The Running Record

The following is information about the *Running Record*, one method of assessing a student's reading level, style, and proficiencies. The article was written for a booklet about Informal Reading Inventories, assembled by a committee of University School teachers. It includes the following discussions:

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What is a Running Record?

A Running Record, the cornerstone of a good first grade reading assessment program, is a kind of "map" of a student's reading. Coined by Marie Clay, the originator of Reading Recovery , the Running Record is similar to Yetta Goodman's system of Miscue Analysis. As a child reads a portion of a book, the teacher notes errors, self-corrections, repetitions, re-readings, hesitations, and appeals for help. The focus, first, is on what the child can do when reading, and, secondly, what the child needs to learn to do to become a better reader. Analysis of the results reveals the child's accuracy and self-correction rates; further analysis of the errors and self-corrections reveals the cueing systems (meaning, structure and visual) that the student uses and/or ignores. The Running Record allows the teacher to note and record the reading progress of a child over time. The Running Record also allows the teacher to determine if a given book, either a student's own choice, or a book considered for instruction or for independent reading, is at an appropriate level for him.

In order to be able to read and comprehend a book independently, a student should be able to read a book with at least 95% accuracy. With the support of an adult, or within the confines of a literature discussion group, a student will make the most progress reading at instructional level, accuracy rate of 90% - 95%. At that level, the student can read enough words to give him a context within which to solve reading problems, learn new words and understand the ideas. Below 90% accuracy (frustration level), a child is apt to miss too many words to comprehend fully. At frustration level a student is not able to employ enough reading strategies to experience success; too much energy is expended at the word level, and ideas are sacrificed.

Although word-perfect reading is not the goal, a child should be self-correcting at a rate that allows for good comprehension. A 1:2 self-correction rate is very good; that is, the student self-corrects half of all initial errors. At 1:5, the self-correction rate is poor; the student is not monitoring himself carefully enough. The teacher must take into account the type of errors made by the student in order to determine the importance of the errors. A child who misreads *a* for *the* , for example, is making a much less serious error than another child who misreads **house** for **horse.** The type of errors made by the student often gives the teacher a good indication of the student's comprehension of the passage or story.

Taking a Running Record

Learning to take a Running Record takes practice, as the teacher must become comfortable with writing and observing the student at the same time. With time, however, the process becomes second nature, and is a wonderful way of closely observing a student's reading. With first graders who read short books slowly enough to allow for the teacher to mark all the miscues, the teacher uses a Running Record form, a mostly blank paper with columns for analyzing errors and self-corrections. For older students, who read too quickly to allow for easy note-taking, it is easier to xerox pages from several books at each grade level. In this way the teacher can make all the notations right on the paper, much faster than on a traditional Running Record. The teacher should, as the student reads, note the strategies and error patterns used by the student while reading.

How to Take a Running Record

As the Running Record is an assessment tool, it is not a time for instruction. The teacher's role is passive, and the reader should be given at least five seconds to think before the teacher gives him the word. If the child appeals for help, the teacher marks *A* above the word, and a *T* below, if she tells him the word. If the student appeals for help too often, the teacher may say "you try that" at first, and give help if the student is unable to proceed. If the reader loses his sense of the story and gets mixed up, the teacher may say "Try that again," noting with **TTA** and putting brackets around the passage that is being repeated. The TTA response is counted as a single error, and the second reading, not the first, is counted.

The teacher places a check on the paper for each correctly-read word, and notes any errors above the correct word. When using a blank Running Record form the teacher places the row of checks to correspond with the lines of text in the book being read. It is important to write the page number in the left-hand column and separate the pages with a short line, to facilitate finding the place in the book later if clarification is necessary.

Some common teachers' notations

student's error ***correct word***	*teacher's notation of error*
T	*told (teacher gave word)*
SC	self-correct
-	skipped word
^	inserted word
TTA	"try that again"
R	repetition
← R	repetition to a starting point
W	wait (student hesitated awhile before reading correct word)
A	appeal (student asked for help

The teacher notes each error and self-correction. Misread words, but not self-corrections or repetitions, are counted as errors. If the child misreads a proper name in a story, the error is noted one time only and not counted on succeeding errors. Contractions are counted as one error, rather than two. The teacher determines the error and self-correction rates by dividing the total number of words by the number of errors; 10 errors in 100 words is computed as 1:10 (one error in every ten words) and translated into a percentage of accuracy, 90%. It is helpful to keep a chart handy which easily converts the error rate into a percentage. To figure the self-correction rate, add the errors and self-corrections together, and divide by the number of self-corrections. A student who makes three errors and three self-corrections has a 1:2 self-correction rate (3 + 3 ÷ 3). Establishing the self-correction rate can be done quickly and approximately. If the number of self-corrections is approximately 1/2 the number of errors, the rate is 1:3. If the number of self-corrections is approximately 1/3 the number of errors, the rate is 1:4, and so forth. The exact mathematical equivalent is not so important as is the awareness of how much self-monitoring is occurring. Not figured into the percentages but equally important are notes about the student's reading behaviors. The margins and bottom of the Running Record sheet are places to make note of the child's fluency, flexibility, interest, independence, self-awareness, risk-taking, enjoyment, and any other pertinent observations.

Analyzing the Running Record

Later the teacher analyzes the errors and self-corrections as **M, S,** or **V** (Meaning, Structure, Visual), aiding her understanding of the cueing systems the student relies on when reading. **Meaning** cues are generally noted in a first grade reader who looks at the picture to help him determine the correct word. **Structure** cues involve syntax, and are generally noted in the student who re-reads a passage to determine what sounds like. Finally, **Visual** cues, also called "graphophonics" cues, are visible when a student analyzes a word phonetically or attempts to recall it from prior experience.

In analyzing the errors and self-corrections using **MSV**, the teacher will begin to see patterns. The student may rely consistently on one cueing system to read, at the expense of the other two, or may have begun to rely on more than one. One student may rely on the visual cueing system, ignoring Meaning as he "whacks and hacks" at words. Another student may rely on meaning and read words which look visually nothing like those on the page but which make sense within the context of the sentence. Still another may use Structure and Meaning initially, but monitor himself and self-correct using the visual cueing system. Self-monitoring and cross-

checking are strategies used regularly by good readers and are to be encouraged. They lead to good comprehension and independence in reading. The goal for each teacher should be to help each child become a balanced reader, making use of many strategies and cueing systems, self-monitoring as he does so.

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updated 10/99

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