National Association of

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Special Education Teachers

Assessment in Special Education

Part 9 - Understand the Components of a Professional Report

Introduction

Most, if not all, professionals on the Multidisciplinary Team will be required to write a professional report summarizing their findings and making recommendations. Whether you have to write a report or just review various ones, it is essential that you understand the language that is used and the different sections found in most of them. This next section will present the most practical guidelines for writing a professional report, as well as the most common compenents of professional reports in special education.

The When writing a report, always write it in the "Third Person."

Reports are never written in the first person. A professional report will never use the word "I". Phrases that can be used include:

- According to the examiner
- It was felt that
- There seems to be
- It is the professional opinion of this evaluator that

Never write "I think" or "If it were up to me"

Remember that professional reports are not a term paper. The professional approach is to remain in the third person.

When writing a report, single space it to condense the length.

Reports for parents should be written so as not be overwhelming in length. In general, try to keep what you write to 3 to 5 pages, unless it is essential to be longer.

When writing a report, use the past tense as often as possible

The assessmento fht estudent has already been done. Therefore, the reporting of information should reflect the data that were found. Since the data were already collected, the use of the past tense is most appropriate. For example:

- On the Reading subtest, Billy scored in the 95th percentile.
- During testing, Sally exhibited shyness.
- Throughout the interview, Tommy showed no signs of hyperactivity.
- Sally appeared to lack confidence when doing tasks that required hand–eye coordination.

When writing a report, bold or italicize new sections, as well as separate them by skipping two lines.

This is done simply for purposes of clarity.

When writing a report, be sure to check for spelling and grammar

The reports you write are a reflection of your cometence. A report should flow smoothly, never reading like a telegram. Complete sentences are always used. Always check spelling and grammar to make sure there are no errors. Nothing is more unprofessional than a report that looks sloppy and has many mistakes.

Understand each of the sections found within the report

Identifying Data

Identifying Data presents the necessary basic demographic information about the child. This section is important to the reader, especially if further contact is required. It allows the reader to have all the basic information in one place. The parts of this section include:

Name:, Parents' Names:, Address: Teacher:, Phone: Referred By:, Date of Birth:, Date/s of Testing:, Grade: Date of Report:, School: Examiner:, &
Chronological Age at Time of Testing (CA):

Reason for Referral

The Reason for Referral explains to the reader who made the referral and the rationale for this evaluation. It should not be longer than two to three sentences, but should be comprehensive enough to clarify the purpose. The following are some examples of this section:

- Jarmel was referred by his teacher for an evaluation as a result of inconsistent academic performance and poor social skills.
- Sally was referred by the child study team in order to determine his present intellectual, academic, and perceptual levels.
- The Reason for Referral should be short and right to the point.

Background History

The Background History of a report contains detailed information on the following areas of the student:

- **Family history**-- provides the reader with a general understanding of the family structure, siblings, parental perceptions, and so on
- **Developmental history**—provides the reader with relevant background history pertaining to developmental milestones.
- **Academic history**--provides the reader with relevant academic performance during the child's school years
- **Social history**-- provides the reader with an understanding of the child in his social world.

Background History is very comprehensive and establishes a foundation for what will follow. If you suspect a disability that may have historical features, then you need to present the development of this disability and its interfering factors in depth. The reader should come away from the section seeing the substantiation for a suspected disability. Certain areas should always be covered in the Background History section. These include:

Behavioral Observations

Behavioral Observations and includes a description of the child's behavior during the testing sessions. This can be a very important section because it may reinforce what is seen in the class or be very different, in which case the structure of the testing environment should be explored for clues to learning style. Examples of sentences that would appear in this section include the following:

- Sally approached the testing situation in a reluctant and hesitant manner.
- During testing, it was evident that Sally was frustrated with many of the reading tasks.
- Throughout the assessment, Sally appeared anxious and nervous, as she was biting her nails and always asking whether her answers were correct.

Tests and Procedures Administered

Tests and Procedures Administered is a list of the individual tests included in the test battery and any procedures used to enhance the report, such as classroom observation, review of records, and parent intake.

- Wechsler Individual Achievement Test—2nd Edition (WIAT-2)
- Detroit Tests of Learning Aptitudes—4th Edition (DTLA-4)
- Gray Oral Reading Test—4rd Edition (GORT-4)
- Classroom observation
- Interview with child
- Test Results
- Test Results is perhaps the most important section of a report. It analyzes the results of each test and looks at the child's individual performance on each measure.

Step 1 for Writing Test Results: Write out the Name of the Test

Wechsler Individualized Achievement Test, 2nd edition

Step 2 for Writing Test Results: Create a Table (Standard Score, Classification, and Percentile)

Name of Subtest	Standard Score	Classification	Percentile Rank
Word Reading	85	Low Average	16
Numerical Operations	135	Very Superior	99
Spelling	110	High Average	75
Reading Comprehension	70	Well Below Average	2

Step 3 for Writing Test Results: Write a brief a brief 1-2 sentence statement about what each subtest measures (This is obtained through the Examiner's Manual)

- The Word Reading subtest of the WIAT-II presents a series of pictures and printed words for assessing decoding and word-reading ability. Only the accuracy of the pronunciation is scored; not comprehension.
- The Numerical Operations subtest of the WIAT-II consists of a series of problems with pencil and paper for assessing the ability to reason mathematically.
- The Spelling subtest of the WIAT-II requires the student to spell a target word based on its meaning in a sentence.
- The Reading Comprehension subtest of the WIAT-II presents stories for the student to read. The student is then asked a question about the story orally, to which she must orally respond with an answer.

Step 4 for Writing Test Results: Report the student's standard score, classification, and percentile for each subtest. You are reiterating what is stated on the table.

The Word Reading subtest of the WIAT-II presents a series of pictures and printed words for assessing decoding and word-reading ability. Only the accuracy of the pronunciation is scored; not comprehension.

- On this subtest, Sally performance was in the Low Average range, earning a standard score of 85. As indicated by her percentile rank of 16, Sally performed as well or better than 16 percent of all students when compared to the norms for her age.
- The Numerical Operations subtest of the WIAT-II consists of a series of problems with pencil and paper for assessing the ability to reason mathematically. On this subtest, Sally performance was in the Very Superior range, earning a standard score of 135. As indicated by her percentile rank of 99, Sally performed as well or better than 99 percent of all students when compared to the norms for her age.
- The Spelling subtest of the WIAT-II requires the student to spell a target word based on its meaning in a sentence. On this subtest, Sally performance was in the High Average range, earning a standard score of 110. As indicated by her percentile rank of 75, Sally performed as well or better than 75 percent of all students when compared to the norms for her age.

- The Reading Comprehension subtest of the WIAT-II presents stories for the student to read. The student is then asked a question about the story orally, to which she must orally respond with an answer. On this subtest, Sally performance was in the Well Below Average range, earning a standard score of 70. As indicated by her percentile rank of 2, Sally performed as well or better than 2 percent of all students when compared to the norms for her age.

Step 5 for Writing Test Results: Finally, make a statement regarding something to note about the student's performance on each subtest. This could include statements such as:

The Word Reading subtest of the WIAT-II presents a series of pictures and printed words for assessing decoding and word-reading ability. Only the accuracy of the pronunciation is scored; not comprehension. On this subtest, Sally performance was in the Low Average range, earning a standard score of 85. As indicated by her percentile rank of 16, Sally performed as well or better than 16 percent of all students when compared to the norms for her age. An analysis of Sally's errors indicated that she often added and omitted syllables when reading words. Her reading speed was slow, and self-corrected herself on five different words. An analysis of Sally's errors indicated that she often added and omitted syllables when reading words. Her reading speed was slow and she self-corrected herself on five different words.

The Numerical Operations subtest of the WIAT-II consists of a series of problems with pencil and paper for assessing the ability to reason mathematically. On this subtest, Sally performance was in the Very Superior range, earning a standard score of 135. As indicated by her percentile rank of 99, Sally performed as well or better than 99 percent of all students when compared to the norms for her age. Sally's shows a strong ability with mathematical problems. On the only two division errors that she made, her errors were due to simple miscalculations that had more to do with carelessness and rushing rather than anything else. Her scores represent a normative strength for her.

The Spelling subtest of the WIAT-II requires the student to spell a target word based on its meaning in a sentence. On this subtest, Sally performance was in the High Average range, earning a standard score of 110. As indicated by her percentile rank of 75, Sally performed as well or better than 75 percent of all students when compared to the norms for her age. Analysis of Sally's errors reveals that she most often either added a single letter or omitted a single letter when misspelling words. The majority of errors were made toward the end of the subtest as the items increased in level of difficulty.

The Reading Comprehension subtest of the WIAT-II presents stories for the student to read. The student is then asked a question about the story orally, to which she must orally respond with an answer. On this subtest, Sally performance was in the Well Below Average range, earning a standard score of 70. As indicated by her percentile rank of 2, Sally performed as well or better than 2 percent of all students when compared to the norms for her age. Sally made numerous errors on items that involved the skill of drawing conclusions and making inferences. She had difficulty recognizing stated detail, predicting events and outcomes, and identifying the main ideas of passages. As compared to Sally's achievement on other subtests on the WIAT-II, her standard score of 70 on the Reading Comprehension subtest represents a relative weakness for her.

Conclusions Section

The Conclusions section explains in very simple terms to the reader the trends in the child's testing results that may indicate academic strengths and weaknesses, modality strengths and weaknesses, process strengths and weaknesses, and overall diagnosis and level of severity of the problems areas indicated. It is not a restatement of the test results section but a summary of overall performance.

Sally Jones is a thirteen-year-old seventh grade girl who was administered the WIAT-II for the purposes of assessing her academic achievement. The areas of spelling and mathematics (numerical operations) appear to be Sally's greatest strengths. Sally appears to have difficulties in both reading and reading comprehension. Sally made numerous errors on items that involved the skill of drawing conclusions and making inferences. She had difficulty recognizing stated detail, predicting events and outcomes, and identifying the main ideas of passages. Furthermore, Sally often added and omitted syllables when reading words. Sally appears to be lacking academic self-confidence. She is frustrated by school and has difficulty making friends.

Recommendations Section

The last section of the report is probably the most valuable section for the reader—Recommendations. It should contain practical recommendations that will bring some hope and direction for the identified problem areas. Keep in mind that the recommendations should be practical enough and explained in such a way that the reader will have no problem following through. For example, a recommendation to a parent of "Try to spend more time with Jarmel" is useless. It provides the reader with no direction or specifics. Instead, a recommendation such as "Read at home with Jarmel in unison. By this, we mean that both you and Jarmel have the same book and read aloud together so that he receives constant auditory feedback." This more detailed recommendation provides the reader with specific direction.

Try to separate the recommendations into the following three sections (Pierangelo and Giuliani, 2006):

 1. **Recommendations to the school:** This section might contain suggestions such as further testing from other professionals on staff, vision or hearing tests by the school nurse, recommendation for a review by the Eligibility Committee, remedial reading assistance, or an ESL evaluation.

 2. **Recommendations to the teacher:** This section should contain useful information for the teacher including an indication of the conditions under which the child learns best. The teacher is probably mainly interested in "What do I do to help the child learn?" Keep in mind that even before you begin the evaluation process, you should ask the teacher what he or she has already tried in an attempt to alleviate the problems. This should be done so that your recommendations do not include suggestions already attempted by the teacher. Doing this will avoid having your recommendations being viewed as "nothing I haven't already tried before."

 3. **Recommendations to the parent:** This part should be very practical, direct, and diplomatic. The suggestions should also be inclusive enough to answer the questions "why" and "how" so that parents do not have to interpret them.