

# **CASE STUDY**

## **Part1**

**JIM**

## SLD Illustrative Case Example- Jim

The intent of this case example is to be used in training staff to recognize the link between achievement and basic psychological processes. The available data are designed as a teaching tool and do not represent a model case. In some instances we have intentionally left out critical information and in others provided both relevant and irrelevant details, so that participants have to actively practice. The following data represents a fictional student but is based on real student data. In preparing this case we make the following assumptions:

- The student has participated in 2 research-based interventions that were delivered as intended. The interventions were designed to be sufficient in addressing the gap in achievement and accelerate the student's rate of learning.
- The gap in learning has persisted.
- The order the data is presented in follows the intended model staff should use when gathering data for generating hypotheses and designing the next step in problem solving. Data provided is specific to areas of concern.
- 

**Student Name: Jim**

**Grade: 3**

### Presenting Concerns:

Jim was identified as needing additional instructional interventions in the spring of second grade due to his persistent low performance in reading. According to information contained in his school records, Jim has difficulty making progress in reading on grade-level as indicated by a reading rate of 40 words correct per minute (WCPM) compared to current grade level expectations of 110 WCPM decoding skills. Additional teacher concerns included: inability to focus and sustain attention, difficulty following multi-step directions, and frequent requests to repeat oral communications. The following specific concerns were reported:

- Difficulty decoding, specifically in sounding out vowels, seeing patterns in irregular and multi-syllabic words and words with similar sounds.

- He typically decodes letter by letter. The suspicion is that he has been able to compensate to a degree because he has a large vocabulary and memory for sight words. Evidence that supports this includes analysis of curriculum based measures, which show his words read correct per minute on word lists is significantly higher than on connected text, running records indicate difficulty with sounding out vowels, phonemes with similar sounds “sh vs. ch” etc.
- Teachers and interventionists have noted that Jim reads more fluently when he is familiar with the text and topic. He seems to be able to predict and insert words that preserve the meaning of the passage. This is not true when he is reading text that is unfamiliar.

Additionally, parent and teacher interviews indicate difficulty following oral directions and attending to the teacher in large group instruction. Parents report that Jim increasingly dislikes school and regularly complains of stomach pains on mornings before school. They acknowledge that he has difficulties making friends. He seems to have difficulty following peer conversations and jokes, and he dislikes playing group sports or large group activities.

Jim participated in the following interventions at the end of second and beginning of third grade. Evidence-based reading interventions included:

- a. Peer Assisted Learning Strategies (PALS) guided instruction and sessions by the classroom teacher for 30-35 minutes four times a week.
- b. Additional time with decoding and fluency practice, an Orton-based phonics program and repeated readings were delivered for 30 minutes four times per week from a trained educational assistant. As such, the team requested a complete comprehensive evaluation to explore the possibility of a specific learning disability in the winter of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.

## Summary of MCA data

Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA-II) Spring 2010 - Reading 310

Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA-II) Spring 2010- Math 320

## **The 3rd grade level standards and benchmarks for which Jim is predicted to have the most difficulty:**

Overall, Jim is functionally limited from making progress toward grade level standards due to his limited ability to read passages fluently, to comprehend what he has read, in understanding class lessons due to language difficulties and in expressing his thoughts.

**Word Recognition, Analysis, and Fluency:** The student will apply word recognition strategies to decode unfamiliar multi-syllabic words and will read grade-appropriate text with accuracy and fluency.

- Read unfamiliar complex and multi-syllabic words using advanced phonetic and structural analysis.
- Read aloud narrative and expository text with fluency, accuracy, and appropriate pacing, intonation and expression.
- Notice when reading breaks down, reread and use phonetic and other strategies to self-correct.

**Vocabulary Expansion:** The student will use a variety of strategies to expand reading, listening and speaking vocabularies.

- Acquire, understand and use new vocabulary through explicit instruction and independent reading.
- Identify and correctly use antonyms, synonyms, homonyms and multiple-meaning words.
- Use context and word structure to determine the meaning of unfamiliar words.
- Use knowledge of prefixes and suffixes to determine the meaning of unknown words.
- Use dictionaries and glossaries to understand the meaning of new words.

**Comprehension:** The student will understand the meaning of texts using a variety of comprehension strategies and will demonstrate literal, interpretive and evaluative comprehension.

- Read aloud grade-appropriate text (that has not been previewed) with accuracy and comprehension.
- Recall and use prior learning and preview text, using title, headings and illustrations, to prepare for reading.
- Generate and answer literal, inferential, interpretive and evaluative questions to demonstrate understanding about what is read.
- Retell, restate or summarize information orally, in writing, and through graphic organizers.
- Infer and identify main idea and determine relevant details in non-fiction text

**Speaking and Listening:** The student will demonstrate understanding and communicate effectively through listening and speaking.

- Demonstrate active listening and comprehension.

- Follow multi-step oral directions.
- Perform expressive oral readings of prose, poetry or drama.

Spelling, grammar and usage: The student will apply standard English conventions when writing

- Recognize and correct spelling errors when writing.
- Spell correctly one-syllable and two-syllable words that have blends, contractions and compounds.
- Spell common homophones correctly.
- Apply grammar conventions correctly in writing

### **Relevant medical history:**

A review of records, parent input, and current sensory screening indicate that Jim's vision is 20/20 in both eyes. There is a history of frequent ear infections (otitis media) but the family indicated that since he had tubes put in, at age three, they had no further concerns. He has not had regular ear infections since. Hearing is currently in the normal range. Overall, there appears to be no current physical or health factors that might be related to Jim's educational difficulties.

### **Record Reviews of Performance to Date:**

In the first grade, teacher reports that Jim was a cheerful, eager learner who enjoyed interaction with others. As the academic tasks increased in demands, Jim appeared to become inattentive and easily frustrated in large group instruction. His teacher noted that he seemed slow to pick up new information as compared to his peers. His first grade teacher recommended additional work with vowel sounds and sent home some materials to support Jim's reading over the summer. The parents also noted that the first grade teacher made comments that Jim was seldom able to answer questions or contribute to sharing. Because Jim was one of the youngest in his grade, and appeared to be very immature, parents and teacher determined that he needed more time to develop. Parents supported his reading skills by reading with him each night at home, working with rhyming sounds, and recognition of letter sounds.

By the winter of second grade, Jim's teacher had increasing concerns that Jim was not able to keep up even with her differentiation and the supports parents were giving at home. In the late winter/early spring Jim was recommended to join 4 students receiving additional instructional supports in basic phonics, word reading, and oral reading fluency. The group received the Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies (PALS) to focus on increasing intermediate decoding, fluency and comprehension skills. Identified students received PALS guided

instruction and sessions by the classroom teacher for 30-35 minutes, three times per week in addition to the core reading program. Progress was monitored twice a month using curriculum based measures. On average, the students receiving the PALS intervention increased their fluency and comprehension by 12 words correct per minute. Although Jim made progress (6 words correct per minute), the teacher and intervention team noted that Jim was not closing the gap and would not meet second-grade spring benchmarks. The intervention team recommended that a second targeted interventions with weekly progress monitoring, begin in third grade.

In the fall of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, Jim's intervention plan was revised. Based on the recommendations of the second grade team, MAP scores, and the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teachers judgment of his performance, Jim was given core instruction including the PALS program with a supplemental small-group instruction for a 40-minute period, three days per week for 12 weeks. The intervention program was comprised of a 30 minute lesson using an Orton Gillingham based phonics program, and ten minutes of Read Naturally delivered by a trained educational assistant. Progress monitoring administered bi-weekly suggests slow steady growth; however, the growth the team expected compared to the intensity of instructional services provided continues to be insufficient to close the gap and difficult to sustain long-term.

### **Progress monitoring data:**

A fluency goal was set with the expectation of gaining 1.1 word correct per minute (wcpm) per week. Progress was monitored bi-weekly for 12 weeks. Graphed data showed that after 6 weeks, 3 consecutive scores fell below the aimline, and he gained only .7 wcpm per week. This is 66% of what was expected; therefore the intervention was deemed as insufficient and a referral for comprehensive evaluation was considered.

### **Interview results:**

Parents provided a complete history and background information. Of significance were the extensive strategies to help Jim that were implemented at home. The parents reported that they have been working with Jim since he was in first grade. Jim is one of the youngest in his grade, and continues to appear to be very immature. Parents supported his reading skills by reading with him each night at home, working with rhyming sounds, and recognition of letter sounds. They used to play games with finger paint soap in the bathtub and with sand in the sandbox to make reading playful and more fun.

According to his parents, Jim reports the only thing he still likes about school is math and recess. He has always excelled at visual spatial tasks, drawing, building and individual sports. He doesn't like school as much anymore because he thinks the teacher and kids think he is "dumb." because he doesn't understand directions and always has to get extra help. The assignments are getting harder. He claims that the teacher talks too much and "uses too many words." He wishes the teacher would just show him what to do and not talk about it. Parents report that Jim is more quiet and discouraged than last year. They are worried about his increasing dislike for school and that he feels dumb and incapable. They worry that they will not be able to provide all the supports he needs to keep up as Jim moves into upper elementary and junior high.

An interview Jim's current teacher reported that she has noted that when she gave Jim oral directions his rate of attention was higher in small groups, in close proximity to teacher, when given visual aids (written directions) or when there are reduced distractions in the classroom. She also observed that he regularly relies on his "study buddy" or other students for clues for what to do.

### **Observation results:**

Jim's performance in reading was observed during core instruction. Observation during intervention indicated that when faced with words that are part of his sight vocabulary, Jim reads them relatively automatically. When faced with words that are not familiar, he does not have sufficient skills to analyze them phonetically. During the observation, Jim regularly identified words incorrectly, even after the teacher modeled how to sound them out. Jim was observed to make multiple mistakes in sounding out vowel patterns. He appears to predict a word based on recognition of consonants. For example, Jim read "shell" for shall, "ten" for ton, "swet" for sweet and "water" for whatever. The words he "reads" don't make sense given the context or number of letters in the word on the page. During the observation some of Jim's peers began joking around. Jim misheard one of the remarks, repeating what he thought the students said. In response, his peers laughed at him. Jim withdrew and became silent.

Additional reflection on observations may suggest there could be difficulty with auditory input in the presence of environmental auditory stimuli (e.g. classroom environment) letter-sound correspondence, blending, and phonics.

### **Instructional, Curricular and Environmental Analysis.**

Within the classroom, the teacher has been noted as successful with the following means of differentiation:

- Content and Language objectives are clearly defined, displayed and reviewed with students; key vocabulary is posted and modified as appropriate using word walls. The teacher has constructed quiet areas and listening stations, uses of a variety of techniques to make content concepts clear such as paring visual and verbal input, graphic organizers, and concrete to abstract hands on activities. Curriculum is differentiated to provide content on instructional level. Examples include science readers that cover the same topic areas at different reading levels, a leveled class library, use of technology to support development of conceptual understanding and independent practice.

- The classroom-learning environment frequently provides for small group work and active learning activities resulting in constant talking and activity during the “working” time of the lesson. When teacher instruction occurs in a relatively loud auditory environment, Jim requests to access listening stations, a quieter area of the classroom, or use a pass to work in the library.
- Teacher encourages students to ask for clarification/question things he/she “missed” during verbal instruction. She frequently checks-in with Jim to make sure he understands the directions and to get him started on assignments. Jim has indicated to the teacher that he feels that this calls singles him out as needing more help than his classmates. Jim also has a “study buddy.” He could ask his buddy questions if he did not understand or remember an in-class assignment or the teacher’s directions. The teacher has Jim’s desk close to hers as a way of supporting him. However, it was noted during observation that her instruction takes place in various points in the room. Jim is not necessarily in close proximity to the instruction.
- Interventionist reports that Jim seems to be more successful in a small group setting as he is rarely off-task in this environment. However, his progress monitoring data showed that while he was making progress during interventions, his total classroom performance continued to stagnate. The benefits of intervention were not translating into improved performance in the classroom. On task small group observations were conducted to compare performance with large group instruction. Overall on-task behavior during small group instruction was 90% as compared to 65% in the large group.
- Within a typical classroom setting, Jim’s work continues to show difficulties in spelling, understanding directions, delay in task initiation and sustained attention in large group settings.



## Visual Integration and Summary of Jim's Achievement

Areas of Achievement	Guiding Questions to Identify Patterns in Achievement Data			
	<p>Can the student meet the instructional demands that apply to all students?</p> <p>List academic/behavioral task requirements the student can meet.</p>	<p>In what areas is the student's achievement inadequate to meet:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> State approved grade-level standards</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> District or state norms</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Intellectual development</li> </ul>	<p>Instructional interventions or adaptations provided</p> <p>List instructional supplemental efforts, aligned with grade level standards, implemented to accelerate the student's rate of learning and level of performance</p>	<p>List what has worked to increase rate of learning, performance, motivation, etc. (consider ICEL matrix).</p>
<p><b>Listening Comprehension</b></p>	<p>Demonstrates inadequate comprehension of oral information within the classroom (65% on task behavior)</p> <p>Fall Grade listening comprehension scores at 24<sup>th</sup>ile in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.</p>	<p>Below grade level on State grade level standards in Reading, MAP testing, and reading benchmarks.</p>	<p>Content instructions defined, displayed and reviewed, teacher enunciation &amp; rate of speech, minimize background noise, use of "whisper phone" when reading</p>	<p>Quiet setting, use of headphones/whisper phone, self monitoring and advocacy, teacher enunciation and rate of speech</p>
<p><b>Oral Expression</b></p>	<p>Jim is able to use basic communication skills for expression with correct grammar, vocabulary, and expression of ideas. Difficulty with grade level academic vocabulary</p>	<p>Grade level standards: Perform expressive oral readings of prose, poetry or drama.</p>	<p>Encourage student to ask for clarification when needed</p>	<p>Differentiated instruction, encouragement and opportunities for oral expression</p>
<p><b>Written Expression</b></p>	<p>Difficulty with spelling &amp; note</p>	<p>Grade level standards: grammar conventions</p>	<p>Emphasize sight words, provide copy of notes, word banks, use</p>	<p>Electronic spell-checker (Franklin Spelling Ace)</p>

Areas of Achievement	Guiding Questions to Identify Patterns in Achievement Data			
	taking	correctly in writing, spelling	of technology for spelling support (beginning to learn), direct instruction & practice, encourage correction of errors, provide editing checklist.	direct instruction & practice, encourage correction of errors, provide editing checklist.
<b>Basic Reading Skills</b>	Decoding errors occur with irregular and multi-syllabic words, Uses a letter by letter decoding strategy	Grade standards: below grade level, not meeting MAP/benchmarking	Small-group instruction: highly explicit, multisensory decoding; sound blending & segmenting.	Paring visual and verbal input,  Small group instruction, skill development on instructional level
<b>Reading Fluency</b>	Slow but accurate reader	Benchmark & CBM's	Small-group instruction: highly explicit, multisensory decoding; sound blending & segmenting.	Small group instruction, skill development on instructional level, Quiet setting, use of headphones/whisper phone,
Reading Comprehension	Difficulty with connected text	Grade standards: below grade level, not meeting MAP & benchmarking	Small-group instruction: highly explicit, multisensory decoding; sound blending & segmenting.	Comprehension monitoring, listen to books on tape; content and language objectives clearly defined, displayed and reviewed, study buddy in choral reading activity.
<b>Mathematical Calculation</b>	No concerns at this time	Achievement above to high average	No concerns at this time	No concerns at this time
<b>Mathematical Problem Solving</b>	Difficulty with word or story problems	Achievement comparable to peers (average range)	Reading strategies for increasing vocabulary and comprehension are also implemented for math problem solving.	"Study buddy," paring visual and verbal input

**Activity 1: Given the information presented thus far, draft a problem statement outlining the gap between Jim's current performance and grade level expectations.**

**Write your hypothesis of areas of cognitive processing that may be weak given Jim's persistent learning difficulties.**

**Activity 2: Make your recommendations of proposed assessments or additional relevant data to be collected during comprehensive evaluation:**