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Neuropsychological Evaluations

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SAMPLE ONLY – NOT A FULL OR ACTUAL EVALUATION REPORT

Child's Name: Jane (Not Her Real Name) Doe
Grade/School: 5; Local Elementary School

Date of Birth: XX/XX/2008
Date of Testing: XX/XX/2018

SUMMARY AND IMPRESSIONS

Jane is a 10 year-old girl with a longstanding history of reading challenges. Although Jane has consistently been able to make adequate educational progress through her own hard work, a high level of parent support, and weekly outside tutoring, reading remains very effortful for her. Currently, Jane is currently in the fifth grade at Local Elementary School. Although she does not receive any formal Special Education services or accommodations, her devoted teachers are also supporting her reading skills' development informally in the classroom. Nevertheless, Jane is not developing the automaticity that teachers, parents, and outside service providers have hoped. This evaluation was requested to provide more information about her profile so that more targeted, personalized intervention can be implemented. Jane's test results indicate many cognitive strengths, within the context of mild to moderate learning difficulties that are impacting her ability to function up to her fullest potential. The diagnosis below is based on Jane's overall profile of strengths and weaknesses, which is described in more detail in the following paragraphs.

Diagnosis

- ICD-10 Code F81.0: Specific Reading Disorder (Dyslexia), mild to moderate range

Jane's Strengths

Jane's test results indicate she is clearly a nonverbal, hands-on, kinesthetic learner who will thrive on multisensory learning and teaching techniques. Her scores on measures of her nonverbal reasoning skills, nonverbal memory, visual-perceptual skills, and fine-motor speed all fell in the high average for her age, indicating nice development in these areas. These skills will help Jane solve puzzles, see patterns and build and design three-dimensional shapes. These skills will also help Jane think about sequences and quantities, navigate her environment, participate in artistic and athletic activities, and complete hands-on and visual-spatial tasks both in and outside of school.

Jane also shows a strength in her ability to think and act quickly, especially when completing familiar tasks. For example, her paper-and-pencil processing speed fell in the superior range, and she performed similarly well on other familiar tasks. Because of her well-developed processing speed, Jane is likely to quickly make decisions, and she should be able to complete tasks quite rapidly when she knows what to do.

While Jane's nonverbal skills and rapid processing speed are her "stand-out" strengths, she also performed right at age level on many verbal tasks. Her verbal thinking skills, verbal short-term memory, memory for a story, and overall language development were all in the average range for her age. In other words, Jane has the skills she needs to understand others, express what she knows, take in new information verbally, and use and retain that information. These skills will make her an effective communicator, and should support her ability to learn in the classroom.

In addition to these neurocognitive strengths, Jane presents with many interpersonal strengths and interests. She is an outgoing, friendly girl who is well-liked by adults and peers. She has a wide range of interests, enjoys pursuing many activities, and always wants to try new things. She also appears to be a spirited and independent youngster who has good ideas and wants others to follow those ideas. At times, Jane can become somewhat frustrated when she or others do not live up to her high expectations or complete tasks that way that she thinks is best. However, she clearly has the potential to develop nice leadership skills and the appropriate assertiveness skills that will help her stand up for what she believes in. At this time, Jane does not present with any emotional concerns. She appears to be a happy, self-confident, and well-adjusted girl when not being asked to engage in reading or writing.

**HISTORY, BEHAVIOR OBSERVATIONS, TEST SCORES, AND INTERPRETATION OF
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Jane's Vulnerabilities

While she has many strengths, Jane demonstrates some challenges with the basic processes that support reading. More specifically, during this evaluation, she demonstrated weaknesses in her:

- **Phonological awareness:** Understanding how sounds combine to form words
- **Phonological Memory:** Short-term memory for meaningful and nonmeaningful sounds
- **Rapid Naming Speed:** Quick, effortless recall of information learned through rote memory, such as letter and number names, color names, and basic math facts
- **Left-Right Differentiation:** Distinguishing between visual shapes that differ based on their rotation or orientation, like distinguishing quickly between d/b/p/q.

These difficulties with processing, understanding, and combining sounds and effectively discriminating printed symbols are significantly impacting Jane's ability to develop fluent and automatic reading, spelling, and writing. While her academic achievement test results show her single-word reading, decoding, and spelling skills are within the broad average range for her grade, her achievement is below what would be expected given her cognitive profile (e.g., 22- to 23-point difference between her overall cognitive score and her single word reading and spelling scores). Jane also struggled especially with reading fluency and accuracy during this evaluation. Her reading comprehension and sentence-writing skills were also compromised by her reading and spelling difficulties. Jane's math achievement was also reduced due to inaccurate recall of her math facts, which is a common challenge for students with rapid naming weaknesses. Overall, **it is clear the processes involved in reading and writing do not come easily to Jane**, and as a result, learning these subjects – which should feel interesting and exciting to Jane as she masters new skills – instead feels very difficult and demanding.

Many children with learning differences also demonstrate some challenges with attention and other aspects of executive functioning, Jane demonstrated mild to modest difficulties in these areas as well. In particular, test results and parent report suggests some weaknesses in short-term memory and planning/organization. Her test results also showed mild to moderate difficulties with sustained attention and impulse control. Jane's fine-motor coordination and visual-motor integration were also somewhat reduced.

Summary of Jane's Profile

Jane's test results meet criteria for the diagnosis of a mild to moderate **Dyslexia**. Students with dyslexia often demonstrate two specific deficits: weaknesses in *phonological awareness* and *rapid naming*, both described above. Students use their phonological awareness to decode unfamiliar words, and use their rapid naming skills to quickly recall familiar words. If a student struggles with one of these skills, they can often compensate by relying more heavily on the other skill. However, students with weaknesses in both of these areas are doubly challenged. Each word they encounter – whether familiar or unfamiliar – is difficult for them to accurately and fluently read. Students with challenges in phonological awareness and rapid naming are considered to have the "double deficit" of dyslexia. Students with dyslexia also often demonstrate other subtle processing differences. For example, they often have stronger nonverbal than verbal skills, as Jane does. These students also often have inconsistent auditory attention and short-term memory, motor coordination difficulties, and difficulties distinguishing between similar shapes based on the orientation of those shapes (e.g., reversing letters and numbers). Jane demonstrated moderate weaknesses in these areas as well.

How to Best Support Jane

Given her dyslexia, Jane requires ongoing support for her language-based learning disability in the school setting, supplemented with formal and informal supports outside of the classroom. In particular, at school, Jane requires specialized instruction in reading and writing delivered in a small-group or one-on-one setting, using a research-based, multisensory reading program. Additional targeted instruction in math and executive functioning may also be helpful as she progresses through school, as she is at high risk of struggling with math fluency, math word problems, and organization. Jane will also benefit from strategies that help her demonstrate her nonverbal and social strengths in the classroom, such as encouraging her to share her ideas with the class or younger students. Nurturing her strengths in this way will help foster Jane's self-esteem, academic engagement, and critical thinking skills.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Jane will benefit from intensive, targeted instruction in reading that is provided at least 3 days per week in an individual or very small group format. Specific focuses of the instruction should be on building phonological awareness and increasing fluency/rapid naming speed. Multisensory instruction is strongly recommended given Jane's profile. It will also be important to focus on Jane's academic self-esteem, through education about learning differences, learning about role models with dyslexia, and nurturing her nonverbal strengths. There are many evidence-based programs that would be appropriate for Jane's needs, such as Orton-Gillingham-based methods. Overall, research suggests any program that systematically targets phonics and fluency is likely to be successful with students who have Jane's profile. The most important variable, based on this research, is the intensity and frequency of the treatment, with the best outcomes coming from individualized intervention that occurs 3-5 times per week.
2. Other interventions that will be helpful for Jane in the school setting include the following:
 - A primarily multisensory (e.g., visual and kinesthetic) curriculum
 - Additional time to complete reading-based assignments
 - Providing her with audiobooks to improve comprehension in subjects other than reading (e.g., social studies textbooks on audiobooks)
 - Reduced demands for copying from the board (e.g., access to a copy of the teacher's notes)
 - Assignments that focus only on one skill at a time (e.g., ensuring that her spelling tests or math assignments do not also require reading)
 - Modified workload if needed (e.g., reduced length of assignments that require reading or writing so that she is spending the same amount of time as other students on her work)
 - If the focus of an assignment is on spelling, Jane will benefit from *immediate* corrective feedback regarding a misspelled word (as opposed to getting back a corrected paper hours or days later)
 - Highlighting symbolic information that she should be attending to (e.g., using color-coded highlighting to emphasize mathematical signs or prefixes/suffixes on words)
 - Access to tables, formulas, or vocabulary banks during tests, as math facts, formulas, and vocabulary words will be effortful for her to recall efficiently
 - Strategies that assist with idea generation and organization for writing (e.g., software programs such as www.inspiration.com)
 - A visual and conceptual math curriculum, rather than one that is heavily verbal or highly focused on the acquisition of rote math facts
 - Early introduction into assistive technology (such as dictation software and/or keyboarding programs)
 - Additional academic challenge and enrichment whenever possible, given her considerable cognitive strengths and her creative problem-solving skills
3. Jane would also benefit from support for her executive functioning difficulties in the school setting. In particular, she will benefit from:
 - Preferential seating away from distractions and noises
 - Frequent opportunities for movement to help her self-regulate
 - Consistent cueing to 'get ready' to pay attention and to learn new material
 - Organizational strategies such as graphic organizers to help her organize information while she is learning and organizing her thoughts
 - Prompting and rewards for double-checking her work
 - Help breaking tasks down into steps
 - Encouragement to persist with difficult tasks
 - Encouragement to focus on her "personal best" rather than comparison with others or to an ideal
 - A teacher approach that focuses on immediate feedback, lots of encouragement, and praise to shape behavior, with limited constructive criticism or feedback that is provided later

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4. Given her unique pattern of cognitive strengths and weaknesses, Jane is likely to prefer learning tasks that:
 - Are multisensory (e.g., incorporate visual aids or hands-on learning)
 - Are novel rather than routine, if the goal is to engage her interest
 - Are routine or familiar rather than novel, if the goal is to elicit her strongest performance and greatest level of self-confidence
 - Are brief and that proceed at a rapid pace
 - Are well-structured and well-organized
 - Are social, such as group discussion and learning stations
 - Keep her actively engaged and on-task by allowing her to respond frequently, such as through choral responding or use of response boards
 - Allow her opportunity to move around, such as participatory activities or being given special ‘jobs’ where she can get up and walk around
 - Provide her with cues about how to “get started” on a new task and gentle reminders to discourage procrastination
 - Provide her with reminders to double-check her work after she has put her ideas on paper
 - Help her visualize the final product and the steps she needs to take to achieve it
 - Provide her with plenty of opportunity for one-on-one instruction
 - Provide her with written or picture directions that she can refer back to as she completes the task to reduce demands on working memory and attention
5. Many parents are eager to know what they can do at home to help support a student with a language-based learning disability, in addition to providing empathy and understanding. At home, reading to Jane or listening to audiobooks together is strongly recommended. Listening to books at her *comprehension* level will expose her to increasingly sophisticated ideas, grammar, and vocabulary. However, if Jane is asked to practice her reading skills at home, this practice should be for brief periods of time, and should involve reading at her *reading* level (e.g., reading books for students at her reading grade level, not her actual grade level). It is strongly recommended that the bulk of all instruction in reading should occur mostly in the school setting and/or in outside reading tutoring, as students with dyslexia need a “break” to recharge when they are at home. If Jane is interested in increased challenge at home, use of fun games that focus on developing academic fluency, such as math fact videogames, would be a good use of time. Jane would also benefit from developing good skills with assistive technology (e.g., dictation software, keyboarding, word processing programs that involve spell-check and grammar-check).
6. About 50% of students with dyslexia meet criteria for an attention disorder, and Jane’s history includes other factors that heighten her risk of developing an attention problem, including family history. At this time, she does not meet criteria for ADHD or any other attention problem. However, careful monitoring is recommended to ensure Jane is given all of the support that she might need as she matures.
7. The book *Overcoming Dyslexia* by Sally Shaywitz, M.D. provides a wealth of useful information that may be helpful. *Basic Facts about Dyslexia and Other Reading Problems*, by Louisa Moats and Karen Dakin, is another good resource. It will also be useful to review the information available through the website of the International Dyslexia Association, www.interdys.org.
8. Follow-up evaluation every 2-3 years, and especially at times of major transitions (e.g., entry into high school), is recommended to monitor Jane’s progress and to assist with refining treatment goals. I would be happy to see Jane again in a few years to see what she has learned and to answer any remaining questions about her profile.

If you have questions, with appropriate parental consent, feel free to contact me at (425) 628-5758.



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