

CASE STUDY

Case Study: Background Assessment/Profile

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Family Background

Patrick is five and recently started Kindergarten. Patrick is a White American born to two parents who emigrated from South Africa. He lives with both his parents and his sister, who is nine years old. His father struggled with Dyslexia throughout school. Patrick attends a Charter School that utilizes a collaborative model, with each parent required to spend a certain amount of time serving as a teacher's aide in the classroom. Patrick's mother, Joan, reports that she is in his class once a week for a four-hour shift. This includes reading with children, correcting homework, making copies, and escorting children to the nurse, among other activities.

Student Interview

During our interview, Patrick was polite and talkative. He showed enthusiasm as he spoke about school. We sat and talked for forty minutes. He stayed attentive and engaged but consistently wiggled throughout the conversation. Patrick was inquisitive about the function of and difference between my pens, mechanical pencils, and highlighters. He listened to my explanation with interest and requested to try each of them while he narrated his observations the entire time.

Patrick shared that his favorite thing at school is playing games on the playground. His favorite thing to do in class is to "draw a picture that means the word" that starts with the sound the teacher gives them. Patrick shared that the class has yet to get through all the letters, so he cannot name all of them, but that "I" is for Ivan. His least favorite is math. Outside of school, his favorite thing to do is to build with his blocks. When he grows up, he wants to be an engineer who uses a computer to plan buildings.

Parent Interview

I do not have access to Patrick's teacher or his records. However, I was able to interview his parents and learn from their observations and the feedback they had received thus far from the teacher. Patrick's mother, Joan, shared that he shines in social and emotional skills. He's respectful in class, listens well, and easily builds positive relationships with his classmates and teachers. He has a natural ability to navigate challenging situations with empathy and maturity, which makes him a supportive peer to others. He's particularly engaged with project-based work, where he enjoys diving into a topic, applying his creativity, and working collaboratively. His understanding of numbers is solid, and he speaks and shares ideas confidently. His ability to communicate effectively and connect with others contributes to his success in school and makes him a valued class member. These observations are consistent with the time we have spent together thus far.

Joan shared that the feedback they had received indicated that he could use additional support in developing his phonemic and phonological awareness. He sometimes struggles to sound out letters and blend them to form words, which impacts his ability to read words independently. Specifically, he needs to recognize letters and consistently associate them with their correct sounds. Strengthening his phonological awareness—his ability to distinguish and manipulate the sounds within words—will undoubtedly help build a stronger foundation for reading.

These insights indicate a preliminary plan for assessing phonemic and phonological awareness, beginning/middle/end sounds, blending, word decoding, and fluency, as well as letter recognition and sound identification.

Quick Phonological Awareness Screening Result Summary for Patrick

Patrick shows proficiency in Rhyming Recognition, Rhyming Production, Syllable Awareness (where he held his hand under his chin as he repeated the words with exaggerated movements, illustrating a clearly learned behavior), and Initial Sound Identification. He scored 5/5 for each of these sections of our assessment. Patrick answered correctly on only the first sentence for Word Awareness, scoring a 1/5. However, this is likely due to the coincidence that the correct answer is the same as the example, as evidenced by his guessing the same answer for the subsequent two sentences where that answer was wrong. For over three seconds, Patrick contemplated the first word given for Final Sound Identification and responded, “I don’t know.” Finally, on Sound Segmentation and Sound Blending, he immediately responded with I don’t know. For each of these sections, Patrick scored 0/5.

The assessment, given in November, reflects Patrick’s progress for the first third of his Kindergarten year. Areas that reflect a 1/5 or 0/5 are areas where Patrick’s subsequent learning will need to focus; however, given the timing within the year and the curriculum, no interventions are indicated.

Heggerty Letter Identification and Sounds Assessment Result Summary for Patrick

Partick exhibits proficiency in Alphabet Recognition: Uppercase Letters (15/26) for the beginning of the school year administration. Partick began the exam by declaring he didn't know any of the letters. After a pause of more than three seconds, I named the first letter and pointed to the second, asking him to tell me the name. For Alphabet Recognition: Lowercase Letters (9/28) and Letter Sound Identification (7/26), Partick's skills are developing.

As this assessment was given in mid-November, Patrick's scores indicate a need to focus more specifically on lowercase letters and letter sound identification. This is consistent with the observations shared during the preliminary interview.