

PD: How to Administer an Observation Survey of Early Literacy Development

By Jill Stevenson

(26th Sept 2011 – Susan Skarsholt, Margie Gilbert, Emma Francis)

This course was based on “An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement” by Marie M. Clay. It was run by Jill Stevenson of the Reading Recovery Association.

A very practical, hands-on, motivating course, complete with folder of key assessment templates and snippets from Marie M. Clay’s complementary books on the subject:

“What Changes in Writing can I See?”

“How Young Children Can Explore Writing”

“The Puzzling Code”

(These 3x publications were released shortly before the death of Marie M. Clay).

The course covered 5x key aspects:

*Concepts about Print

*Letter Identification

*Word Reading

*Writing Vocabulary

*Hearing and Recording the Sounds in Words

We also looked at the Burt and Running Records.

We watched a practical demonstration of an Observation Survey on a 6year old child from the local school, via a one-way mirror/microphone. This was taken by an experienced Reading Recovery teacher. We then participated as a group with that Reading Recovery teacher and Course Facilitator, analysing the assessment data obtained from this session.

The manual we used as a basis for this PD is a clear, easy to follow book which clearly outlines the processes required for the assessment activities. It is an essential component for analysis and used as a constant guide and reference for obtaining accurate data and standardising results.

In the afternoon we divided into 2x groups: experienced and less experienced, and did some practical sessions on taking and analysing Running Records.

We found Observation Surveys add essential data to standardised testing to better inform teachers. It follows a standardised process and specific procedures, giving teachers information on children from Year 1 to Year 3 (8 year old levels). It is an excellent way of raising red flags at a much earlier age, revealing hidden gaps often not noticed via ‘normal’ testing.

We suggest it would be a valuable addition to assessments currently used by Teachers of the Deaf.

Highlights for each of the 3x RTDs who attended this PD:

1. It is not so much what is right or wrong, or what the score is, as the How, What and Why of children’s reading abilities and strategies.
2. An enhanced awareness of other aspects of the Observation Survey such as Concepts about Print, Written Vocab, Observation Sheets, that result in more effective use of information gained.
3. Seeing the practical demonstration of administering an Observation Survey.