

Data Use in the Classroom: Cheryl and Adrienne's Perspective

Washington Literacy Center
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NRS

National Reporting System
for Adult Education

Background

- ▶ Before WLC adopted Wilson Reading System, curriculum was staff-created.
- ▶ WLC hired a consultant to review its program.
- ▶ The consultant found that students were not making significant gains.
- ▶ An expert advised WLC to adopt Wilson because it had proven successful with students similar to ours.
- ▶ Wilson incorporates data collection.



Why We Use Data

- ▶ Regular and frequent assessment is a check on our general impression about whether a student has mastered a concept.
- ▶ Gut feel about skill mastery is often unreliable.
- ▶ Data provide students with concrete indicators of how much progress they are making.



How Our Program Uses Data to Place Students

▶ Intake has 3 strands:

1. Reading and spelling test
2. Fluency Test
3. CASAS



How Our Program Uses Attendance Data

- ▶ Computer program reports the attendance rate of each student.
- ▶ 75% is our red flag to have a conversation about reason for poor attendance.
- ▶ Attendance data helped us to determine the optimal length of our courses.
- ▶ CASAS is administered every 40 hours of instruction.



How I Use Data to Assess Performance--Adrienne

- ▶ **Check-up** assessment after first half of each unit checks whether students are mastering material. Concepts not mastered are re-taught.
- ▶ **Unit Tests** at the end of each unit give a separate score for each skill covered. A spreadsheet calculates the percentage of the class scoring 80+. Students scoring below 80 get extra help. If less than 80% of the class scores 80+, I re-teach targeted skills and re-test.



How I Use Data to Measure Progress--Adrienne

- ▶ Each unit starts with a **Progress Check**, an assessment containing all the concepts taught in the course.
- ▶ Students correct themselves with an answer key. As students master more concepts, scores on the progress checks rise.
- ▶ Students make a **bar graph** charting progress. As the bars rise, they are motivated by their progress.



How I Use Data to Teach CASAS Competencies--Adrienne

- ▶ We receive a spreadsheet showing the CASAS competencies each student has mastered and not mastered.
- ▶ Students are given extra attention in classes teaching non-mastered competencies.



How I Use Data—Cheryl

- ▶ Look at the types of mistakes each student is making in daily dictations and adjust the next day's lessons based on the common mistakes.
- ▶ Don't move forward with our weekly 15 word reading list until a certain percentage of students get the words right.



The Impact of Using Data—Cheryl

- ▶ Post-testing helps determine whether or not what we're doing is effective.
- ▶ We used to move forward based on the intuition of the teacher, but now it's more prescribed.
 - Less subjective
- ▶ Teaching is more efficient.
- ▶ Students now have a better understanding of how their progress influences the rest of the group.
 - We need a certain percentage to move forward.
 - They know the class needs to be ready based on certain criteria.



The Support We Receive

- ▶ Teachers receive an initial multi-day training in either Intensive or Just Words courses, taught by a Wilson trainer.
- ▶ Teachers are observed and coached by Wilson trainers multiple times.
- ▶ All teachers are given an analysis of CASAS test results, so they can identify areas where students need support.



Our Greatest Challenges

- ▶ Overcoming the mental barrier of using data in the classroom.
- ▶ Making sure that all students are present for assessments, so we don't have to repeat the assessment multiple times.
- ▶ Convincing students with test anxiety that frequent assessment is in their best interest.



Our Best Tips

- ▶ Regularly assess students and track data, so testing doesn't seem out of the ordinary.
- ▶ Establish uniform threshold scores that determine the pace of the class, but be flexible about changing the thresholds if they are unworkable.
- ▶ Have easy, manageable tools for testing.
- ▶ Don't move on until a large percentage of the class has achieved mastery.



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