Appendix D
Case Examples

The following case examples illustrate the ability of the OWLS-II to provide information about the strengths and weaknesses of an individual's language skills. They also illustrate the concurrent use of all four scales to provide a comprehensive picture of an individual's abilities. Three case studies are presented, each representing a different level of schooling: preschool, elementary, and middle school.

CASE 1: JON (FIGURE 9)

Jon is a 4-year, 6-month-old preschool child who was referred to the county early intervention assessment team by his preschool teacher because he rarely talks at school and the teacher is unsure if he is delayed in language.

Background Information: Parent and Teacher Reports

Jon's parent reports that he is the product of a full-term, uncomplicated pregnancy, weighing 7 pounds, 8 ounces at birth. He is the youngest of three children and has a 7-year-old sister and a 10-year-old brother. He is easygoing, happy, and very affectionate, and there are no discipline problems. His infancy was normal, and he met normal developmental milestones with the exception of talking.

In terms of language, Jon's first recognizable word was at 15 months, and he didn't put words together until 2 years. He didn't start using sentences until he started preschool at 3 years. His sister does most of the talking for him. He seems to understand everything that is said to him. He has no history of hearing problems and he passed his infancy hearing screen.

Jon's teacher reports that he is very well behaved and always has a smile for peers and adults. He likes to play with trucks and cars and climb on the outdoor play structure. He likes to paint and do craft projects. He has average fine- and large-motor skills. He engages in parallel play and doesn't appear to have any special friend in class. He observes boys and girls in pretend play but rejects prompts to join the group. He appears to understand what is going on in the school setting. He has learned all the routines and follows directions like his peers do. He loves being read to and looking at books.

His language in class is very limited. He rarely talks and has never been observed talking to a peer while playing. On the few occasions he has talked, his sentence structure was short and missing function words. He participates in all activities but does so without talking. He allows other children to talk for him, particularly one girl. Recently he began answering direct questions during circle time with one or two words. For example, to the question "What is the weather today?" he will answer "rain" or "sun."

Current Test Results

Pure Tone Audiological Assessment

Jon's hearing was judged to be normal following an audiological assessment in the county audiology suite, conducted in a sound field using play audiometry. Jon responded quickly and accurately to pure tones at 20 dB at 500, 1000, 2000, 4000, 6000, and 8000 Hz.


The OWLS-II was administered to determine Jon's skill in listening comprehension and oral expression and to identify strengths and weaknesses. Information gathered from the OWLS-II will assist in determining whether Jon has an oral language delay and whether he would benefit from specialized instruction. Suggestions will also be provided to his parents and teacher for home and classroom activities that enhance language development. Jon was administered the two oral language scales.
Listening Comprehension. On the Listening Comprehension (LC) scale of the OWLS-II, Jon obtained a standard score of 80 with a percentile rank of 9. This indicates that his score is below average when compared to the scores of his same-age peers. His performance was higher than that of only 9% of other children his age. Although Jon’s mother and teacher believe that he understands everything that is said to him, the LC test results suggest that he likely does not. To the adults in his life, he probably appears to understand because he has learned the routines that accompany the language he hears and so he does what he is expected to do. Item analysis was conducted to qualitatively evaluate specific areas of strength and weakness. It revealed the following:

- **Lexical/Semantic**: Jon answered 12 out of 17 Lexical/Semantic items correctly. He correctly comprehended nouns, verbs, nouns with adjectives, and adjectives. Jon answered incorrectly on items with similar content, but at a higher level of difficulty.
- **Syntactic**: Jon correctly answered 5 out of 11 Syntactic items, including superlatives, plural nouns, and prepositions. He gave incorrect responses on items requiring comprehension of a prepositional phrase, irregular plural noun, irregular past tense, pronoun, and superlative. As with the Lexical/Semantic items, he responded correctly to the easier Syntactic items. However, he struggled more on syntax versus lexical/semantic.
- **Pragmatic**: Jon correctly responded to the two items he took. One measured comprehension of gratitude and the other measured comprehension of a farewell. These correct responses support his teacher’s comment that learning routines is a strength of Jon’s. Teaching and practicing new and emerging skills within routines can be an effective way of improving Jon’s language skills.

Oral Expression. Jon obtained a standard score of 67 with a percentile rank of 1 on the Oral Expression (OE) scale of the OWLS-II. This score of 67 falls within the deficient range because it is well below the performance of his same-age peers and may reflect the presence of a language disorder. Most of Jon’s incorrect responses represent no response. That is, Jon was presented with items and either did not answer or shook his head “no.” Jon’s responses were examined qualitatively using item analysis to determine areas of strengths and weakness on this scale. The results are as follows:

- **Lexical/Semantic**: Jon correctly responded to six of the eight Lexical/Semantic items. These correct responses were almost all items using nouns, but he also responded correctly with one verb. He responded incorrectly to two items requiring the use of adjectives.
- **Syntactic**: Jon was presented with four Syntactic items and did not answer any of them correctly. These items required use of a preposition, noun phrases, and a pronoun.
- **Supralinguistic**: Jon responded incorrectly to the one Supralinguistic item he took, which required inference using meaning from context.

Jon’s Oral Language Composite on the OWLS-II is a standard score of 72 with a percentile rank of 3. This is above only 3% of his same-age peers. This score illustrates that Jon demonstrates weakness in all skill areas examined. However, Jon’s LC score is significantly higher than his OE score, at a difference level that occurred 20% of the time in the standardization sample. This suggests that the difference between Jon’s skills in oral comprehension and oral expression as measured by the OWLS-II may be clinically meaningful. His stronger comprehension skills may be used as a base for increasing his expressive skills.

Summary and Recommendations

Based on assessment using the OWLS-II oral language scales, Jon presents with delays in both listening comprehension and oral expression. His listening comprehension skills exceed his oral expression skills, which corresponds with the communication behaviors noted by his mother and preschool teacher. Jon’s use of parallel play and observing peers’ play is reasonable since he is not able to keep pace with his peers’ communication. His vocabulary, both receptive and expressive, exceeds his syntactic development. Lexical/semantic development occurs earlier in children, with rules of syntax emerging at a later point. Jon’s greater success with Lexical/Semantic items implies that his syntax abilities are less developed.
Jon will profit from individual and small group language therapy in receptive and expressive language, with a focus on expression. Opportunities for practice during play and social scripting such as cooking, playing store, and dramatic play with costumes will provide motivation and realistic contexts for learning. Instruction should include multisensory opportunities: see it, hear it, say it, touch it, do it. Following are recommendations for intervention goals based on the OWLS-II test results. These include both lexical/semantic and syntactic skills. Both areas require intervention, but work on syntax will need to start at a more basic level.

- Instruction in comprehension and use of present tense and present progressive tense verbs in first and third person singular and plural
- Instruction in comprehension and use of possessive nouns (such as Mom’s, my sister’s)
- Instruction in comprehension and use of personal pronouns
- Instruction in comprehension and use of basic concepts (size, number, shape)
- Instruction in comprehension and use of prepositional phrases using in, on, under
- Instruction in comprehension and use of requests, polite responses, simple social routines

Following are suggestions for Jon’s parents and preschool teacher to enhance his language development and support therapy goals:

- Create an environment that is rich in language, with opportunities for listening and speaking.
- Read daily to Jon using simple, repetitive story books, such as *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, *The Sleeping House*, and *Goodnight, Moon*. Read Mother Goose rhymes.
- Listen to and sing simple children’s songs, such as those by Raffi.
- Play with Jon using toys like farm, circus, garage, and airport sets, and model talk between toys and descriptions of the action.
- Play with hand and finger puppets, making them talk to each other.
- Narrate as you do tasks around the house or classroom to expose Jon to vocabulary about his environment.
- Play word games such as *I Spy* in the car or while waiting for appointments.
- Explain to Jon’s sister and classroom friend that he needs to talk for himself: “We are all going to help him talk better by not talking for him.”

In summary, based on the OWLS-II oral language scales, Jon demonstrates a delay in both comprehension and expression, demonstrating greater difficulty with expression. He has challenges with both lexical/semantic and syntactic skills; however, his syntactic skills appear to show greater weakness. Jon’s responses to test items demonstrate a developmental pattern of delay and will best be remediated by developing goals and strategies that build upon his strengths to increase weak, missing, and emerging skills and bring his language skills closer to those of his peers. Jon should be reassessed in 6 months to determine the progress that he has made.
**Listening Comprehension and Oral Expression Scales**

Elizabeth Carrow-Woolfolk, Ph.D.

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### Score Summary

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- *Sum of Listening Comprehension and Oral Expression Standard Scores*

### Score Profile

- **Listening Comprehension**
  - Standard Score
  - Percentile

- **Oral Expression**
  - Standard Score
  - Percentile

### Score Comparison

- **Significant Difference**
  - Listening Comprehension
    - Standard Score: 80
  - Oral Expression
    - Standard Score: 67
  - Difference: 13
  - Percentage: 20%

### Notes

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**Figure 9**

**Case 1: Jon**
CASE 2: DERRICK (FIGURE 10)

Derrick, an 8-year, 11-month-old public school third grader, was referred for reevaluation of his special education eligibility under the category of communication disorder. Derrick's Individualized Education Program (IEP) defined services for instruction in written language, social interaction skills, and following oral directions.

Background Information: Teacher Report

Derrick's teacher has a number of concerns related to his language functioning. She reports that he often appears to be lost during group instruction and discussion, and often makes errors in completing assignments when directions are given orally. He does not ask for repetition or clarification of directions. He decodes at grade level but has great difficulty in writing. He has difficulty selecting a topic and beginning, organizing his thoughts, and revising his work. His sentence structure is simple, but his word choice is age appropriate. Derrick is an average speller and uses capitalization and most punctuation correctly.

Derrick is described as “a loner” on the playground. He does not initiate conversations with peers or adults. If he is asked questions, he usually answers with short factual statements. Although Derrick is not as social as his peers, he is liked by his classmates and participates well in cooperative learning groups.

Previous Test Results

Woodcock Johnson-III Normative Update, Tests of Achievement (WJ-III NU)

The WJ-III NU was administered to determine Derrick's academic status. His standard scores were as follows: Broad Reading, 101; Broad Math, 107; Broad Written Language, 83. Derrick is performing academically within normal limits in reading and math, but displays below-average performance in writing.

Current Testing

Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children, Fourth Edition (WISC-IV)

The WISC-IV was administered to Derrick to obtain an estimate of his cognitive functioning. He obtained a Full Scale IQ of 99, with a Verbal Comprehension Index score of 94 and a Perceptual Reasoning Index score of 105. These results suggest that his overall cognitive functioning is average.


The OWLS-II was administered to evaluate Derrick's strengths and weakness in oral, written, receptive, and expressive language, and to help guide the educational team of specialists, his parents, and his regular education teachers in supporting Derrick's educational success. This will require identifying his strengths as well as his weaknesses and using mastered skills to scaffold the acquisition of skills that are not yet mastered. Derrick was administered all four scales measuring both oral and written language.

Listening Comprehension. On the Listening Comprehension (LC) scale of the OWLS-II, Derrick obtained a standard score of 80 with a percentile rank of 9. This indicates that his score is below average when compared to the scores of his same-age peers. His performance was higher than that of only 9% of other children his age. Item analysis was conducted to qualitatively evaluate specific areas of strength and weakness. It revealed the following:

• Lexical/Semantic: Derrick demonstrated good comprehension of lexical/semantic concepts, such as left versus right, and showed knowledge of nouns and verbs. Derrick erred on only one out of nine Lexical/Semantic items.

• Syntactic: Derrick correctly responded to only 3 of the 11 Syntactic items he took. These required understanding of a preposition, superlative, and a conjunctive adverb. He missed many items requiring comprehension of inflections, particularly those measuring knowledge of verb tense. For example, he missed items measuring passive voice, the subjunctive, and past tense. He also missed items requiring comprehension of a pronoun and understanding of compound and complex sentence structure.
• Supralinguistic: Derrick erred on one of the five Supralinguistic items, which was an inference task requiring understanding of double meaning and lexical ambiguity. He showed he comprehended Supralinguistic items measuring understanding of an indirect request and meaning from the context of the statement and picture.

**Oral Expression.** Derrick obtained a standard score of 79 on the Oral Expression (OE) scale with a percentile rank of 8. This indicates that his score is below average when compared to the scores of his same-age peers. His performance was higher than that of only 8% of other children his age. Derrick attempted most items, even when he did not know the answers. On items that differentiated between preferred and acceptable responses, Derrick gave five preferred responses and four acceptable ones. Item analysis was conducted to obtain more information about areas of strength and weakness. It revealed the following:

- **Lexical/Semantic:** Derrick answered six out of eight Lexical/Semantic items correctly. These included proper use of nouns, verbs, and adjectives. He erred on items measuring use of an adjective and adverb.
- **Syntactic:** Derrick answered 11 out of 16 Syntactic items correctly. These items measured prepositions, pronouns, a superlative, regular past tense, and passive voice. However, he demonstrated difficulty with another item requiring use of passive voice sentence structure and three items measuring use of irregular past tense verbs.
- **Supralinguistic:** Derrick correctly answered two Supralinguistic items: one requiring inference from world knowledge and another requiring use of multiple meanings of the word *ring*. Derrick incorrectly answered one Supralinguistic item requiring verbal reasoning.
- **Pragmatic:** Derrick erred on five of eight Pragmatic items, one requiring him to ask an appropriate question, one requiring appropriate conversation, two asking him to give an appropriate description of a sequence of events, and one asking him to compare and contrast two things. The three that he answered correctly showed he could ask some appropriate questions.

The Oral Composite for the LC and OE scales standard scores was 78 with a percentile rank of 7. There is no statistically significant discrepancy between Derrick's LC standard score and his OE standard score.

**Reading Comprehension.** Derrick's performance on the Reading Comprehension (RC) scale suggests that his reading skills are stronger than his skills in other areas of language. He obtained a standard score of 95 and a percentile rank of 37. This indicates that his score is average when compared to the scores of his same-age peers. His performance was higher than that of 37% of other children his age. Item analysis was conducted to evaluate specific areas of strength and weakness. It revealed the following:

- **Lexical/Semantic:** Derrick responded successfully to 15 of the 19 Lexical/Semantic items that he took, which included comprehension of nouns, verbs, modifiers, and bound lexical morphemes. He missed items requiring comprehension of more difficult modifiers and a bound lexical morpheme.
- **Syntactic:** Derrick responded correctly to 9 of the 16 Syntactic items requiring comprehension of pronouns, conjunctions, plurals, noun-verb agreement, and present tense. However, he had a number of errors on the Syntactic items, particularly those with more complicated sentences, such as complex sentences, and ones with prepositional phrases and adverbial clauses.
- **Supralinguistic:** Derrick responded successfully to four of seven Supralinguistic items, including those requiring comprehension of figurative language. He missed items requiring understanding of an idiom and inference from world knowledge.

**Written Expression.** Administration of the Written Expression (WE) scale appeared stressful for Derrick. He remarked, "I really don't like this" after completing three prompts. He held the pencil with a nontraditional grip and used more pressure than needed. He lacked fluid motion as he wrote, and he showed physical and emotional fatigue after 10 minutes. Completion of the task took 25 minutes. He did not proof his work.

Derrick's standard score on the WE was 81 with a percentile rank of 10. This indicates that his score is below average when compared to the scores of his same-age peers and above only 10% of those of others his age. Although Derrick's teacher reported that he used punctuation and capitalization correctly in class writing, on the WE scale he did not consistently use periods and he did not correctly spell every word, even when the model for correct spelling was present.
in the Response Booklet. It is likely that the difference between classroom and test performance is due to the fact that Derrick has a special education assistant working with him in the classroom during writing instruction. Analysis of the WE items shows the following:

- Conventions: Derrick's spelling and punctuation showed some errors. He had great difficulty using appropriate conventions for the structure of a “thank you” note.
- Lexical/Semantic: Derrick used nouns and verbs as needed, but did not use additional words, such as modifiers, to make the writing more complex.
- Syntactic: Derrick erred frequently on the use of correct verb tense and did not use any compound or complex sentences. He also had a sentence fragment on one item. He did use some function words, such as pronouns, appropriately.
- Pragmatic: On an item requiring him to write a “thank you” note, Derrick showed limitations in producing the appropriate social conventions.
- Text Structure: Derrick showed very little use of detail in retelling a story and struggled with appropriate text organization in terms of organizing a list of steps and retelling a story with a beginning, middle, and ending.

The Written Language Composite was a standard score of 88 and percentile rank of 21. A significant difference was found between Derrick's RC score and his WE score. Derrick's RC score was 14 points higher than his WE score. This difference was statistically significant and found to occur between 20% and 25% of the time in the standardization sample. This suggests that the difference may not be clinically meaningful, although it may have some ramifications for intervention. Derrick's RC score was statistically higher than his LC and OE scores as well.

All of Derrick's composite scores were in the below average to average range. His highest composite scores were in Written Language and Receptive Language, reflecting his stronger RC score.

**Summary and Conclusions**

Derrick's WISC-IV and WJ-III NU achievement scores suggest overall average abilities. However, Derrick's classroom performance and OWLS-II results show difficulties with language. On the OWLS-II, Derrick demonstrated below-average skills on three of the four scales. Derrick's responses on the LC and OE scales indicate that he has neither mastered comprehension nor demonstrated consistent use of different verb tenses and complex sentence structures. Based on these scores, it is reasonable to expect simple sentence structure and inflection errors in his writing, as he demonstrated on the WE scale. Similarly, Derrick had difficulty with lengthier items on the RC scale, particularly those with more complex syntax. However, Derrick scored in the average range on the RC scale, indicating that this is an area of relative strength for him.

Lack of comprehension of syntax can negatively impact comprehension of oral discourse. Derrick's teacher reported that he appears to get lost during instruction/lecture and class discussion and makes errors in completion of assignments when oral directions are given. These observations are consistent with his OWLS-II responses. He erred more frequently when oral discourse increased in length or complexity. Since instructional discourse can be long and complex, it is reasonable to expect Derrick to have comprehension problems. These skill difficulties can also relate to some of his limited social interactions if he is unable to fully comprehend social discourse.

Given his stronger ability to comprehend information presented in a written format, it is likely that Derrick's challenges with comprehension of oral language are related to other factors aside from language, such as attention. Interventions for the coming IEP year should include goals that address the following skills:

- Comprehend differences in meaning when verb tenses change (present, present progressive, past, and future tenses) and other inflections are used
- Formulate sentences orally and in writing using present, past, and future verb tenses and other inflections
- Comprehend oral discourse and verbal directions
- Express content meaning and personal opinion; draw inferences and conclusions from oral discourse
The OWLS-II test results suggest a number of ways Derrick’s classroom teachers and parents can assist him. It is essential that adults in Derrick’s family and school setting develop an awareness of his problem with oral comprehension. It should be noted that learning inflections is more difficult than learning function words.

- Conduct comprehension checks at regular intervals to ensure that Derrick is remaining engaged and is accurately interpreting instructions and interactions; these checks can be achieved by asking him questions and having him restate in his own words what he has heard.
- Whenever possible, provide instructions to Derrick in written format.
- Pair discourse with visual supports and hands-on experience.
- Simplify vocabulary, sentence structure, and length of the message when giving important information and directions.
- Provide preferred seating in the classroom; designate a peer buddy who can help Derrick by providing immediate interpretation if the teacher is not available.
- Establish a nonverbal code with his teacher and parents so that if Derrick does not understand something, he can ask for help without drawing attention to himself.
- Provide visual organizers, templates, and word banks for writing assignments.
- Provide Derrick with a “heads up” by giving him an assignment to listen for a specific piece of information, or give him two or three questions he should be able to answer after an instructional presentation.
- Provide access to a computer for writing assignments.
- Integrate teaching using all four processes—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—because they interact with each other.

In summary, Derrick is a student whose test scores on the OWLS-II and teacher report indicate that he presents with a communication difficulty. Although his WJ-III NU achievement scores meet grade-level standards and his WISC-IV scores show average cognitive ability for his age, he still struggles with communication in and out of the classroom. Oral comprehension problems related to syntax deficits and difficulty constructing sentences correctly in the oral and written modes have a negative impact on Derrick’s academic performance. Additional testing is recommended to further understand the specifics of the communication difficulty he has. Specifically, he should have a complete audiological assessment to rule out the possibility of a hearing impairment affecting his comprehension. Additionally, further observations and assessments should test Derrick’s attention and memory to determine if those are impacting his oral comprehension. Finally, he should be administered the Comprehensive Assessment of Spoken Language (CASL) to further compare his abilities in semantics and syntax to be certain that syntax is the primary area of concern.
Comprehensive Profile Form

Name: Derrick
Gender: Male
Age: 8 years, 11 months
Ethnicity: ____________________________
Grade/Educational Level: 3rd
Dialect: ____________________________
Examiner: Mr. Crowe
School/Agency: ____________________________
Reason for Testing: reevaluation

SCORE PROFILE

Standard Score | Percentile
160 | >99.9
150 | 99.6
140 | 98
130 | 91
120 | 75
110 | 50
100 | 25
90 | 9
80 | 2
70 | 1
60 |<0.1
50 |<0.1
40 | 99.6
30 | 98
20 | 75
10 | 50
0 | 25

Listening Comprehension (LC) | Oral Expression (OE) | 1 | Y (Y)
Listening Comprehension (LC) | Reading Comprehension (RC) | 15 | (Y) N
Listening Comprehension (LC) | Written Expression (WE) | 1 | Y (Y)
Oral Expression (OE) | Reading Comprehension (RC) | 16 | (Y) N
Oral Expression (OE) | Written Expression (WE) | 2 | Y (Y)
Written Expression (WE) | Reading Comprehension (RC) | 14 | (Y) N

COMPOSITE SCORES

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See LCIDE or RCWE manual appendixes for scoring tables.

Elizabeth Carrow-Woolfolk, Ph.D.

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W-6029

Figure 10
Case 2: Derrick
Figure 10 (continued)
Case 2: Derrick
## Written Expression (WE) Item Analysis Worksheet

**Ages 8–10 years / Items 13–26**

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| Maximum | 17 9 13 2 4 32 16 11 12 6 3 7 14 2 |
CASE 3: ELLA (FIGURE 11)

Ella is a 12-year, 3-month-old sixth-grade student at a public middle school referred for reevaluation of her special education eligibilities: Communication Disorder and Other Health Impaired (Attention Deficit Disorder). Ella's Individualized Education Program (IEP) includes goals in receptive and expressive oral language, reading, written language, math, and behavior (on-task behavior and work completion).

Background Information: Parent and Teacher Reports

Ella's parents report that she was adopted when she was 5 years old after being removed from her birth parents' home because of neglect and abuse. Her adoptive parents have provided her with private therapies in the areas of speech/language pathology, play and social skills, and fine- and gross-motor development, and counseling for attachment disorder and posttraumatic stress. She currently takes stimulant medication for attention deficit disorder under the direction of her pediatrician. She spends at least 3 hours per night on homework.

Ella's teachers report that in the mainstream classroom for science and social studies, Ella's curriculum is significantly modified and assignments are specially designed and shortened. Textbooks are read to her by a peer buddy or a parent volunteer. She often appears off task during lectures and discussions. She plays with her pencils and stares around the room or talks to her neighbors. Her responses to oral questions are off topic or indicate lack of comprehension of the topic. Quizzes and tests are modified and administered in the resource room with additional time for completion. She turns in less than 50% of the modified assignments, although her parents report that she completes at least 90% of them at home. She is disorganized and often comes to class without needed supplies. She is often and easily frustrated. She cries, pouts, or acts defiant when frustrated.

Ella enjoys sports and is above average in soccer, basketball, and water skiing. Although she has social problems with school peers, Ella shows strong empathy toward a Sunday school friend who is chronically ill. She enjoys drawing and participating in any hands-on project in science and social studies. When she develops a trusting relationship with teachers and staff, Ella is willing to try more difficult tasks.

Previous Test Results

Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children–Fourth Edition (WISC-IV)

The WISC-IV was administered for Ella's previous 3-year reevaluation. The Full Scale IQ was 84, which falls in the below average range.

Wechsler Individual Achievement Test–Second Edition (WIAT-II)

The WIAT-II scores obtained 3 years ago were also in the below average range:
- Reading composite standard score 77, percentile rank 6
- Math composite standard score 78, percentile rank 7
- Written Language standard score 83, percentile rank 13

Current Test Results

Informal Reading Inventory (IRI)

An Informal Reading Inventory (IRI) was administered to determine Ella's reading decoding, fluency, and comprehension skills. Given a fourth-grade passage, Ella decoded with 93% accuracy at the rate of 95 words per minute and a 75% comprehension level. These scores show growth of 1 full year in a 9-month time frame.

Pure Tone Audiological Assessment

Ella passed a pure tone hearing screen. She was tested in a quiet room at 15 dB bilaterally at 500, 1000, 2000, 4000, 6000, and 8000 Hz.
Appendix D: Case Examples


The OWLS-II was administered to determine Ella's current strengths and weaknesses in oral and written language skills in the receptive and expressive domains to determine eligibility for special education and make recommendations to teachers and staff for more effective instruction. All four scales were administered.

**Listening Comprehension.** Ella obtained a standard score of 82 with a percentile rank of 12, which is below the expected performance level of her age-matched peers. It is above 12% of that of her same-age peers. This comprehension score represents Ella’s peak performance while working in a quiet, distraction-free environment in combination with visual information. Item analysis was conducted to qualitatively evaluate specific areas of strength and weakness. It revealed the following:

- **Lexical/Semantic:** This appears to be Ella's weakest listening comprehension skill. She responded correctly to three out of nine items involving comprehension of vocabulary and idioms. Although Ella is developing flexibility and maturity in vocabulary, she has not yet reached the expected mastery level for her age.
- **Syntactic:** Ella demonstrated the strongest skill in the syntactic area. She answered 13 of the 15 items correctly, comprehending meaning of complex sentence structure, passive voice, past perfect progressive tense, noun-verb agreement, and subjunctive tense. Her errors were on items with correlative conjunctions.
- **Supralinguistic:** Ella responded correctly to 7 of the 11 Supralinguistic items, including those measuring inference from world knowledge, understanding of double meaning, indirect request, figurative language, and verbal reasoning. Her incorrect responses were on similar types of items, but of greater difficulty.

**Oral Expression.** Ella obtained a standard score of 71 with a percentile rank of 3. This falls at the low end of the below average range and is above only 3% of the scores of her same-age peers. Ella attempted most items, although she did not provide a response for two items. On items that differentiated between preferred and acceptable responses, Ella gave four preferred responses and four acceptable ones. In general, Ella was successful on items intended for younger individuals. Item analysis was conducted to provide additional insight into areas of strength and weakness. It revealed the following:

- **Lexical/Semantic:** Ella correctly answered six of the nine items, but missed items requiring her to describe the qualities of a teacher and the process of subtraction. She also missed an idiom.
- **Syntactic:** Ella correctly responded to 8 of the 13 Syntactic items she took, which included noun-verb agreement, conjunctions, pronouns, prepositions, irregular past tense verbs, a superlative, and simple sentence structure. She erred on items requiring use of passive voice, irregular past tense, and subjunctive tense.
- **Supralinguistic:** She correctly responded to two Supralinguistic items requiring inference from world knowledge and comprehension of lexical ambiguity.
- **Pragmatic:** Ella correctly answered most of the items (9 of 10), including appropriately comparing and contrasting nouns, describing a sequence of events, requesting information, and providing information according to social routine. The one item she missed was a more difficult one requiring her to request information.

The Oral Language Composite for the Listening Comprehension (LC) and Oral Expression (OE) scales standard scores was 75 with a percentile rank of 5. Ella's LC score was 11 points higher than her OE score. This difference was statistically significant and found to occur more than 25% of the time in the standardization sample. This suggests that the difference may not be clinically meaningful, although it may have some ramifications for intervention. In general, it is understandable that Ella struggles to keep up with her classmates in the mainstream classroom. It also follows that the deficits that she has demonstrated in listening comprehension and oral expression impact her ability to integrate into the social scene of the middle school.

**Reading Comprehension.** Ella's performance on the Reading Comprehension (RC) scale illustrates that she does have significant difficulty understanding material she reads. She obtained a standard score of 79 and a percentile rank of 8. This indicates that her score is below average when compared to that of her same-age peers and above only 8% of her same-age peers. Item analysis was conducted to evaluate specific areas of strength and weakness. It revealed the following:
Appendix D: Case Examples

• Lexical/Semantic: Ella was able to correctly answer items requiring comprehension of adjectives, adverbs, verbs, nouns, and prefixes. However, she showed difficulty in understanding some modifiers and bound lexical morphemes.

• Syntactic: On Syntactic items, Ella was able to correctly answer 6 of 11 items measuring the use of function words, such as subordinating conjunctions and prepositions. She erred on items measuring complex sentence structure and word order.

• Supralinguistic: Ella correctly answered four of eight Supralinguistic items. All four successful items required inference from world knowledge. The items she missed measured figurative language, sarcasm, and idioms in context.

• Pragmatic: Ella took two Pragmatic items, both of which measured understanding social norms. She answered one correctly and one incorrectly.

Written Expression. Ella attempted all prompts presented; however, she was given an item set for a younger age range due to the difficulties she showed on the initial items. Ella’s standard score was below 40 with a percentile rank of <0.1. This represents a deficient score and the likely presence of a disorder. Analysis of item subcomponents shows the following:

• Conventions: Ella earned a few spelling points because she spells many commonly used words correctly. Her spelling errors were frequently attempts to phonetically spell words and demonstrated a lack of knowledge of variations for vowels. Ella uses capitals and periods correctly in most contexts but does not use other ending punctuation, commas, or quotation marks correctly.

• Lexical/Semantic: Ella uses few modifiers in her writing. She earned 1 modifier point.

• Syntactic: Ella earned very few points for correct use of function words and inflections. She earned points for simple sentence structure but made no attempt to construct compound or complex sentences. Ella always gave brief responses, which is consistent with her approach to classroom writing assignments. She makes a minimal effort until she is prompted to do more. Her writing lacks organization and is restricted to simple sentence structure.

• Pragmatic: Ella expressed meaningful content on the item requiring writing a “thank you” note but did not use the social conventions of a greeting or farewell and did not elaborate on the topic.

Ella’s score on the Written Expression (WE) scale is significantly below her scores on the other three scales. The differences between her WE score and other scores occurred with rarity in the standardization sample and therefore represent clinical significance. Writing will be Ella’s greatest academic challenge and will negatively impact all aspects of her school performance. It will be difficult for her to complete compositions, essay questions, or even short-answer questions assigned in mainstream science and social studies classes without continued modifications, specific individual instruction, and assistance.

Ella’s composite scores range from deficient to below average, suggesting an overall difficulty with language. Due to the large discrepancy between her WE score and other scores, the individual scales provide the most useful means of interpreting her performance.

Summary and Conclusions

On the OWLS-II, Ella demonstrated below-average scores on three of the scales, with a very low written language score. There is a developmental pattern to her OWLS-II results. Ella’s receptive skills, both oral and written, are stronger than her expressive skills, and her oral skills surpass her written skills. Using item analysis and comparing across the four scales, intervention goals can be set that use Ella’s strengths in oral skills to scaffold instruction for written language skills. Taking advantage of the developmental profile of Ella’s delay will provide structure for her learning and can assist her in gaining skills more effectively and efficiently. Considering Ella’s history of neglect and abuse for the first 5 years of her life, it is important to remember that many of the language skills that are normally acquired in the preschool and primary school years now need to be taught in a manner that is age appropriate for a preteen. The fact that Ella had greater difficulty on Lexical/Semantic as compared with Syntactic items likely results from the lack of a stimulating environment during her early years. Suggestions for instructional goals for the coming IEP year follow. These goals
should be approached in all four processes—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—while keeping in mind that Ella's overall cognitive ability may be below what is expected for her age.

- Instruction in vocabulary, beginning with basic words and moving up to more complex words as she masters the easier ones
- Instruction in comprehension and use of various verb tenses, such as past, perfect, future, and subjunctive case
- Instruction in sentence structure, including compound and complex sentences using *and, but, if, or, although*
- Instruction in interpreting and using multiple-meaning words, adjectives, adverbs, idioms, and figurative forms
- Instruction in providing details in language expression
- Instruction to identify inference and logical statements and to use inference and logical statement in presenting reasons
- Instruction in identifying and using appropriate social interaction skills, such as on-topic conversation, truthful comments, introducing a topic, expressing disagreement, and appropriate response to teasing and taunting

The OWLS-II test results suggest a number of ways Ella's classroom teachers and parents can assist her:

- All individuals working with Ella should understand her current overall language skill strengths and weaknesses.
- Use visual supports—such as organizers, templates, outlines, drawings, and charts—when giving instruction on new material and directions to complete assignments.
- Utilize a multisensory teaching approach (see, hear, say, do).
- Provide preferential seating to reduce distractions and promote opportunity for active involvement.
- Provide a peer buddy for note taking and comprehension checks and in cooperative learning groups.
- Perform frequent checks for listening and reading comprehension.
- Provide opportunities to practice newly taught skills in multiple contexts and across domains (listening, speaking, reading, and writing).
- Identify three to five curriculum concepts from mainstream class content that are essential for Ella to master during each instructional unit.
- Bring grade-level content and "big ideas" into specific instruction in reading, math, and writing within the resource room through the collaboration of learning specialists and classroom teachers.
- Provide opportunities for Ella to rehearse scripts for social situations in the classroom, cafeteria, gym, and so on.
- Use shared writing to provide Ella with positive examples of structures and expose her to new skills: "You write a sentence about ____, and I will write a sentence about it, too."
- Limit the number of questions or paragraphs assigned to what can be completed in a short work time, such as 10 to 15 minutes, to maximize Ella's attention and motivation. Increase the amount of work and time as she becomes more skilled.

In summary, based on the OWLS-II results, Ella is a student with a language delay that increases in significance as skills along the developmental continuum become more complex. Her performance on earlier developing skills such as listening comprehension of sentence structure and verbs predicts her ability to express these structures orally and in writing, as well as her ability to comprehend these structures when reading. Ella's deficits are understandable because of her early childhood. She is capable of continued development in all areas and has demonstrated growth, particularly in reading, over the past 9 months. Following the developmental continuum of the OWLS-II, it is possible not only to identify Ella's strengths and weaknesses, but also to design a fully integrated plan of instruction that builds on her present and emerging development and brings her closer to the developmental level of her age-matched peers.

It is recommended that further testing be conducted to obtain a more recent measurement of her overall cognitive ability to assist in providing the most appropriate interventions. It may be most useful to administer a nonverbal test of intelligence to help predict her ability level without the influence of language and to determine if she is experiencing an overall cognitive delay that is affecting her language functioning.
**Comprehensive Profile Form**

**Elizabeth Carrow-Woolfolk, Ph.D.**

### Name: Ella

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
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<td>Age</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Grade/Educational Level</td>
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<td>Dialect</td>
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<td>School/Agency</td>
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### COMPOSITE SCORES

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<th>Composite</th>
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<th>Confidence Interval</th>
<th>Percentile Rank</th>
<th>Description</th>
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### SCALE COMPARISONS

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<th>Difference</th>
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See LC/DE or RC/WE manual appendices for scoring tables.

---

**Figure 11**

Case 3: Ella
### Written Expression (WE) Item Analysis Worksheet

**Ages 8–10 years / Items 13–26**

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<th>Conventions</th>
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<th>Syntactic</th>
<th>Pragmatic</th>
<th>Text Structure</th>
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</table>

**Total Awarded**

|       | 6 | 6 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

**Maximum Award**

|       | 17 | 9 | 13 | 2 | 4 | 32 | 16 | 11 | 12 | 6 | 3 | 7 | 14 | 2 |