Observation list “Good skills in reading Braille”

Name student: Date:

***Before reading:***

The student uses a rubber pad, if necessary. (A rubber pad is required when reading a single paper.)/Yes/No/

The chair has the right height (the feet need support)./Yes/No/

The table has the right height (the student's elbows should be a little higher than the top of the desk or table being used). /Yes/No/

A finger warming up has been done before beginning./Yes/No/

The student orientates himself with a flat hand across the page./Yes/No/

***Sitting position while reading:***

The student sits straight up /Yes/No/

The book is well-positioned (body centered)/Yes/No/

The shoulders are relaxed/Yes/No/

The elbows are relaxed and positioned down to the body/Yes/No/

Both feet are next to each other/Yes/No/

***Reading technique:***

The index fingers are parallel to each other/Yes/No/

The student uses six fingers (or eight) horizontal on one line/Yes/No/

The fingers are slightly bended /Yes/No/

Thumbs are downwards/Yes/No/

The student shows no vertically regressive hand movements /Yes/No/

The student uses very little pressure when touching the Braille dots. The touch is adequate. (The fingertips should not be white while reading)/Yes/No/

On demand, the student can read a text with only the right hand /Yes/No/

On demand, the student can read a text with only the left hand /Yes/No/

The left hand reads half of the line, the right hand takes over in a fluent movement./Yes/No/

The student utilizes a two handed reading technique in which the left hand locates the beginning of the next line, while the right hand finishes reading the previous line. /Yes/No/

The student is aware of the importance of a good reading technique to improve the reading speed/Yes/No/

*Put a cross in the empty squares where the answer was a “no” and formulate goals*

p.s. The goals for the coming period must have been discussed with the student.

**Goals for the coming period:**

**1**

**2**

**3**

**Guidelines for teaching**

Compiled by Gyntha Goertz, Royal Dutch Visio

 *‘Touch in conjunction with movements of the two hands, can achieve almost the same facility and speed as visual reading’*. (Millar, S 2008)

Before starting with Braille, readers should pay much attention to adopt a proper position when reading and writing. By allowing the pupil to practise this every day, you make the pupil aware of his attitude so that he will make it a habit to check his posture. Apart from the fact that an incorrect attitude can also cause fatigue or pain complaints, it turns out that a good reading posture can also prevent mistakes while reading Braille. These are mistakes with regard to position (for example, exchanging b for e); they can occur if the pupil constantly adopts the same attitude in relation to the material to be read (body, arm, hands). The height of the table and chair should be adjusted to the pupil’s length. For more sensitivity in the fingers, the hands should be warm. Encourage the child to use both hands while reading.

**Problems of insufficient knowledge of Braille letters and guidelines for the teaching of Braille reading technique**

**Observation:**

The student has problems with letters which are reversals of another letter: e/i j/ h w/r f/d

**Guidelines for the teaching of Braille reading technique**

* Be aware that the elbows hang aside the body. When the elbow moves sideways than the fingertip rotates and will increase errors.
* Offer exercises with flash letters. Encourage the movements of the hands from left to right
* For those who became blind later in life: refer to the visual image of the letters (the dots of f, en j in Braille have agreement with the form in black print.

**Observation:**

The pupil does not notice the lower dots and makes mistakes in

o (student reads e)

l (student reads b)

p (student reads f )

**Guidelines for the teaching of Braille reading technique**

* Encourage a reading technique in which the fingers slightly flatter on paper.
* Let each line of text be followed by a blank line.

**Observation:**

The student is rubbing in a vertical manner

**Guidelines for the teaching of Braille reading technique**

* “Rubbing” should not be accepted. Reading Braille requires movement forward, not up and down. Each vertical movement must be prevented since this will seriously delay the reading speed in a later phase. If a word or letter is not recognised, do not make an up-down movement (this is called ”rubbing”). In that case the fingers must go back again and another attempt must be made.
* Encourage to use the most sensitive part of the fingertips, the ball of the fingers.
* Practice in reading rhyming words
* Select texts that are at students' instructional or easier reading level.
* Offer exercises with flash letters and flash words in a line
* Encourage rereading to develop the automatic recognition of simple words
* Let each line of text be followed by a blank line.

**Problems in advanced reading and Guidelines for the teaching of Braille reading technique**

**Observation:**

The index fingers are not parallel to each other in the middle of the line

**Guidelines for the teaching of Braille reading technique**

* Be aware that the elbows are placed beside the body. The elbows are relaxed and positioned down to the body, the forefingers will go stand by itself in the correct position.
* Explanations for children: the index fingers are in love and want to hug each other, in the middle of the line.

**Observation:**

The student reads only with index finger(s)

**Guidelines for the teaching of Braille reading technique**

* Teach in the most deliberate way: Provide awareness, otherwise slow reading will remain. Explain: the forefingers are the primary reading fingers and the middle and third fingers help to keep place on the line and increase speed,
* Make sure the other fingers in learning Braille always be at or above the line. Do not let the other fingers make a fist. The other fingers are required to be able to follow the line and to orient in the beginning and the end of the line.
* Use a long line length to give the opportunity to develop the skill of two handed reading.
* Set goals with the student: at what lessons/ length of exercising / at what lessons do you apply reading with more fingers.
* The ultimate goal is: read with 3 fingers of each hand.

**Observation:**

The student uses too much pressure while reading (fingertips are white)

**Guidelines for the teaching of Braille reading technique**

Explain: Keep your touch light. The touch must be adequate: tickle the dots. The fingertips should not be white while reading. Let the student brush his fingers across the skin of the hand. He will feel the texture of the skin and hairs, compare it with Braille. Explain: Braille requires a light touch. Improve the touch sensitivity.

**Observation:**

The student reads with one hand and is not able to read a text with the other hand.

**Guidelines for the teaching of Braille reading technique**

* Teach in the most deliberate way: For the optimal reading technique it is necessary that both hands can read independently. Provide awareness, otherwise slow reading will remain.
* The first step is to make the weaker hand follow the other hand
* Make arrangements for transition to the new line (see below the item about newline)
* Use a rubber pad so the page will not shift.
* Train the weak reading-hand. Start with simple reading exercises (flashwords between a line, rhyming words in a row from left to right)
* Determine achievable goals for improvement and regularly evaluate.

**Observation:**

Problems with transition between lines

* There is no take over in the middle of the line from the left to the right hand in a fluent movement.
* The left hand doesn’t locate the beginning of the next line, while the right hand finishes reading the previous line.

**Guidelines for the teaching of Braille reading technique** .

1. Observe whether the motor skills are sufficiently developed to perform these independent movements. This skill is related to the development of lateralization and dominance. Realize that different movements of the hands, can only be learned at a minimum age of 8 or 9 years. Since the motor skills are not sufficient yet, let the child read with both hands together. Meanwhile it is important to determine which hand is the dominant hand.
2. Is the motor sufficiently developed (age above 8 years), realize that a transition of reading hand in the middle of the line is not always (immediately) achievable.

It is always important to use both hands, even if one is less sensitive. It is important to determine which hand is the dominant hand.

Make the hand you are trying to strengthen read at least one word at the beginning or end of the line. Train de weaker hand each day a few minutes by reading more simple exercises (in the level of the weaker hand).

The final goal is try to bring the index fingers together somewhere in the middle of the line, letting the right hand finish while the left hand returns to the left margin to locate and begin the new line.

1. For those who became blind at a later age: teach the take-over technique from beginning: The student utilizes a two handed reading technique in which the left hand locates the beginning of the next line, while the right hand finishes reading the previous line. The two hands read independently from the start of learning Braille.
* Make exercises to switch hands halfway line. Use a sign as recognition (dot 2,4,6 and 1,3,5) in the middle of the line as a mark (a hole) to switch hands.
* Reading of rhyming words and poetry facilitates fluent movements. Make agreements with the student how many words will be read by the weaker hand.
* Determine intermediate goals along with the pupil. Evaluate the goals .

**Observation:**

The reading has a slow speed.

**Guidelines for the teaching of Braille reading technique**

* For more sensitivity in the fingers, the hands should be warm
* The student needs access to a wide variety of motivating reading materials.
* Encourage reading with both hands
* As many fingers as possible on the line.
* Use the take over technique and both hands read independently.
* Use a light pressure
* Make use of echo reading, reading together, or taking turns reading.
* Make progress clear to student (use a stopwatch. (‘you can improve your record’)
* Expect students to reread exercises until they achieve fluency
* Encourage daily reading at home

**Observation:**

The student is tired quickly or has pain in the elbow

 **Guidelines for the teaching of Braille reading technique**

* Beware of RSI !
* Observe the reading and sitting position (elbows relaxed hanging down and may not move along while reading!)
* Check the height of the table top and seat or put the book on your lap.
* Take time to relax fingers and shoulders.
* Choose alternate exercises (flashwords, rhyme words, short text)
* Read regularly for short periods

**Effective teacher skills:**

* Awareness of the optimal reading technique by teacher and student. Teacher and Braille students realize that it is never too late to improve the reading technique.
* Create high and positive shared expectations for learning Braille.
* Observing and analyzing data

Establish goals per pupil depending on the age and possibilities (choose motivating reading materials)

* Effective and efficient teaching
* Interaction between teacher and child/student

Express agreement on the operating point during the reading lesson. (Do not give unsolicited physical help, as correcting elbows or shoulders.)

Feedback at each Braille lesson. Teachers need to seek feedback on their practice from both students and colleagues.

Let the pupil express his/ her goals for the coming Braille lessons.

The student can make a note of his / her duty point. The more the student becomes his own teacher the more successful the achievement outcomes.

Archer, AL & Hughes, C.A. (2011). Explicit instruction: Effective and efficient teaching. The Guilford Press.

Ford S. & Waldorf R. (1996) *Braille Reading Speed*. [*https://nfb.org/Images/nfb/Publications/bm/bm99/bm990604.htm*](https://nfb.org/Images/nfb/Publications/bm/bm99/bm990604.htm)

Hattie, J. (2009) *Visible learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement.* Routledge

Harinck, F. (2006) *Basisprincipes praktijkonderzoek.* Garant

Heijkant, C. van den en Wegen, R. van der (2000) *De klas in beeld.* Esstede

Lamb. G. (1996) *Beginning Braille: a whole Language-based strategy*. Journal of Visual Impairment & blindness may/ june 1996

Millar, S. (1997*). Reading by touch*. Routledge.

Millar, S. (2008) *Space and Sense*. Psychologie Press.

Mitchell, D. (2014) *What really works in Special and Inclusive Education. Using Evidence-Based Teaching Strategies.* Routledge

Pierce, B. & Cheadle, B. (2005). *The world under my fingers, personal reflections on Braille.* National Federation of the blind

Withagen, A. en Janssen, N. (2003) *Tactiel profiel*. Visio