

Direct Academic Assessment

Name: _____ **Chronological Age:** 9 years, 1 month
Date of Birth: 28 October 1994 **Grade:** 3
Date: 17 November 2003 **School:** _____

Reason for Referral:

XXX was referred for evaluation due to academic difficulties in the areas of reading decoding, math computation, and written expression, and to assist these examiners in gaining experience in direct assessment. Results will be used to determine instructional placement and recommendations.

Background Information:

XXX is currently a student at XXX Elementary School in XXX, PA, where she attends third grade. Her third grade teacher referred her for testing because of academic difficulties in the areas of reading decoding, math computation, and expressing thoughts in written form. Her teachers do not report any social or behavioral adjustment problems that could interfere with her academic progress.

Assessment Methods:

- ❖ Review of records
- ❖ Teacher Interview
- ❖ Direct Observations
- ❖ Student Interview
- ❖ Direct Assessment: Reading, Math, and Written Expression

Assessment Results:

Reading

Teacher Interview. According to her teacher, XXX's reading curriculum is a balanced series, with equal emphasis placed on teaching decoding skills and the whole language approach to reading. XXX is currently working in New Horizons, a book in the third grade edition of Harcourt, Brace, & Jovanovich reading series. This class also utilizes trade books for reading instruction. Reading instruction occurs for 90 minutes per day. Lessons begin in a large group, teacher-directed setting, and move to flexible small-group instruction. Students are required to work on independent assignments while the teacher works with small groups. Time is also provided for independent reading and library visits. XXX also receives remedial services for 20 minutes per day in a small group setting. The teacher utilizes daily grades as a contingency for accuracy, with parent contact following any five incomplete assignments.

XXX's teacher estimated her oral reading skills to be somewhat weaker than those of her reading group members, and significantly weaker than those of her classmates. With regard to word attack, XXX often guesses at unfamiliar words, and will attempt to sound words out if encouraged. Her sight vocabulary and reading comprehension were reported to be somewhat below the average ability levels of the class. On a brief behavioral rating scale completed by the teacher, XXX was rated as having difficulty with oral reading, completing seatwork accurately and on time, and giving correct answers when called upon when compared to other students in her class.

Direct Observation. A structured observation code, the Behavioral Observation of Students in Schools (BOSS) was used to sample XXX's behavior during reading. Data were collected for fifteen minutes during teacher-directed reading instruction. Comparison data were also obtained by using a randomly selected peer once every minute. During the observation, XXX was engaged for 87% and off-task 13% of the observed time. In contrast, the peer was on-task for 100% of the observed intervals. Of note is the fact that XXX spent most of

her on-task time passively engaged (54%), while her peers were mostly actively engaged (75%) during this observation. XXX's percentage of active engaged time (33%) suggests that she was actively engaged at a far lower rate than her peers (75%). The majority of XXX's off-task behavior was passive in nature, rather than verbal or motor.

Student Interview. We interviewed XXX to learn more about her perceptions of reading in general. Results suggested that XX enjoys reading for pleasure, particularly books in the *Judy Moody*, *Amber Brown*, and *Junie B. Jones* series of children's literature. These books are illustrated and are targeted at children in the grades 2-4 range. She feels that reading, both in school and at home, "comes easy" to her. She enjoys her reading class at school, and feels that she generally understands what she is expected to do in class.

Direct Assessment. Reading probes at the third grade level were administered to assess reading fluency. XXX's median score was 72 words correct per minute, which indicates an instructional learning level. Observation noted that XXX attempted to sound out unfamiliar words, which indicates a systematic approach to decoding. Difficulty was noted with pronunciation of the /R/ sound; SM consistently pronounced it with a /W/ sound.

Screening for reading comprehension at the third grade level allowed XXX to correctly answer 83% of the questions correctly (5 out of 6). Further curriculum-based evaluation in this area using similar reading prompts found that while XXX could elicit meaning from a fourth grade text with 100% accuracy, her median score at this level was 59 words correct per minute, which indicates a frustrational learning level. These results suggest that XXX is appropriately placed in her reading curriculum, and is reading on grade level.

Mathematics

Teacher Interview. XXX's teacher indicated that she is currently placed in the third grade edition of the Houghton-Mifflin Series. Fifty minutes are allotted per day for mathematics instruction. The daily lesson is taught to the entire class via direct instruction for 20-30 minutes, followed by independent practice. XXX does not receive remedial instruction in mathematics, although remediation and enrichment services are offered in the "math lab." The contingencies for accuracy and completion are consistent with the aforementioned contingency policies in reading. According to her teacher, XXX has specific difficulty with computation and does not know basic facts, which affects her accuracy. Abstract concepts such as time and measurement also present XXX with difficulty.

XXX's teacher completed a brief behavioral evaluation, on which he reported most of her behavior as "satisfactory," with the exception of encouraging others to participate in a cooperative learning setting.

Direct Observation. A fifteen-minute observation was conducted using the BOSS in XXX's math class. In this observation, teacher-directed instruction only accounted for 67% of the time (the remainder was independent seatwork time). Comparison data were collected by using randomly selected peers once per minute.

Results indicate that XXX's level of engagement was better than that of her peers. She was engaged for 92% of the observed time (52% actively, 40% passively), while her peers were engaged only 83% of the observed time (50% actively, 33% passively). XXX's off-task time was primarily spent talking.

Student Interview. XXX was interviewed about her likes and dislikes in the areas of mathematics. She enjoys adding, subtracting, and solving word problems. She dislikes problems dealing with money, although she was unable to articulate why she feels that way. During the interview (which took place post-assessment), XXX indicated that her class had not yet covered multiplication or division. Overall, her attitude toward math as a class is indifferent, though given the choice, she prefers reading class.

Direct Assessment. Based upon the teacher report, curriculum-based assessment was started at the third grade level with a multiple-skill probe designed to evaluate her computation skills. A specific skill deficit was noted in that XXX did not complete any multiplication or division problems, focusing only on addition and

subtraction. While XXX completed the addition and subtraction problems with no errors (100% accuracy and with all digits correct), her inability to complete the multiplication and division problems brought her overall scores to 5 digits correct per minute with 32% accuracy. Her lack of answers for multiplication and division also provided a score of 5 errors per minute. These scores all indicate a frustrational learning level.

Written Expression

Teacher Interview. XXX's writing teacher indicated that most of the writing assignments in the class come in the form of daily journals and Writer's Workshop, which emphasizes the writing process. XXX is reported to have great difficulty formulating and expressing thoughts in writing, and in writing stories of adequate length and depth. However, XXX is capable of expressing herself and employing creativity when responding verbally to prompts. In terms of mechanics, XXX's capitalization, punctuation, grammar, and handwriting legibility are all reported to be poor in relation to her peers. XXX has made satisfactory progress on her weekly spelling tests.

Direct Observation. Data were collected using the BOSS over a fifteen-minute period of time in XXX's writing class. A peer was selected at random once every minute to provide comparison data. In this observation period, the teacher provided instruction only 25% of the observed time; the rest was spent on independent work. XXX was actively engaged for 83% of the observed time, while her randomly selected peers were engaged 100% of the time.

XXX was actively engaged for 54% of the observation period, while her peers were actively engaged 75% of the time. SM's level of passive engagement (29%) was slightly higher than that of her peers (25%). XXX also registered a significant number of off-task behaviors (10 motor, 10 verbal, and 4 passive off-task behaviors) in a period during which her peers exhibited none. As in reading class, XXX seems far less actively engaged in the learning process than her peers.

Student Interview. When asked about her level of interest in writing, XXX responded with great enthusiasm for the subject. She often writes for pleasure, and takes great pride in telling about her "chapter stories," which she writes on a fairly regular basis.

Direct Assessment. Administration of three writing probes found XXX's median score of 27 correct word sequences consistent with the average score for third graders. Her spelling accuracy was 97%, which is consistent with her ability to successfully create correct word sequences. Behavioral observation noted that these scores both come from the same probe, during which XXX announced she was "finished" at 2 minutes, 15 seconds; therefore, raw scores and percentages for this probe are pro-rated. Additionally, XXX wrote steadily after taking the initial 30 seconds to think about her topic, and spoke quietly to herself as she wrote.

Further examination of the writing samples showed handwriting to be legible, with a minimum of misspelled words and no punctuation errors. Verb tense agreement in one sample was the only grammatical error noted. These results do not support the teacher's initial report.

Conclusions:

XXX, a nine-year-old third grade student, was referred for evaluation due to academic difficulties in the areas of reading decoding, math computation, and written expression, and to assist these examiners in gaining experience in direct assessment.

In reading, XXX is placed in the instructional range at the third grade level based upon reading fluency. Reading comprehension skills were also deemed to be adequate. The data does not support the teacher's initial report of difficulty with reading decoding skills, although the examiners noted an area of concern in XXX's inability to correctly pronounce the /R/ sound.

XXX's teacher identified mathematical computation as an area of concern. While her scores of 5 digits correct per minute, 5 errors per minute, and only 32% accuracy place XXX in the frustrational range, it must be noted that the third grade multiple skills probe consists of addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division problems. XXX has not yet learned multiplication or division in school, so she was unable to complete the probe to reflect her true ability due to a specific skill deficit. Closer examination of XXX's results show that she was able to solve addition and subtraction problems with 100% accuracy. Despite the results of the probe, XXX appears to be functioning on or above grade level in the area of mathematics, and the teacher's initial report is not supported by analysis of the data. We recommend administering single-skill probes in the areas of subtraction and addition in order to assess fluency in those specific areas.

In the area of written expression, XXX's ability to form correct word sequences was consistent with that expected of the average third grader (27 sequences per minute). Again, the teacher's concerns with regard to written expression were not supported by test results, as no serious problems with legibility, mechanics, or grammar were noted.

Direct observations sampled XXX's behavior across academic areas. XXX was engaged adequately, but should be more actively engaged in the learning process in the areas of reading and writing. XXX tends to be extremely talkative when off-task in math and writing classes.

Recommendations:

Reading

1. Placement in reading at the third-grade level is appropriate based on her oral reading rate.
2. Remedial small-group services for reading are not deemed necessary by these test results.
3. X should be referred to the building's speech therapist for further evaluation.

Mathematics

1. Administer single-skill probes in addition and subtraction to substantiate level of fluency.
2. After multiplication and division units have been taught, administer single-skill probes in those areas to monitor progress, bi-weekly or at teacher discretion.

Written Expression

1. No remediation is deemed necessary at this time.
2. For enrichment purposes, XXX should be encouraged to continue writing stories on her own. Reinforcement from her teacher in any form (perhaps demonstrating an interest in reading them, and providing verbal feedback) would likely encourage XXX to write more, thereby developing the skills and creativity needed for school assignments.

This examiner remains available for further assistance in the development of these recommendations and to assist with intervention planning and implementation.

Damian N. Bariexca
Teacher of English
School Psychology Graduate Student