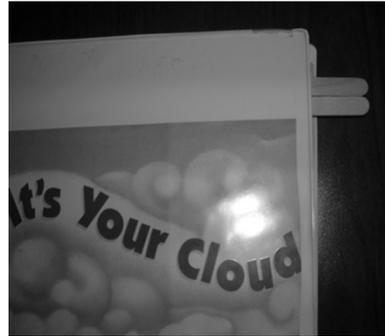


## Planning for making the text accessible: Adapting the Book

- ▶ Add pictures or objects to support the story
- ▶ If story has pictures, no adaptation may be needed
- ▶ Larger font
- ▶ If a book has limited pictures
  - ▶ Use digital photographs to create a book that is personally relevant
  - ▶ Use symbols
  - ▶ Cut pictures from picture books or magazines



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You will need to make the book accessible for students with physical challenges. Above left: a handle has been added for opening the book. Above right: Popsicle sticks may make turning the page easier. Bottom right: page fluffers separate the pages and make it easier to turn one at a time. Use cut up sponges, or stacked foam squares.

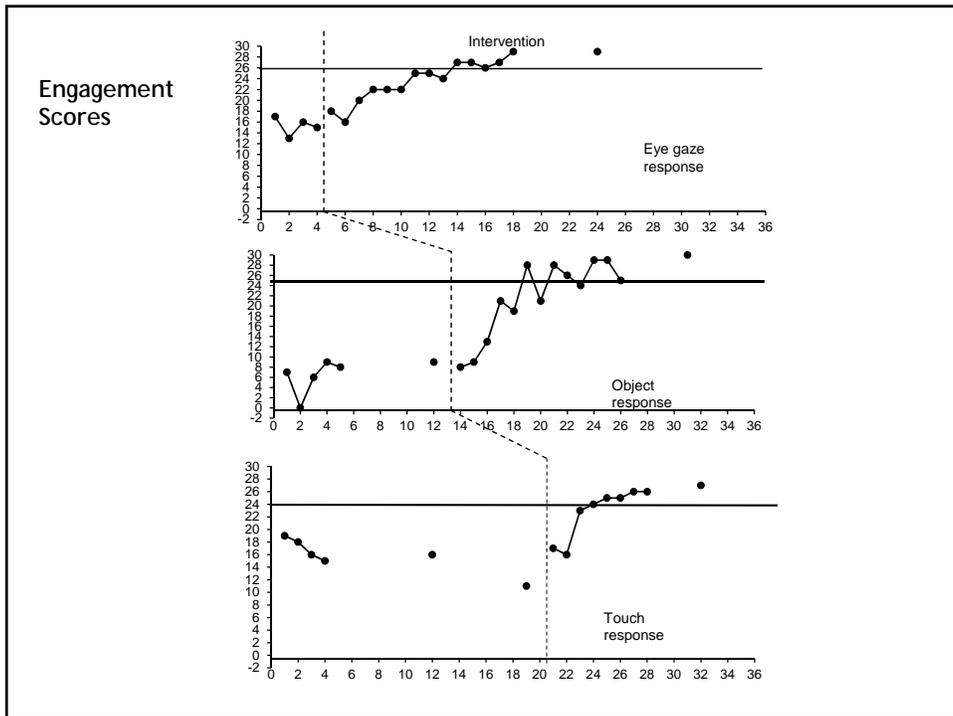


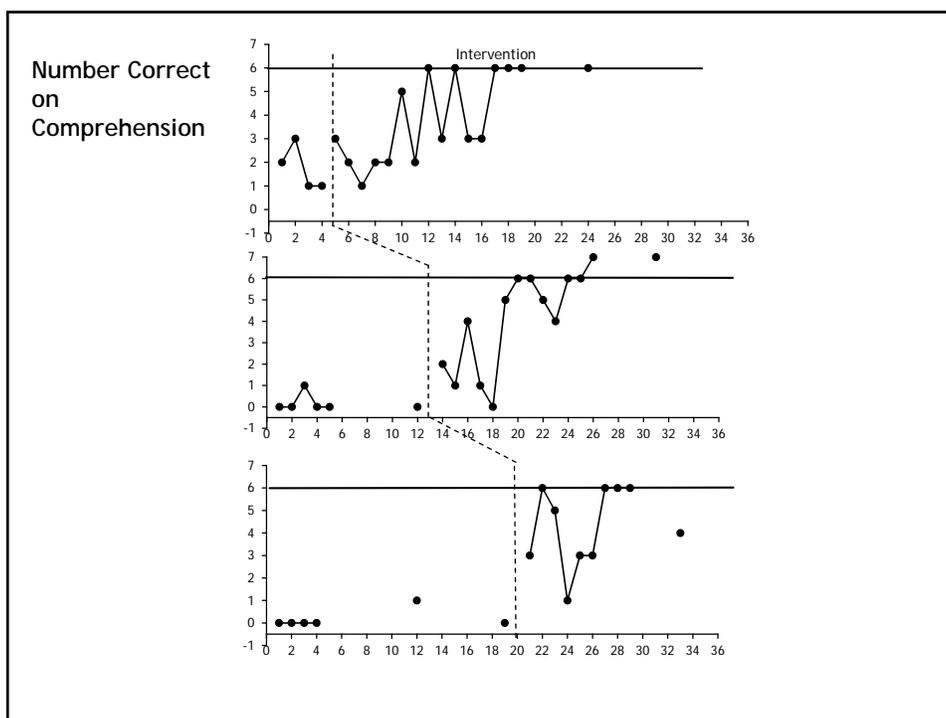
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## Planning for the use of assistive technology



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## Final Thoughts

- ▶ Objects can be concrete or abstract; begin with immediate and concrete and build abstraction.
- ▶ Use words supported by symbols or pictures—with all students.
- ▶ Use repeated readings of same book.
- ▶ Often, instruction must begin 1:1. After a student is familiar with a book, move to a small group.
- ▶ Peers who are non-disabled can learn to follow the TA.
- ▶ Students in this study were able to participate in lesson lasting 30 minutes or more.

## Questions and Discussion

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