

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: Erica Lewis
Date: **10/10/2011** Time Started: **9:38 am** Time Ended: **10:10 am**
Location: **World History Classroom** Activity: **Primary document reading on the Silk Road.**

Observer's name: Erica Lewis
Date: **10/11/2011** Time Started: **9:38 am** Time Ended: **10:10 am**
Location: **World History Classroom** Activity: **Reporting on Silk Road Traders**

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)

The student is a tenth grade male in my co-workers World History class. The class is for tenth graders so he is not behind academically. He however has very low grades in all his classes. The student seems to get behind, then can not catch up and as a result has barely passed his classes with a 60 percent or higher. Student is known to be pulled out of class often in order talk to his counselor about anxiety he has during certain situations. He recently has been seeing the counselor about the school wide Silk Road simulation that is taking place tomorrow for all tenth graders. The simulation is done every year for world history students. They are able to become traders on the Silk Road and have to apply what they have learned throughout the last two weeks in order to trade their goods for certain goods or ideas that they need. I teach world history and know that the simulation can be overwhelming for introvert students and can be a lot to handle for three hours of the day. There are strict rules that must be followed while the student applies their understanding and knowledge. Besides seeing a counselor, the student also has a LINK student who meets with them for one or two hours a day in order to help them with daily tasks such as organization and keeping focused in the classroom. A LINK student is typically a junior or senior mentor that can share tips for success in school and social situations. In order to qualify for a mentor the student has to be a struggling student socially and academically, have some type of disability (does not have to include autism), and demonstrate a willingness to have a mentor. All mentors are approved by parents to help their children. The student currently has Resource room as a class which is helpful for students with a 504 plan and enables them to catch up in classes or get extra help from the resource teacher. He also is scheduled in one Focus class for English which means that the class size is smaller and allows for a different group dynamic in order to try to improve understanding. The student's 504 plan states that he is not

reading at 10th grade proficiency as well as has social anxiety that makes it hard for him to enjoy school.

The student lives at home with both parents and has one older sibling that does not demonstrate any introvert signs. The family has lived in the same home their entire lives and the student has been in the school district all but one school year when they tried to send the student to a Catholic school for 8th grade. This did not work and they returned the student back to the original school district he was in. The family is supportive of the student and contacts the teacher once a week to check in. I do not know about the student's medical history because the teacher did not specify if he was on medication or not.

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)

The teacher discussed with me that often the student will ask to leave class during group work or presentation activities to meet with the counselor. He said that when the child does participate in group work he will sit off by himself, complete his portion of the group task but not interact with the other members of the group. He is very quiet and speaks quietly but will ask clarifying questions when he needs understanding. A basic geography poster that required students to show pictures of some of the fundamental geography concepts lacked creativity but was done with detail. The teacher described how the poster did not have any pictures on it but was a giant poster sized chart that listed the concept, definition, and several written example for each. The teacher showed me a few samples of the student's written work as well. The student has very poor handwriting and lacks clarity or organization but the teacher said when the student actually verbalizes he understands or speaks very well on subjects. Because this information on the Silk Road will be utilized in a school wide simulation Thursday (tomorrow), the teacher suggested that the student be a stationary merchant in order to reduce frustrations. The student declined the offer and continued to want to be a trader.

The resource room teacher and counselor both stated that the student will shut down when frustrated over anything that upsets him. For example, the resource teacher explained how he saw he had an E in math and automatically refused to answer math questions for a week in class, refused to talk about math, and refused any offers from the teacher to gather missing math assignments. The resource teacher also told me that the student will refuse to verbally answer if they are angry or upset; choosing just to shake his head "yes" or "no" and sit doing nothing at his desk. The LINK mentor also said that he has done this behavior to her once since the beginning of the year after she suggested that he organize his binder in order to find missing assignments. She mentors him during math class as well as in English class. The mentor told me that the student will shout out answers in math without being called on. Math is also the only class he has a B in, his highest grade. During English class, the mentor mentioned that he questions the teacher a lot about her grammar on worksheets and tests. The English teacher usually has to explain why something was written the way it was if it is correct and rarely does the student find actual mistakes that are true grammatical errors on the teacher's behalf.

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)

While observing in the classroom I noticed a number of things about the student's behavior. The student picked up his packet of work from the supplies table right when after walking in the classroom. Most other students went to their desks first, chatted with friends, then remembered to pick of the materials they needed for the activity. He also sat down at his desk for the remainder of passing time until the bell rang for class to start. His lack of desire to socialize with others during this time was quite obvious. His teacher also said that he takes the routine of picking up his materials quite seriously and sometimes get frustrated when he (the teacher) puts out the papers after the students start entering the classroom. During the first observation the students were asked to read a primary source from a diary of a trader on the Silk Road. They were asked to do four things with the reading. In different coordinating colors they were supposed to underline places they traveled to, people they met, goods that they traded/needed, and ideas that they exchanged. The student did a great job picking out all things that were listed in the primary reading. He had his whole packet marked up with many different colors. I did not get to see that last half of the class period where the students all met with four or five other people that also read about the same trader. The teacher told me that even though the student had detailed his packet beyond most of his group, he did not choose to share the things that his group had missed that he had found. He did not socialize in the group as other students did, talking about random things that students usually get sidetracked by. The only time he spoke was to correct a student that was pronouncing the trader's name wrong.

The next day when I watched the student in history, the students were asked as a group to compile a list of all the goods and ideas their trader handled on an overhead. The whole class had a graphic organizer that had boxes for them to add other traders' goods into. Then they were supposed to make a concept web that linked all six total traders to the various goods/ideas that they handled along with charting the route that all six traders went on. During this time, the student did not again participate at all in contributing to the discussion even though he had the most information pertaining to his specific trader. The whole time students were shouting out the goods and ideas for each specific trader yet the student did not even write down the other five traders' goods that were added to the overhead sheet. His behavior does not seem defiant though. The students were asked to make the concept web as well as a write a summary of what their trader contributed relating to the Silk Road. Again, his teacher told me that the student did fine listing the information regarding the trade goods all six traders had but struggled to link the six together even though they were all interrelated. The student's concept map was delineated but not interconnected. His summary was different than the other students. Most students wrote four or five sentences detailing the significance of their trader. The student's response was almost a page long. It was almost like he could not narrow down the significance of his trader so he wrote more than what would have been considered a summary.

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)

Based on my observations and conversations with other people in contact with him, I would assume he is demonstrating the basic characters of a child with ASD. He seems to lack social skills or want to socialize with others as well as does not demonstrate norms that a typical tenth grader would show. His concept about his self failure makes him shut down and refuse help of any kind. He refuses to verbalize his frustrations with others when they ask him questions or suggests things that he does not like. The notion that his teacher suggested that he remove himself from the more chaotic part of the simulation also indicates that the student might not do well with random chaos or non-routine procedures. This is also supported by the observation that the student must pick up his materials in class daily right away. His routine is disrupted when the materials or supplies are not available right when they are supposed to be. It seems like he does better with routines and concrete learning like listing the trade goods but does not do well with more creative work such as the geography poster. This might mean that he has a very literal sense of understanding rather than being able to stretch the understanding in a creative aspect. It has been suggested in the past that the child be tested for autism but the parents have refused to place a label on the student beyond what the 504 specifies as his disabilities. I believe that he should be tested based on my small observations and my conversations with others.

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)

There seem to be a few interventions in place for the student currently. One, he is able to speak regularly, whenever he needs to, with his counselor. If the student needs a break from what is going on in class he is able to leave in order to not get frustrated. If he is in class with his LINK mentor they are able to take a quick walk around the school in order to cool down or regroup in order to return to class. Removing the student from overstimulation or frustrations can be an important intervention for the student in order to calm down. Also according to his 504, he is allowed to reduce more creative concepts from assignments while still providing the major understanding of the assignment. This is similar to what he did for the geography poster. He is allowed extra time on assignments. This intervention is fairly common for students with 504 plans. Having resource as a class also is a positive intervention for the student because he receives tools, resources, and support that are needed in order to complete assignments.

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

Based on talking to the student's history teacher and resource teacher, I feel that providing time to cool off after overstimulation or frustration can greatly reduce the risk of the student shutting down. The teacher said that if the student shuts down it often can take a few days or more to get the student back on track. Preventing the shut down is useful to all because it reduces the risk that the student will get so far behind that he will not be able to catch up at all.

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)

I do however feel like there might be other positive interventions that will help the student become more socially involved or less abrasive when finding errors with adults and peers. He could participate in a social improvement intervention such as Applied Behavioral Analysis and if it had been done younger, early childhood interventions. ABA can be used to practice certain greetings and appropriate behaviors that will help the student's social outcome. Reinforcing behaviors with positive incentives can help with problems such as practicing hand raising rather than shouting out answers. This might alter the student's current behavior. Also, ignoring behaviors we want to see reduced can help because we are not giving any attention. Then by showing attention to positive behaviors, we can hopefully see an increase in the behaviors we want. Lastly, preparing the student for changes in routine might be beneficial for this student, especially because they get frustrated or panic over not having materials ready before the bell rings. It would be interesting to observe this student tomorrow during the simulation to see how he reacts to all the chaos. I would have prepared the student for the changes in multiple ways and in numerous occasions to reduce the risk that he might shut down during the simulation because of a routine change not normal to his daily norm.

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

I think from looking at a student and observing what I can in order to determine if they should be classified or tested for autism can be a challenge. I only got to watch the student for two thirty minute sessions and I definitely feel like that was an inadequate amount of time to decide whether a student should be tested or have a label of ASD. I could look at my stereotypical signs and symptoms and come to a quick conclusion but it would have been much more beneficial to observe for many sessions in order to pinpoint more specific behaviors. I think I have walked away understanding that first judgments of a student can give you a hunch but you need to repeatedly go back and observe in order to see which behaviors are habit and which ones are a fluke. I might have seen the student on two off days for him and decided right then and there that he needed to be labeled ASD. The ASD diagnosis would be falsely given based on two bad days the student had for whatever reasons. However, since multiple people detailed his behaviors it can be assumed that he should have some form of ASD diagnosis. Again, I wish I could have watched many hours of observations, had the student in my class, or even been able to fit in time to meet with his counselor. I would have liked to have learned more what he does in his free time to get a scope of whether or not he had an area or particular interest or if he truly is just introvert. Without the parent approval for testing however, we as educators can only provide so much for the student without looking as if we are favoring one student over others. I think it is important to think about as a teacher what values and restrictions you might be placed under despite your best intentions. Sometimes a parent might disapprove of something you suggest just because it is not something they value as much. I think it is very important to

continue to do what the parent expects and to respect their wishes because the child is theirs first and you are just the educator despite how much you do or do not know.