

Rubric/Guidelines: Case Study

The purpose of this assignment and rubric is to help you (a) gain experience in relation to observations of individuals with ASD, (b) develop an understanding of the referral process according to state guidelines of ASD eligibility, and (c) summarize the information you have obtained from the classroom observations. Total points for the case study is 30.

(You may choose to do (a) two, 30 minute observations, (b) three, 20 minute observations, or (c) four, 15 minute observations)

Observer's name: Andrea Schneider
Date: 2-10-11 Time Started: 10:30 Time Ended: 11:15
Location: Kinetics and Special Education classroom and large group calendar time Activity: Throwing skills (kinetics)

Observer's name: Andrea Schneider
Date: 2-14-11 Time Started: 2:00 Time Ended: 2:45
Location: General Education classroom Activity: Valentine party and bingo game

1. Provide background information about the student you observed (e.g., grade, gender, family background, medical history, academic achievements, etc. – do NOT provide identifying information such as real name). (3 pts)

Joseph (name changed to protect student) is a male, second grade student. He lives with his mother and older brother (9th grade). He is very close with his Nana (grandmother) as well. The family spends almost all of their time together. All 3 are involved in a karate class, visit the library weekly, and errands are taken care of as a family as well. Joseph is very close to his brother and seems to look up to him as a role model. Joseph's mother was in a bad car accident when she was in high school and some of the effects of this accident impact the family. For example, mom does not always understand what educators are sharing with her. Multiple times we have shared that her son is not performing at grade level but she still expects us to teach him the 2nd grade curriculum even though he's not ready. She will then come to us and is upset that he can't read well. This situation brings on some difficulty in best servicing Joseph. As for Joseph, the only medical condition he has is asthma. This does not seem to affect him much throughout the school year but when needed he uses an inhaler and occasionally a breathing treatment.

Academically, Joseph really struggles. He moved into my district at the beginning of last school year (2009-2010) as a first grader. At this time we did not do any psychological testing because he already had an ASD eligibility which would get him all the special education services he might need. As the year went on we noticed that he was much lower than we had originally anticipated. At the start of the year, he looked much like some of the lower achieving first graders but as his peers progressed, he did not make the gains we had hoped. He started to show some coping skills such as copying others behaviors and others work in order to get by. When this topic was approached with mom, she did not see the same things at home and did not want to back away from the amount of time that he was in general education (3 hours in the a.m.). This

year, the gap between Joseph and his peers has become too large and the ASD team is concerned with his lack of success in general education. Joseph currently knows all his letters and letter sounds. He can read 35 sight words. He is able to add single digit numbers and is beginning to complete some two digit addition and single digit subtraction. Joseph struggles to transfer his skills into other more advanced tasks. For instance, when asked to complete a writing task, he does not hear the sounds stretched out in a word and make the connection between what he hears and what letter corresponds with it. He has skills, he just does not yet know how to generalize them into other situations.

2. Briefly summarize any relevant information obtained from conversations or interviews with the student's teacher (e.g., general educator, special educator, etc.), support staff (e.g., paraprofessional) or any professional who provides ancillary services (e.g., speech/language therapist, physical therapist, etc.). (4 pts)

While in general education Joseph has support from a paraprofessional. The paraprofessional that works with Joseph in the general education setting provides support to him when needed but also has high expectations for him to become independent in these settings. Modifications are provided for Joseph so that he is provided with work that suit his skills and provide him with successful situations. His paraprofessional has shared with me that he does not seem to have the confidence to complete any work he is given. He immediately slips into "I can't" mode when he does not feel support from an adult.

His second grade teacher shared that at times he presents as a low achieving second grader much like those who are in his second grade class. However, she feels like he is lost most of the time. Although he can verbally state the routines and expectations in the classroom, he chooses not to follow them. Most of the time he will tattle on his peers who are not following the expectations although he is also one of the first to "forget" the expectations. For example, he will tell the teacher that a student is not doing his work while he is not doing his work either. He will also tell students to stop talking when they're not supposed to be. He likes to be "in charge" in the classroom even though he knows the teacher is the one who is "in charge" in the classroom.

The OT and SLP that work with Joseph have also shared that he often corrects other students rather than focusing on the task he is to be completing. He is always looking for a distraction to avoid doing the work that is expected of him. Most recently, the OT shared that during her 30 minutes with him, he sat and looked around the room and often looked "dazed" while just sitting and doing nothing. When she said his name to refocus him to his task he complained that she scared him when she said his name. To her, this seemed like just another excuse to not do his work.

3. Describe the student's behaviors in detail. Please include all domains relevant to ASD eligibility (e.g., communicative acts, social skills, repetitive/challenging behaviors, etc.). (6 pts)

During my observation time I noticed a number of ASD characteristics. Since my school district is not the one who found him eligible as a student with ASD, I found this experience very helpful

in best meeting his needs. The following describes characteristics of ASD that Joseph presents on a daily basis.

Communication: Joseph does not have the typical skills of communication that those of his same developmental age peers have. He often does not make eye contact with the person he is talking to. When speaking with someone he does not reciprocate the conversation. It is typically a very one sided conversation with Joseph discussing items of interest to him and somehow changing subjects over to what he knows and is interested in rather than trying to share the same topic with the other person. When he has a problem, he does not understand how to approach an adult or another peer to discuss the problem. This also occurs when Joseph needs help. He does know to go to an adult when someone is doing something they are not supposed to be doing but this often is a tattling skill, not an emergency that an adult NEEDS to know about.

Social Skills: Joseph often does not understand when a peer is upset with him. He does understand that when an adult is upset with him if the adult verbally shares with him that they are unhappy. He does not read people's faces. He does not see the cues that peers give him when they are unhappy, annoyed, or mad at him. When he wants to play with other students, Joseph will often walk over to them and hang around them but never actually approach them in a way that they understand he wants to play with them. Typically, Joseph is happy with just being in the same area as his peers and not necessarily playing WITH them.

Stereotypical/Repetitive Behaviors: Joseph has some typical behaviors of a student with ASD but not repetitive behaviors that are typical such as hand flapping or spinning. A behavior that stands out the most with Joseph in this area is the preoccupation with one interest. Joseph will discuss the same two topics. These topics always seem to be the interest for his writing as well as answers to most questions asked throughout the day. If he does not know the answer to a given question he will start talking about ATA (karate) or a Japanese anime cartoon. He also chooses to draw about these two topics as well. There are no adults or peers in my classroom that understand these two topics to the extent that he does so it is difficult to help him in venting a few minutes about these topics each day. He often times has to be redirected to the given topic.

4. Provide your decision and rationale for whether or not the student meets eligibility for ASD. Please refer to the syllabus and note that this is never an individual decision – this assignment is just to give you practice in relation to observations and awareness of the eligibility criteria. (Refer to the form provided on ANGEL). (5 pts)

On the eligibility form there is a list of requirements that must be true to determine an eligibility of ASD. Joseph has met the required areas as stated below:

- Joseph has a lifelong developmental disability.
- Joseph's disorder affects his educational performance in academics, behavior, and socially.
- Reciprocal social interactions in at least 2 areas:
 - Marked impairment in the use of multiple non-verbal behaviors (eye to eye gaze, facial expression, and gestures): Joseph struggles to make eye contact

when some is talking to him or when he is talking to somebody. This is something his mother has tried to work on with him for a very long time. She constantly reminds him to look her or the person he's talking to in the eyes.

- Failure to develop peer relationships appropriate to developmental level: Joseph does not have any true friends. When asked who his friends are he will list a few students in his class but he does not seem to play with them or even talk to them in class or at recess. He will follow students around and copy what they are doing but there is no conversation that happens during this time.
- Marked impairment in spontaneous seeking to share enjoyment, interests with other people: Joseph will often bring up his interests randomly during unrelated times but never seems to want to learn about or listen to others about their interests or enjoyment. Joseph is very much concerned with what he likes and what he knows but shows little to no interest in others.
- Marked impairment in the areas of social or emotional reciprocity
- Demonstrates qualitative impairments in communication (at least 1 area):
 - Marked impairment in pragmatics or in ability to initiate, sustain, or engage in reciprocal conversations with others: Joseph's conversations with peers or teachers are very one-sided. He often will not reciprocate. There will be an initiation by a peer/adult and he may answer one time but will not continue to respond beyond one response.
 - Lack of varied, spontaneous make-believe play or social imitative play appropriate to developmental level
- Demonstrates restricted, repetitive, and stereotypical behaviors (at least 1 area):
 - Encompassing preoccupation with 1 or more stereotyped and restricted patterns of interest that is abnormal in intensity or focus: Joseph is interested in two main topics. He talks very intensely about his ATA class. He likes karate and loves to talk about it and talk to his peers about it even if they are not interested in hearing it. He is also super excited about anime. I had no idea what anime was until he started talking about it and his mother had to share with me what it was. His older brother watches a Japanese anime cartoon and this is where the interest has come from. Again, he will talk about this to anybody even if they show no interest.
- Does not have primary diagnosis of schizophrenia or emotional impairment
- Disability necessitates special education or related services, or both
- Disability is not due to lack of instruction in reading, including the essential components of reading instruction, lack of instruction in math, or limited English proficiency.

5. Are any interventions being utilized to address the student's atypical/challenging behavior or skill deficits? Please describe all aspects of the interventions. (3 pts)

Joseph currently has a “command central” that he takes with him to his second grade class. This provides him with a personal schedule so he knows what tasks are being completed throughout his morning while he is with his second grade peers. He is reminded to check his schedule as he does not yet use it independently. This schedule provides a more specifically detailed schedule for him rather than using the general classroom schedule that is posted on the wall. For his Daily 5 work (which most students know the routine) he has a mini-schedule that helps him schedule his time and know which activities need to be completed within the hour of Daily 5 time. In the special education classroom he uses the classroom schedule that is posted on the wall.

Joseph has had a history of talking out of turn. To help remind him not to talk out, he is given a card with a one on it as a warning to raise his hand before talking. If he does it again, he gets a card with a two on it and is removed from the group to take a break. His break consists of walking down the hall by himself to get him moving and out of the overwhelming feelings he might be having in class. After he takes his break, he reads a social story with his paraprofessional. This social story is all about raising his hand to talk, how others feel when he interrupts, the expectations in the classroom, and provides him with suggestions on what to do if he begins to feel the need to talk out or to take a break.

The OT has set up a sensory break for him each morning. Due to his difficulty in transitioning into the general education classroom in the morning, he takes his break before going to second grade. During this break, he works on wall pushups, squeezing and stretching putty, deep breathing, and stomping/marching.

6. Do you feel the interventions are appropriate and/or effective? Please explain and discuss. (3 pts)

The interventions that are in place at this time seem to be working for Joseph. During the second grade Daily 5 time he seems to be able to follow his routine much better when he has his mini-schedule. On days when he seems a little bit off, he needs to be reminded to check his mini-schedule before each rotation of the Daily 5 work. His command central does not seem to be a huge help at this time because it is not being used independently. However, I do believe that with more practice and reminders to check his schedule he will become more independent and see the real use for having the schedule with him each day.

The most effective intervention at this time is the reminder cards for talking out of turn. He does not like getting the cards so after receiving one, that is typically enough to remind him to stop talking or to at least raise his hand if he has something to share. If/When he does get both cards, he does not like to take a break or to read his social story but once he does it, he returns to the classroom ready to learn.

The sensory break he takes each more seems to make a difference. I did not initially know if it was truly effective until one day when we missed the break because we were busy and forgot (☹). He had a very difficult time in second grade that day and when we realized what we had missed, we had him take his sensory break and return to the classroom. He seemed more relaxed and focused upon his return. I would have to say that this is an effective strategy as well.

7. If interventions are being used - how would you improve the interventions to better address the student's behavior problems or skill deficits? If interventions are not being used – discuss one you might implement to address the student's behavior problems or skill deficits. (3 pts)

At this point, my biggest concern with Joseph is that he is struggling to find confidence to work independently and his academic skills are extremely low for second grade. I would like to address these issues with more interventions. Currently he is being provided with modifications to his work but even that is not providing him with confidence. If I had to choose an intervention to improve it would be providing reinforcement for his independently completed work. My thought after completing these specific observations, I think Joseph needs an intervention that would provide motivation for him to independently complete his work. For Joseph, I think reinforcement is something he would truly benefit from.

8. Reflection: Highlight what you learned from this assignment. How might this experience benefit you in your future professional work? (3 pts)

This experience has benefited me as well as our ASD team to better help Joseph succeed in school. I was able to take these specific observations to the team and we have decided to use these observations in our next ASD teaming for Joseph. I am hoping that Joseph will start to gain confidence in the classroom and see his success as an independent learner. Without these observations, I may not have found the confidence in my own opinion to best help my students. I am not part of the whole ASD evaluation team but now feel that if I had to be a part of the team, I would have a better idea of what to look for and could have a valid opinion towards the eligibility.