

Assessment-Driven Instruction

Teacher: Hildi Perez

Years Teaching: 7

School: Young Achievers School for Science and Mathematics, Boston, Massachusetts

Grade: First

Class Size: 20 students

Lesson Dates: December 11 and 12

“Reading is more than having one skill... reading is about having a balance of different skills. We need to work on making connections, making sense, making meaning of what you read. I think that’s the most important part of reading.” —Hildi Perez

Overview

Video Summary

First-grade teacher Hildi Perez expects “every child in the classroom to read, at their full potential, by the end of first grade.” In this video, Ms. Perez guides students to become active readers and writers who problem solve when they have difficulty and who articulate their problem-solving strategies. Using ongoing formal and informal assessment, Ms. Perez addresses a wide range of student needs with whole-group, small-group, and individual instruction. Ms. Perez carefully chooses appropriate literature for each child and balances independent work with explicit instruction throughout the literacy block.

Ms. Perez’s classroom demonstrates the following:

- Formal and informal assessment linked to instruction
- Explicit teaching of skills and strategies using whole texts
- Teacher-directed instruction balanced with independent reading and writing tasks
- Differentiated instruction to meet the needs of all students, including emergent readers and writers and high achievers
- Connection between reading and writing

“I think it’s really important to have a balance between teaching children how to read and teaching children the love of reading.”

Literacy Teaching Practices

Shared Reading

Guided Reading

Independent Reading and Writing

Putting It in Context

The Teacher and the Class

Hildi Perez teaches first grade at the Young Achievers School for Science and Mathematics in Boston, Massachusetts. A pilot school, Young Achievers operates within the Boston Public School District, but enjoys much of the freedom of a charter school. Accepted through a lottery system, students come from all over the city. Fifty percent of Ms. Perez's students are African American and 30 percent are Latino. Most qualify for free or reduced-price school lunch.

Students' literacy needs, like their backgrounds, are diverse—reading levels range from beginner to sixth grade and beyond. But once inside Ms. Perez's classroom, all students are presented with the same expectation: to take clear and measurable steps forward in their literacy development.

Ms. Perez identifies student needs through frequent formal and informal assessment. "Using assessment is the most important tool for me. It helps me to know the children: who they are, what they come with, the skills they have, and the skills they need to be working on." Ms. Perez formally assesses students four times a year using leveled readers from the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA). She measures students' progress against school benchmarks set for different times of the year, using results to guide instruction and grouping.

Trained as a reading specialist, Ms. Perez spends half of her time overseeing the school's reading program and the other half in the classroom. She uses a variety of sources when planning instruction and setting up her classroom. "A classroom like this doesn't get created overnight; it's a process. It takes a lot of thought and it takes a lot of different resources—reading professional books, watching videos, asking help from veteran teachers."

Day at a Glance*

9:30	Arrival
9:35	Independent Reading
10:00	Shared Reading/Word Study
10:30	Learning Centers/ Guided Reading
11:30	Other Content Areas

*In the video, you see excerpts from Ms. Perez's class on December 11 and 12. On a typical day, other content areas are also included in the schedule.

Analyzing the Video

Before Viewing

The following activities prepare you to observe this classroom video, whether alone or with a group.

Prepare To Record Your Observations

Make a copy of the Observational Checklist (found in the Appendix) to record your observations, reactions, and further questions that come up throughout your viewing. Copy the KWL Chart (also in the Appendix) and record what you already know and what you would like to learn about assessment and using assessment to inform instruction. Groups can use the KWL chart to generate discussion and questions to consider while viewing.

Consider Key Questions

Consider these questions as you view the video:

- How does the classroom environment encourage students to gain independence as readers and writers?
- How are the diverse needs of learners (language in particular) met in this classroom?
- What forms of assessment are apparent in this classroom, and how does assessment guide instruction?
- How are reading and writing connected in this classroom?

Review Important Terms

Review the definitions of the following Literacy Teaching Practices (page 4): read-aloud, shared reading, guided reading, independent reading, interactive writing, and independent writing.

Review the following definitions of the Essential Components of Literacy Development (page 2): oral language, phonological awareness, word study (vocabulary/concepts and word identification/phonics), comprehension, composition, and fluency and automaticity.

First Impressions

Use the following activities to reflect on the classroom video.

Watch the Video

On your first viewing, use the Observational Checklist to note how Hildi Perez implements some of the Literacy Teaching Practices. In particular, note how she links ongoing assessment to instruction.

Review What You Saw

After watching the video, review the Observational Checklist and reflect on what you saw. How do the practices you just watched compare to your own? Think about your classroom and the needs of your students. How are they different from or similar to what you saw in the video?

Relate the Key Questions to Hildi Perez's Classroom

What forms of assessment are apparent in this classroom, and how does assessment guide instruction?

Consider Ms. Perez's comment, "Informal assessment is part of my everyday teaching. I'm always watching kids during the different activities and seeing how they're going about them... what strategies they are using." What types of formal and informal assessment does Ms. Perez use in her classroom? How does Ms. Perez use questions and close observation in her informal assessment?

Analyzing the Video, cont'd.

Looking Closer

Take a second look at Hildi Perez's classroom to deepen your understanding of specific literacy strategies. Use the video images below to locate where to begin viewing.

Shared Reading: Video Segment

Find this segment 4 minutes and 33 seconds after the beginning of the video. Watch for 4 minutes and 34 seconds.

At the beginning of the literacy block, students gather together to read an enlarged poem. After reading the poem together, children are invited to comment on what they notice in the text. Then Ms. Perez leads the class in an explicit phonics lesson drawn from the poem.



- On your Observational Checklist, note the Essential Components of Literacy Development that are addressed during the first part of the shared reading activity. How does this activity engage students who are at different levels of literacy development?
- During her explicit phonics lesson, how does Ms. Perez support students' problem-solving skills?
- Based on what you saw in the video, what are the different ways that shared reading can be used to promote literacy?

Guided Reading: Video Segment

Find this segment 17 minutes and 14 seconds after the beginning of the video. Watch for 7 minutes and 34 seconds.

In this video segment, Ms. Perez guides a small group of students to use multiple strategies while reading. In particular, she encourages students to make connections and uses "masking," a technique that helps students predict words from the syntax and meaning of the rest of the sentence. She cues students to think for themselves about what strategies to use when reading.

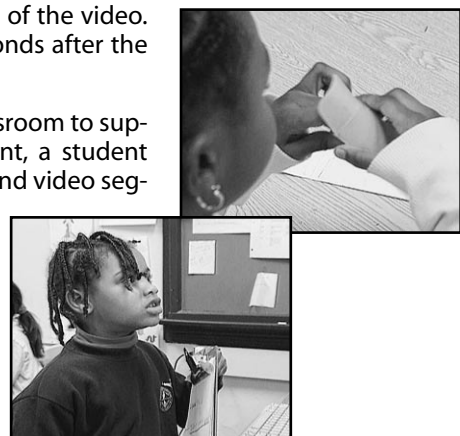


- Why does she think it's important for students to verbalize their strategies? What else do you notice about how she helps students build meaning in text?

Differentiated Instruction: Video Segments

Find the first segment 11 minutes and 47 seconds after the beginning of the video. Watch for 1 minute. Find the second segment 14 minutes and 19 seconds after the beginning of the video. Watch for 1 minute and 56 seconds.

These two video segments demonstrate how Ms. Perez sets up her classroom to support and extend the learning of all her students. In the first segment, a student teacher works with a student in the "Making Words" activity. In the second video segment, another student describes her independent research on spiders with a classmate.



- How does Ms. Perez organize her classroom to support a wide range of learners?
- How are reading and writing connected in classroom activities?

Analyzing the Video, cont'd.

Assessment: Video Segment

Find this segment 1 minute and 41 seconds after the beginning of the video. Watch for 2 minutes and 49 seconds.

In this video segment, Ms. Perez assesses one student's reading skills with a DRA (Developmental Reading Assessment) leveled reader. While listening to the student read, Ms. Perez takes a running record, marking miscues and making notes on comprehension. She then describes her method of charting each student's progress in a class profile with clear benchmarks for different times of the year.



- How does Ms. Perez use ongoing individual assessment to guide her instruction? How can the class profile be used to help group students and differentiate instruction?
- How can ongoing assessment be integrated into your own classroom practice?

Summing Up

Wrap up your impressions of the video with a final reflection.

Reflecting on Your Viewing Experience

Review your completed Observational Checklist and other notes such as your KWL chart.

- What surprised or interested you?
- What did you find that affirmed what you already knew or had been doing?
- What new approaches or ideas will you try?
- What questions do you have?
- After watching the video, do you think differently about your own practices? About the students you teach? About how young students develop literacy?

Making Connections

Apply and Extend

Here are some opportunities to apply and extend what you've seen.

Read This Article

Think about the ideas in the following article, especially in relation to Ms. Perez's instruction and your own.

Askew, B. J., and I. C. Fountas. "Building an Early Reading Process: Active from the Start." *The Reading Teacher* 52, no. 2 (October 1998): 126–134.

This reading is available as a downloadable PDF file on the Teaching Reading Web site. Go to www.learner.org/channel/libraries/readingk2/.

Watch These Videos

View the other first-grade videos in the *Teaching Reading* library, "Connecting Skills to Text," "Students Making Choices," and "Promoting Readers As Leaders," to compare the ways in which other first-grade teachers conduct shared and guided reading. View "Staying on Topic" to compare the different ways in which a second-grade teacher conducts guided reading.

For more information on these videos, see the chapters on "Connecting Skills to Text," "Students Making Choices," "Promoting Readers As Leaders," and "Staying on Topic" in this guide.

Take It Back to the Classroom

Identify one element or strategy from Ms. Perez's lesson that you would like to try in your classroom. List supports or resources that you would need to implement it. Use the Classroom Strategy Planner (found in the Appendix). If you are participating in a study group, share what happened when you tried out the new strategy. Or keep a reflective journal of your experience, focusing on the benefits for you and for your students.

Selected Resources

Resources Used by Ms. Perez

Cunningham, P. *Systematic Sequential Phonics They Use*. Greensboro, N.C.: Carson-Dellosa Publishing, 2000.
Developmental Reading Assessment: <http://www.pearsonlearning.com/celepress/observation.html>

Books for Students in Ms. Perez's Classroom

Prelutsky, Jack. "My Fish Can Ride a Bicycle." A poem from the book *Something Big Has Been Here*. New York, N.Y.: Greenwillow Books, 1990.

Rosen, Michael. ed. *Poems for the Very Young*. London: Kingfisher Publishing Co., 1993.

Smith, Annette. *New Boots*. From Rigby PM Plus. Barrington, Ill.: Rigby Education, 2000.

Additional Resources

Books and Articles

Askew, B. J., and I. C. Fountas. "Building an Early Reading Process: Active from the Start." *The Reading Teacher* 52, no. 2 (1998).

Avery, C. *...And With a Light Touch: Learning About Reading, Writing, and Teaching With First Graders*. Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 1993.

Beaver, Joetta. *The Developmental Reading Assessment*. Lebanon, Ind.: Pearson Learning Publisher, 1999.

Clay, M. *Running Records for Classroom Teachers*. Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 2000.

Dahl, K. L., et al. *Rethinking Phonics: Making the Best Teaching Decisions*. Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 2001.

Gaskins, I., et al. "Procedures for Word Learning: Making Discoveries About Words." *The Reading Teacher* 50, no. 4 (1997).

Morrow, L. M., et al. "Characteristics of Exemplary First-Grade Literacy Instruction." *The Reading Teacher* 52, no. 5 (1999).

Opitz, M. F., and M. P. Ford. *Reaching Readers: Flexible & Innovative Strategies for Guided Reading*. Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 2001.

Price, D. P. "Explicit Instruction at the Point of Use." *Language Arts* 76, no. 1 (1998).

West, K. "Noticing and Responding to Learners: Literacy Evaluation and Instruction in the Primary Grades." *The Reading Teacher* 51, no 7 (April, 1998).

Web Sites

Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Ability (CIERA): <http://www.ciera.org>

International Reading Association (IRA): <http://www.IRA.org>

National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE): <http://www.NCTE.org>

National Association of Education of Young Children: <http://www.naeyc.org>

For more resources on literacy, see the General Resources section of the Appendix.