

PSYCHED SERVICES IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE:

COMPREHENSIVE,
STRENGTHS-BASED,
USER-FRIENDLY
REPORT WRITING

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WELCOME!

We are Psyched that you are here!

In this document, you will find implementation guidance for some of our resources,* including the Psyched Services Assessment Matrix, the Psyched Services Report Writing Style Guide, and the Key Components Checklist: Comprehensive, Strengths-Based, User-Friendly Reports.

These materials, along with this implementation guide, are designed to facilitate school psychologists in completing evaluations and reports that are comprehensive, strengths-based, and user-friendly so as to increase competence, confidence, and efficiency within your work. We want you to Learn so that you can Do! As fellow school psychologists, our bottom line goal is to improve the quality of services we provide to schools and families, and especially for the students we support, in order to best facilitate their learning and development and maximize their future outcomes.

*Although this implementation guide is designed to be used in conjunction with the other materials delineated above, it also provides relevant information for practitioners as a stand-alone document.

For any questions, please ask! We welcome and appreciate your feedback.

COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION AND REPORT WRITING

Overview

According to IDEA, schools must conduct comprehensive, individualized evaluations when determining:

- whether a student meets eligibility under one of the disability categories
- the student's educational needs and the most appropriate supports to best meet those needs.

The evaluation must be individualized, meaning that districts, school psychology departments, and/or independent practitioners should not merely use the same standard battery of tests for every student (Reschly, 2000; Yell, 2019).

Decisions about which assessment measures to utilize should be based on the reason for referral; parent/guardian's input and concerns; and the individual student's characteristics, such as developmental level, communication skills, language proficiency, strengths and challenge areas, and learning and behavioral presentation (Bateman, 2017; Yell, 2019).

As part of a comprehensive and individualized evaluation, a student must be evaluated in every area of suspected need.

In addition, a comprehensive evaluation must include multiple sources of data using a variety of assessment tools and procedures, and no single score or measure can be used in the decision-making process about the student's placement or services.

Using the Psyched Services Assessment Matrix

Utilize our Psyched Services Assessment Matrix as a guide to plan your evaluation and ensure that all areas of suspected disability are included as part of a comprehensive evaluation that provides meaningful assessment in each student's relevant areas of skill and functioning.

Select the suspected area of disability (or disabilities) for a high-level overview of what to consider within each assessment area, including review of records, other professionals to include (when relevant and allowable within your district), interviews/informal input, rating scales, assessment observations, and direct measures.

STRENGTHS-BASED EVALUATION AND REPORT WRITING

Overview

Research indicates that parents are concerned about the focus on negativity within school communications and desire the addition of positive information when school staff are sharing about their child's challenges (Rosetti et al., 2017). Parents are also more likely to accept difficult information when it is communicated with sincerity and genuine interest in working collaboratively with the family (Grant & Ray, 2016).

Subsequently, it behooves us as school psychologists to ensure that our psychoeducational evaluations and reports are strengths-based in nature. Evaluation results should tell a story about the student that is helpful for the student, their family, and their educators/relevant service providers in meeting their individual needs for educational, social, and/or community success.

Using a Strengths-Based Lens

Strengths-based assessments are beneficial to the students, their families, and the school teams. While our reports are used to identify areas of need for special education eligibility and program planning, focusing on skill deficits without acknowledging students' strengths and capacity to learn – regardless of rate of learning – risks discouraging and even stigmatizing students in the evaluation process (Climie & Henley, 2016).

In order to complete evaluations and reports using a strengths-based approach, it is important to include strengths throughout the report, including the background, observations, body of the report, and summary. In addition, the recommendations section should include information and suggestions as to how the student's individual strengths can be leveraged in intervention planning.

- Within the background section, be sure to include positive information about the student, including their interests, talents, and character traits that are strengths. For instance, a child may present with strengths in traits such as empathy, cooperation, communication, leadership, resilience, or adaptability. A student with significant attention challenges may enjoy helping others, being assigned a special leadership position, or engaging in one-on-one conversations with adults about their areas of interest.
- Similarly, strengths should be shared within the observation section. For instance, if a child struggles with time on task, they may also be highly enthusiastic during preferred activities or benefit when provided reminders or scaffolding.
- Within the body of the report, student strengths should include intraindividual and relative strength areas from cognitive, academic, adaptive, and/or social/emotional/behavioral domains that were assessed.

STRENGTHS-BASED EVALUATION AND REPORT WRITING

- It is also important to reiterate areas of strength in the summary of the report.
- Include the child's strengths in intervention planning and recommendations. For instance, for a highly verbal child who talks through problem-solving aloud, they can be encouraged to subvocalize during tasks. For a child with strengths in visual processing, encouraging the use of visual supports such as pictures, pictorial stimuli, graphs, checklists, bulleted lists, or graphic organizers, may be helpful.

Our asynchronous training on the One-Page Summary Guide, available at [Psyched Services' One-Page Summary: The Stress-Free IEP Meeting Is Here \(Really\). - learn.do](#), and the accompanying summary guide, also include additional sample descriptions of student strengths within the areas of social-emotional/behavioral functioning, cognitive processes, academic aptitude, adaptive skills, motor skills, social skills, and interests/talents.

For more information on this topic, refer to our related materials, including the following blogs:
[How strength-based assessments help students discover growth areas \(psychedservices.com\)](#)
[In Search of a Strength-Based Approach to Special Education - Psyched Services](#)

Additional information about strengths-based evaluations and report writing are also included in our report templates as well as our functional implications and recommendations resource.

USER-FRIENDLY REPORT WRITING

Overview

What does it mean to write user-friendly reports? There are already great resources available about the overall topic of report writing, including the book *Writing Useful, Accessible, and Legally Defensible Psychoeducational Reports* by Michael R. Hass and Jeanne Anne Carriere (2014) (Wiley).

However, what has often been overlooked in applied practice is HOW to write. Yes, all school psychologists completed a specialized graduate program and are considered subject matter experts in their fields, but many of us have lacked guidance on the most accurate ways to write psychoeducational evaluations, resulting in reports (often within the same district or even by the same school psychologist—pointing at myself here!) that lack consistent style and formatting.

USER-FRIENDLY REPORT WRITING

We want to help you with that! One way to increase readability is to ensure that the writing style used in the report is consistent throughout the document. Well-written reports ensure that the reader is not distracted by poor grammar, frequent spelling errors, inconsistent styling, or formatting issues.

Using the Psyched Services Report Writing Style Guide

That is why we developed the Psyched Services Report Writing Style Guide. This resource provides school psychologists with the most relevant formatting guidelines and proofreading for psychoeducational reports to increase readability and user-friendliness.

This document includes useful information on how to write reports with consideration of audience and tone; general writing guidelines; how to reference people in the body of a report; mechanics of writing, including commonly used abbreviations and acronyms within the field; common capitalization usage relevant to psychoeducational evaluation; punctuation, including commas, hyphens, and semicolons; and how to write numbers, dates, and time.

TYING IT TOGETHER

Using the Psyched Services Key Component Checklist: Comprehensive, Strengths-Based, User-Friendly Reports

When learning a new skill or system, it is important to have a structured plan for measuring your success, which is why we developed the Psyched Services Key Component Checklist: Comprehensive, Strengths-Based, User-Friendly Reports.

This document offers you guidance on self-assessing your current reports so that you can celebrate areas of success, and identify potential areas in need of improvement.

This document can also be used by individual school psychologists who have started implementing these guidelines as periodic quality control checks to ensure that their reports include these components consistently.

School psychology trainers may also find this tool useful in helping new or student practitioners ensure that their reports are comprehensive, strengths-based, and user-friendly.

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