

Looking for Different Signs of Progress in Older Readers

If running records are used with older readers there should be a special reason for taking them. They are excellent for recording the early phases of literacy acquisition but before long what the reader is doing becomes too fast and too sophisticated for teachers to observe in real time. Literacy processing shifts gradually towards this.

As the reader learns to process more information more quickly, behaviours change and new things can be noted. Errors occur even though the reader clearly used meaning, structure, and visual information to get to a response (strong for sturdy). It is an important 'sign of progress' when errors do contain several kinds of correct information even though the final decision is not quite correct.

Another change occurs when more proficient readers utter only the word beginning and then give the whole word. These are examples:

wu/would pl/play Pe/Peter bu/but

A similar kind of thing happens when the older reader corrects what might have been an error before giving the whole word, as in:

m.../parents gar.../ground d.../tied

Sometimes there is more repetition as the older reader tries to regroup words in phrases.

In older readers self-correction occurs less frequently. In theory we suppose that it has 'gone underground' and the reader is correcting errors before saying them. If the teacher introduces a more challenging text the process of self-correcting may reappear. Even adults reading aloud can be heard to self-correct.

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