
REPORT-WRITING IN THE INTERVENTION AGE: THEME-BASED AND QUESTION-BASED PSYCHOEDUCATIONAL REPORTS

HEIDI BOGUE, HEATH MARRS AND RICH MARSICANO
SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY PROGRAM FACULTY
CENTRAL WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY



PRESENTATION OBJECTIVES

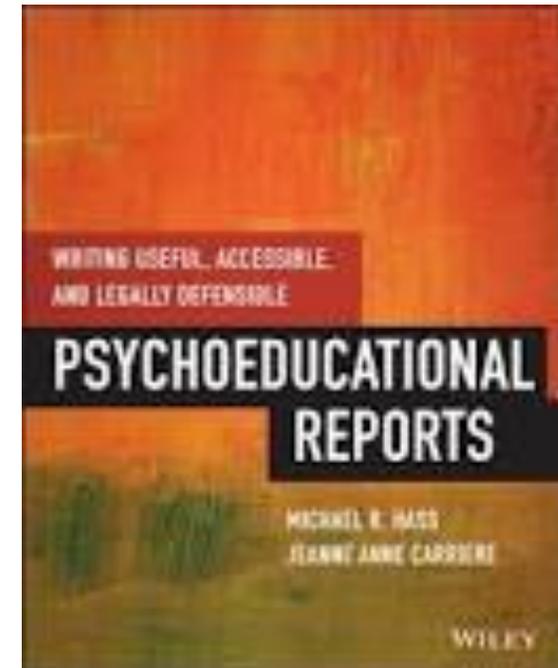
1. Identify empirically-supported styles of report-writing
2. Learn how readability impacts the usefulness of reports for consumers
3. Discuss a strengths-based approach to psychoeducational report writing



QUESTION – BASED PSYCH REPORTS

Writing Useful, Accessible, and Legally Defensible Psychoeducational Reports

- Michael R. Hass
- Jeanne Anne Carriere
- 2014 (Wiley)



WHY FOCUS ON REPORT-WRITING?

- Psychoeducational report expectations vary widely
 - In length
 - In depth
- Need to be ethically and legally compliant
- Spend a large amount of time on assessment activities
 - Majority of school psychologists in WA spend more than 50% of their time on “evaluation”
 - Frustration on the part of school psychologists



WHY IS REPORT-WRITING IMPORTANT?

- Collect “RIOT” data for a purpose
- Sharing team findings via the report is the last stage of assessment
- Support data-based decision-making
 - Further assessment, interventions, or disability classifications
 - May make a difference in the life of a child



HOW DO WE MAKE THEM USEFUL?

- Parents and teachers are our biggest consumers
- Useful reports are:
 - Understandable by the consumer
 - Provide specific answers to referral questions
 - Focus on strengths and needs
 - Give specific and feasible recommendations



CLEAR REPORTS

- Readability- comprehension of written material by consumers
 - Level of education
 - Word and sentence complexity (Flesch-Kincaid reading level)



- E.g., “It is my contention that any statement found in psychological reports could be made comprehensible to any literate individual of at least average intelligence” F-K reading level of 17.8 (graduate level)
- Vs., “I think a psychological report can be written so most people can understand it.” F-K reading level of 9.2 (high school freshman) (p. 46)

CLEAR REPORTS

- Consider length of report
- Use easily understood language
- Eliminate professional jargon
- Positive language, i.e., “Rodrigo is healthy.”

Most reports are written at very high levels of literacy

Try it on your own:

Select a report in a Word document

Run Spelling & Grammar check (under Review tab)

Check readability statistics (may be automatic)

TO REDUCE THIS PROBLEM

- Consider amount and quality of information
 - Do we need to report all results in narrative form?
 - Reduce generic statements or “boilerplate” insertions, e.g., “Student was assessed in English with measures that are compatible with his cultural and linguistic background.”
- Descriptive classifications:
 - Weakness or Below Average (SS <70 to 85)
 - Average (SS 86 to 114)
 - Strength or Above Average (SS 115 to >130)

CONFIDENTIAL: PSYCHOEDUCATIONAL EVALUATION

City Community Schools
112 Main St.
City, State XXXXX

| | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| Name: Sam * | Date(s) of Evaluation: 11/18/2009 |
| Date of Birth: Age: 2 years, 10 months | |
| Grade: Preschool | Parent: Mrs. Mother |
| School: | Telephone: |
| Address: | Examiner: Sarah Connolly, M.A. |
| | Supervisor: Dr. Psychologist, Ph.D. |

* Name and other information have been changed to protect the identity of the student.

REASON FOR REFERRAL

Sam was referred for a psychoeducational re-evaluation to determine eligibility for special education services.

PROCEDURES

Social and Developmental History
Record Review
Systematic Behavioral Observation
Learning Accomplishment Profile (LAP)
Five-Good Adaptive Behavior Scales—2nd Edition, Parent Interview and Teacher Rating Scale (Vineland-II)

BACKGROUND HISTORY

Sam is a 2 year, 10 month old Caucasian male who resides with his mother, Mrs. Mother, in City, State. Mrs. Mother reported that Sam has diagnoses of Down Syndrome and autism, and stated that “the autism eDiets are not as prominent as the Down Syndrome in his current abilities.” He was reportedly diagnosed with autism by Dr. Physician in August 2009. Mrs. Mother also reported that Sam has oprea bilis occulta at the third and fourth thoracic vertebrae and that his second and third vertebrae are fused. Mrs. Mother reported that Sam exhibits severe hypotonia and torticollis. She also indicated that he is lactose intolerant and is currently not eating most solid foods. Mrs. Mother reported that Sam has sleep difficulties. He is reportedly taking the following medications: Synthroid .25 mg for hypothyroidism, Melaxem 6 mg for sleep difficulties, Zyrtec 1 tsp for allergies, and Miralax 8.5 mg for constipation.

Mrs. Mother reported Sam was able to sit alone at 16 months of age and was able to crawl at 18 months of age. Mrs. Mother indicated that Sam spoke his first words at 12 months of age and began talking in 2-3 word sentences at age 32 months. Mrs. Mother stated that Sam is currently

CURRENT STATE OF PSYCH REPORTS



- How have your psych reports changed over the years?
- What do you like about the reports you are currently writing?
What do you dislike?
- What are some of the challenges you face in writing psych reports?

NEW DEVELOPMENTS

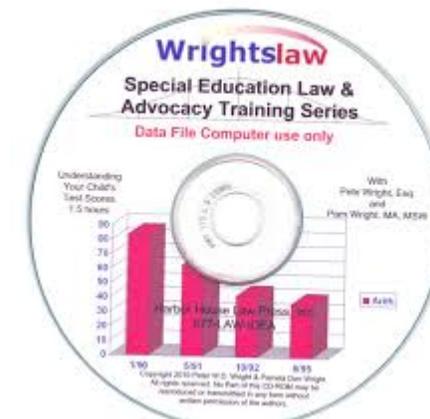


- Growing popularity of software to organize evaluations
- Growing relevance of screening and progress monitoring data
- Discussion regarding relevance of cognitive assessment data

“WHAT MUST BE TRUE ABOUT YOUR EVALUATIONS (AND REPORT)?”

IDEA Guidelines (Sec. 300.304) Evaluation Procedures

1. Evaluation should be comprehensive.
 - Suspected disability and areas of need
2. The evaluator should use a variety of assessment tools or approaches that gather functional and relevant data.
 - Rule of Two: 2 settings, 2 informants, 2 assessment methods.
3. The evaluation should be fair.
4. The evaluator should be competent.
5. The procedure used should be valid and reliable.



LICHTENSTEIN RECOMMENDS

- Identifying Information
- Reason for Referral
- Assessment Procedures
- Assessment Findings
 - Background Information
 - Interviews
 - Observations
 - Test Results
- Conclusions
- Summary and Recommendations
- Data Summary



HASS AND CARRIERE RECOMMEND



Referral-based or Question-Driven theme-based report

- Requires spending more time on the referral and assessment questions
- Examples:
 - How do Michael's thinking skills compare to other children his age? Does he have a specific learning disability? What supports are necessary to help him make adequate progress toward state and district academic standards?
 - Is Lily's placement in a special day class meeting her educational needs?

QUESTION-BASED REPORTS

- a) Reason for Referral section that explains the rationale and purpose of the evaluation
- b) Short list of evaluation questions ← Key Component
- c) Background section that presents the developmental, health, social, and educational context for the referral
- d) Questions
 - a) Present levels of performance
 - b) Disability
 - c) What needs to be done differently?



EXAMPLE: QUESTION-BASED REPORT

- a) Reason for referral
- b) Evaluation questions
 - 1) What are ---'s academic strengths and needs
 - 2) What are ---'s cognitive strengths and needs
 - 3) What is ---'s level of social emotional development
 - 4) Does --- have an emotional disturbance as defined by federal and state regulations?
 - 5) What supports are necessary to help ---- make adequate progress toward state and district academic standards? Does --- need special education services in order to meet these expectations?
- c) Background
- d) Evaluation results



THEME-BASED

- Take your assessment data:
 - Records
 - Interviews
 - Observations
 - Test Data
- Use them to support each part of your findings
- Summarize and bring together all of the info to support each theme



EXAMPLE

- **K-ABC-II**
- **Knowledge (Gc)**

In the overall area that reflects knowledge of one's culture and the ability to apply that knowledge effectively, Miah performed in the average range. She was able to adequately point to the correct picture that went with a vocabulary word or general question that was asked. In addition, her skills at identifying complex verbal concepts when given riddles were above average for her age. This is similar to her parents' report that Miah's has a high vocabulary.

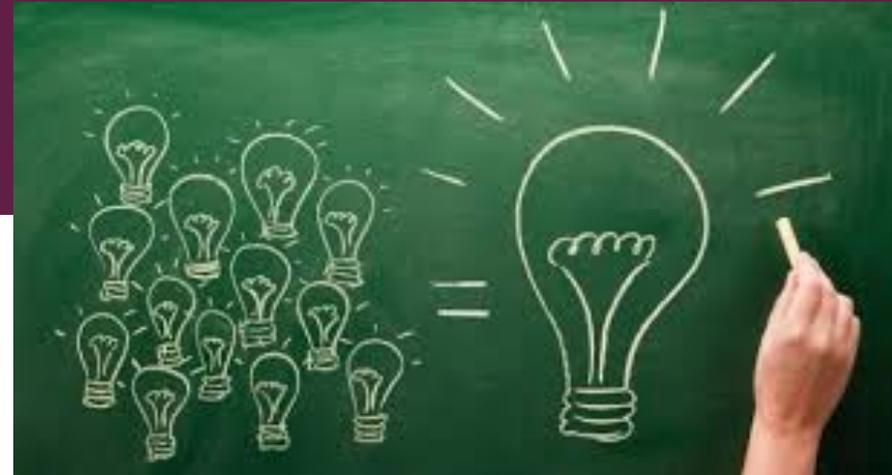


EXAMPLE



- **WJ-IV Cognitive**
- **Short-term Working Memory (Gwm)**
- Jake scored in the average range for Short-term working memory. He was proficient at immediately remembering verbal and numerical information given to him.
- **Auditory Processing (Ga)**
- Kevin scored in the Average range. He scored in the Low range for producing words with specific sounds. In this subtest, he was observed to be struggling with deleting sounds in the middle of words. He answered, “I don’t know” to many of these questions. Despite this, Kevin scored in the High Average range at repeating words accurately in another subtest. This is one of his strengths.

SUMMARY



- Key findings
- Focus on child
- Be clear about how the info you gathered connects with practical applications

EXAMPLE



Summary

- Amber was referred by her mother, Mrs. Blue, to help this examiner practice giving tests. Mrs. Blue shared that Amber currently struggles in reading and spelling. Amber scored in the average range for both reading and spelling on the academic assessment, which may be consistent with Amber's comments that she enjoys reading, and prefers reading to math. Her math scores on testing were also in the average range. Taking all of this into account, Amber is currently performing at a level equal to peers in her grade. However, reading and spelling recommendations will be made to better support her skill development.

EXAMPLE



Summary

- James is a third-grade student at Camelot Elementary School. This assessment was completed as part of the evaluator's graduate training in a school psychology course. James is not currently receiving special education services. He likes to play sports and video games and to socialize with his friends. Ms. High stated that his academic and social development are growing but seem typical. James's intellectual and academic skills are average for his age. Considering the results of this assessment, James may benefit from supports that will help him to concentrate better on his school work.

MEANINGFUL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Now that we have a comprehensive psychoeducational report...
 - Next stage in the problem solving process
- Recommendations
 - Data-based recommendations
 - Function-based



MEANINGFUL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Academic variables are more complex
 - Functions of behavior
- Analyzing all data
 - Interview data
 - Standardized assessment data
- Five hypotheses for academic difficulties (Daly, Witt, Martens, & Dool, 1997)
 - Source
 - Recommendations



MEANINGFUL RECOMMENDATIONS

I. Does the student want to do it?

- Interview data
- Direct observation data
 - Classroom and standardized administration
- Can't do/Won't do Assessment (VanDerHeyden, 2014)
- (Intervention data)
- Recommendations: ←
- Reinforcement
- Choice
- Consequences

Goal: Increase motivation



MEANINGFUL RECOMMENDATIONS



2. Has the student spent enough time doing it?

- Interview data
- Direct observation data
- (Intervention data)
- Recommendations:
 - Increasing or modifying instructional time
 - Passive to active learning
 - Increasing structure

Goal: Increase academic engagement



MEANINGFUL RECOMMENDATIONS

3. Has the student had enough help to do it?

- Interview data
- Direct observation data
- (Intervention data)
- Recommendation
 - Teaching how to request help
 - Increasing quantity and quality of feedback
 - Choral responding (e.g., response cards)

Goal: Increase feedback

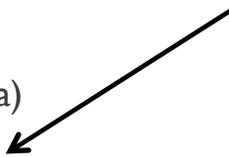


MEANINGFUL RECOMMENDATIONS

4. Are they trying to do it in a new way?

- Interviews
- Permanent products
- CBA
- (Intervention data)
- Recommendations
- Modify instructional materials
 - Well defined objectives
 - Ample practice

Goal: Increase time spent on appropriate tasks



MEANINGFUL RECOMMENDATIONS

5. Is it too hard?

- Interviews
- Grades
- Permanent product
- CBA
- Standardized Test Data
- (Intervention Data)
- Recommendations
- Modify instructional materials

Goal: Match material
to instructional level



MEANINGFUL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Making function-based recommendations
 - Emphasizing quality
- Considering the hypotheses for academic difficulties from day one of a referral
 - Or before...



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