Analysing the Running Record

Running records can show teachers behaviours that the reader is using successfully to comprehend the text, as well as those that inhibit a fluent reading of the text or that indicate a lack of comprehension. While running records will reveal some knowledge of how well most students have comprehended the text, teachers should ask students questions after the record has been taken to ensure that the information on the student’s level of comprehension is reliable.

Examples of the behaviours running records can reveal include whether the student:

- repeats words or phrases in order to self-correct (i.e., knows what the word is);
- rereads a phrase to acquire additional information (i.e., doesn’t know the word), to attempt a new word again, or to confirm that he or she read the word accurately;
- attempts a word before appealing for assistance or appeals to the teacher before trying a word;
- frequently becomes confused and unable to continue, requiring the teacher to tell him or her a word and record a “told” (see page 12.47);
- makes comments about the story that indicate an interest in and understanding of it;
- frequently checks the pictures for assistance or confirmation of his or her understanding;
- efficiently or inefficiently uses the sounding-out strategy to decode new words;
- points at words or phrases with a finger;
- reads in a phrased and fluent manner;
- uses appropriate intonation and expression;
- neglects or pays obvious attention to punctuation.

Examining a student’s reading behaviours also provides the teacher with insight into the reader’s thinking processes. In trying to determine what the material says, the student uses, primarily, three sources of information provided by the text itself. These are the three cueing systems: semantic (meaning) cues, syntactic (structural) cues, and graphophonic (visual) cues (see glossary; see also Chapter 6: Guided Reading for a full discussion of the three cueing systems).

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### Sample End-of-Year Reading-Level Targets for Each Grade (using PM Benchmark Assessment, DRA, and Fountas and Pinnell text levels)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>PM Benchmark Assessment Text Level</th>
<th>Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) Text Level</th>
<th>Fountas and Pinnell (1996) Text Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senior Kindergarten</td>
<td>3–5</td>
<td>3–5</td>
<td>B–C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 1</td>
<td>15–16</td>
<td>16–18</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 2</td>
<td>21–22</td>
<td>24–28</td>
<td>L/M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 3</td>
<td>26–27</td>
<td>34–38</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The teacher should look at every error in the running record and ask, “What led the student to make that error?” For each error, the teacher should consider the following questions:

1. Does the error have a semantic (meaning) basis? Does the error make sense? Does the story line support the error? Does the illustration support the error? Did the student bring a different meaning from his own experience to the text? Consider the following examples:

   - ball or football
   - Daddy or Papa

2. Did the structure, syntax, or grammar of the sentence up to the point of error support the error? Does this student frequently make this kind of structural, syntactical, or grammatical error? Consider the following examples:

   - said or shouted
   - slept or yawned
   - runned or ran

3. Does the error have a graphophonic (visual) basis? Does it look right? Could visual cues have triggered, or do they support, the error? For example, did the student respond to the initial letter, the size of the word, an ending, a reversed word, and so on? Consider the following examples:

   - at or to
   - want or died
   - tied

The recording sheet should have an “analysis” column that is divided into two sub-columns (“Errors” or “E” and “Self-Corrections” or “SC” [see page 12.45]. Beside each error, in the E column of the recording sheet, the teacher should write the letters M S V to represent the three cueing systems: M (meaning/semantic), S (structure/syntactic), and V (visual/graphophonic). If the student’s error may have derived from one or more of these kinds of cues, the teacher circles the appropriate letter or letters. In determining the influence of the cueing systems, it is important to consider the text only up to the point where the student made the error. Although the teacher knows what comes next in the text, the student may not.

Example 1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>said</th>
<th>M S V</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>shouted</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In example 1, said makes sense in the story, sounds right structurally, and starts with the same letter as the correct word. The student may have used all three sources of information.

Example 2 [picture-supported response]:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>slept</th>
<th>M S V</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yawned</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In example 2, slept matches the picture of a yawning child with closed eyes, lying down. The word therefore makes sense. It sounds right in the sentence, but because there is no visual similarity between the words slept and yawned, the word slept does not look right. The student appears to have overlooked the visual cue.

Example 3:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>went</th>
<th>M S V</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>we</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In example 3, went does not make sense in the sentence, nor does it sound right syntactically. It did however, appear to look right to the student who is just learning high-frequency words.
Next, the teacher should look at the self-corrections. The teacher should first analyse the original error, and then ask what cueing systems the student appears to have used to correct the error. The cue or cues used by the student are recorded in the “Self-Correction” or SC column of the recording sheet (see page 12.45). Note that in the following examples, the E column analyses from the above examples are shown as well as the SC column analyses.

**Example 4:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>slept</th>
<th>SC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yowed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In example 4, when self-correcting, the student continued to use the meaning and structural cues but also recognized the visual cues [probably initial and final consonants].

**Example 5:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>went</th>
<th>SC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>we</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In example 5, the student appears to have paid attention to visual cues [both words begin with w-e] but makes an error [went] that does not have meaning within the context of the sentence and that does not fit the structure of the sentence. After reading further and taking into account the meaning and structure cues, the student realized that went did not make sense [M] or sound right [S], and self-corrected the error.

The next step is to consider the pattern of responses. During the analysis of running records, the teacher should not spend much time on individual errors, but instead should look for patterns, sources of information neglected, and so on, as follows:

- Does the student use two or three cues [sources of information] together? Consider the following example:
  
  house
  home

- Does the student cross-check an attempt by using other kinds of cues? Consider the following example:
  
  black
  [looks at picture] blue

- Does the student tend to rely primarily on one kind of cue? For example, does the student sound out and accept words that are meaningless or that may not be real words? Does the student make up text using pictures [meaning cues] to provide information about the story?

- If the teacher totals the number of errors and self-corrected errors that depend on each type of cue (e.g., How many times was M used? S? V?), is there a balance? Does the student tend to rely on one cueing system? Does the student tend to depend on M and S cues when he or she makes an error, and V cues to self-correct (or the reverse)?

At the top of the running record sheet, the teacher summarizes what he or she has learned from the analysis. The teacher then uses this information to determine future instructional practices. The goal is to help each student develop effective reading behaviours and reading skills and become a fluent reader.
Assessing the Reading Behaviours of Students Who Are Not Yet Reading Level-1 Texts by the End of Kindergarten or the Beginning of Grade 1

When young children are asked to read a book, they may invent the text completely. In these cases, for the purpose of taking a running record, the teacher can note “invented text” on the running record sheet and then record the invention. Did the student use full sentences? Correct grammar? Create a pattern? Label or give captions to the pictures?

Students who are unable to maintain the pattern in a simple level-1 or level-A patterned book can have very different understandings of text and the reading process. The teacher’s observations may need to be more extensive than those recorded for a more experienced reader, to ensure that teaching addresses these students’ needs.

If a student is unable to read a level-1 or level-A patterned book, the teacher should try the following:

1. Select a new level-1 or level-A patterned book. Read the first two pages, then ask the student to finish reading the book. Observe and record the student’s attempts.
   • Did the student hold the pattern for the rest of the book? If so, this student is probably aware that text is constant and predictable and is ready to learn about matching words in text with spoken words, high-frequency words, and so on.
   • Did the student hold the pattern briefly, then begin to invent text? (If so, see step 2.)
   • Did the student note the pattern at all? (If not, see step 2.)

2. If the student did not note the pattern or was unable to hold the pattern through the entire book, select a new book and read the entire book to the student. Then ask the student to read the book.
   • Did the student hold the pattern for the entire book? With support and more experiences with patterned books, the student will become ready to learn about matching words in text with spoken words, high-frequency words, and so on
   • Did the student hold the pattern briefly, then begin to invent text? (If so, see step 3.)
   • Did the student note the pattern at all? (If not, see step 3.)

3. If the student did not note the pattern or was unable to hold the pattern through the entire book, ask the student to draw a picture and to dictate a story to accompany it. After writing down and reading the student’s story, ask the student to read his or her own story.
   • Did the student repeat the story correctly? (If so, the student has some understanding that text is constant.)
   • Did the student invent a new story or change the original one?

The information gleaned from this assessment can be used to guide and plan future literacy activities for the individual student.

By analysing the reading behaviours of several students at this level, teachers can glean information that will help them plan new instruction for the whole class or a small group (e.g., for shared reading).