

Analysis of case study:

Jason's biggest area of need as a reader appears to be reading accuracy and comprehension of grade level text. According to the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, "Jason's performance revealed he is a fluent reader but struggles with reading comprehension". This would result in low self esteem as well as impact his grades in all subject areas. Jason lacks confidence in reading which is impeding on his overall school motivation. "He believes that his peers have superior reading skills and he does not believe that family/friends believe he is a good reader".

The unit that I would teach is taken from the Fulton County School District, 11th grade Social Studies Curriculum, based on Georgia Performance Standards. The unit is called "A Nation Divided" and covers the causes and effects of the Civil War. The summary/outline of this unit is as follows: "The Civil War is one of the key events that formed America's national character. This unit examines the causes of the conflict. It also provides a rich field for examining the role of the individual in shaping history. The unit concludes with a focus on political reconstruction of the south, the struggle between the presidency and congress, and assimilation of newly freed African-Americans into the nation." (fultonschools.schoolnet.com, pg. 1, 2011).

The standards addressed in this unit are:

- SSUSH8: The student will explain the relationship between growing north-south divisions and westward expansion.
- SSUSH9: The student will identify key events, issues, and individuals relating to the causes, course, and consequences of the Civil War.

- SSUSH10: The student will identify legal, political, and social dimensions of Reconstruction.

Students are expected to have certain knowledge/skills to be successful in this unit. Students should have a general understanding, and some experience with the concepts: conflict/compromise, state vs. federal jurisdiction, individual rights, and social interaction. By the end of the unit students should know the following ideas: “The failure to follow the principles of compromise and consensus often leads to conflict and division, fighting a war involves planning and sacrifice, individuals play a role in creating a nation, and the federal government plays a role in mandating political and social change.” (fultonschools.schoolnet.com, pg. 2, 2011).

Students will demonstrate acquired knowledge through multiple forms of formative and summative assessments. Students will need to have a good understanding of a large list of vocabulary words found in text book reading. They will also need to interpret meaning behind multiple comics/political cartoons from the Civil War Era. I will use many different activities to assess student learning in this unit. For example, students will hold a classroom discussion on the economics of slavery and why it flourished in the south vs. failed in the north. Students will complete graphic organizers of the major steps in the compromises over the slavery issue while reading from the text book. Students will also write a journal entry as if they were a slave in the south during the war. They will be asked how speeches like the ones given by Abraham Lincoln make them feel, supporting their writing with details from the reading.

I imagine that many of these assignments will be difficult for Jason due to his 8th-9th grade reading level as well as his low comprehension. Most of these assignments require students to not only read and comprehend the text, but interpret it in their own words using a verbal discussion with peers or a written journal/report.

The following instructional methods and strategies based on Jason’s needs and strengths will improve Jason’s overall motivation and achievement in social studies. The first method is incorporating technology by allowing Jason to listen to an audio version of the text book.

Jason's listening comprehension was Independent at grade 10, and instructional at grade 11. Therefore, if Jason is allowed to listen to the text book reading instead of reading it himself, he will have a better chance of comprehending the material. I will also use graphic organizers with Jason whenever he is reading or listening to social studies text material. I will specifically focus on graphic organizers containing main idea and supportive details. "Specific examination of comprehension skills shows that while he made many different kinds of errors, his neediest skill is the identification of main idea". The final strategy I will use with Jason is vocabulary building activities to improve his reading comprehension. "Unlocking and remembering difficult words in science is key to learning science concepts" (BPALI, pg. 100). Social studies concepts are similar to science because they too are rich with content based vocabulary and often difficult to comprehend without this knowledge. "A large vocabulary boosts comprehension, improves achievement, enhances thinking and communication, and promotes fluency." (BPALI, pg. 100). I would enhance text book reading with vocabulary building activities such as the "Guess and Check" activity on page 103 to improve Jason's vocabulary. This activity will encourage students to independently "look for clues in text to help discern the meaning of difficult words" (Brumley, 2002, pg. 103). I would also use the "Vocabulary Anchor" activity (pg. 105). "Vocabulary anchor sheets can help students connect the new to the known as they learn the important key words they don't know but need to know to understand the text." (Brumley, 2002, pg. 105).

Overall Jason seems to struggle the most with reading comprehension and accurately reading grade level text. With reading accommodations such as incorporating listening comprehension, vocabulary building activities, and graphic organizers Jason will be able to learn the social studies content without letting his reading challenges interfere. If Jason is given activities that he can feel successful at, his motivation will improve as well as his self esteem. By incorporating reading based activities in a social studies unit, Jason will get the most out of his class time, and have a bigger chance of improving his reading and catching up to his peers.

References:

Best Practices in Adolescent Literacy Instruction, Hinchman, Kathleen and Sheridan-Thomas, Heather. NY, New York, 2008.

www.fultonschools.schoolnet.com, *Student Achievement Management System*. Grade 11, Social Studies Curriculum. 1999-2011