

## Some Recommendations for Jerry's Educational Team

### Addressing Strengths:

Scrutinize each subject Jerry is taking and determine if there are ways to differentiate his learning experiences through content extension, adding depth and complexity, and by adjusting the instructional pace so that he doesn't get bored. Mathematics is an area of strength for Jerry, so attention should be given to ensuring the appropriate instructional level.

Investigate a variety of course options with Jerry for the rest of his high school career, such as accelerated curriculum, advanced placement, online courses, internships, college courses, etc. College planning should be done early with Jerry to be certain that the appropriate university is selected and that necessary classes have been taken for admissions requirements.

Explore some mentoring options for Jerry, such as deaf role models and math experts.

### Addressing Challenges:

Use the Colorado Communication Plan to its fullest extent in planning Jerry's educational options. See CDE Fast Facts about the Communication Plan at <[http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/download/pdf/FF-DHH\\_Communication\\_Plan.pdf](http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/download/pdf/FF-DHH_Communication_Plan.pdf)>. Be creative while thinking of access to his full school day and co- or extra-curricular opportunities rather than simply thinking of his grades or other smaller aspects of his educational experience.

Even though Jerry appears to be doing well at a surface level, it is still advisable to ask him how he thinks it is going and look at providing some common accommodations. Often students who are deaf or hard of hearing and bright figure out ways to accommodate themselves, but these accommodations are sometimes not very efficient. Simply needing to be visually aware of everything going on and not being able to use your hearing to clue you in to pay attention can be very fatiguing. The educational team should also check on the amount of time Jerry is spending on homework compared to his peers. It might also be helpful to have a private conversation with Jerry about what works well for him in his classes and what doesn't. Then this information can be used to help teachers know what approaches work best for Jerry. These pieces of information can be compiled and used to custom-build a set of accommodations that will help him thrive. One accommodation checklist that many people use in Colorado can be found at the Hands & Voices Web site at <[http://www.handsandvoices.org/resources/pubs/iep\\_cklist.htm](http://www.handsandvoices.org/resources/pubs/iep_cklist.htm)>.

Consider ways to support Jerry's social growth and peer interactions both in and out of school; discuss ways to teach general educators and peers sign language over time so they can directly and more fully communicate with Jerry. Conduct inservice training for all of the general educators (and other school staff) about hearing loss and how best to communicate, change the pace of instruction and activities, and provide visual support of instruction. For example, the team should discuss ways to adjust group projects and discussions so Jerry has access. Perhaps

It would seem that working memory is also a weakness for Brandon. As much as possible, strains on working memory should be alleviated. In writing, the sooner he can be taught to keyboard, the better. While this may take a long time and be frustrating in the beginning, it will be worth it in the long run. Also, Brandon should be taught to write in a process. First, he should organize his thoughts — this could be dictating a brainstorm into a tape recorder or using a graphic organizer. His first draft should focus just on getting ideas on paper. Next, he should edit for organization only. Then, he should edit for conventions, and so on. This frees up his brain to focus on only one thing at a time. For math, he should be allowed to write the steps to problem-solving on an index card so that it can help speed up this process. He knows how to do the steps, but gets overwhelmed with too many of them. Having them on paper allows him to be more efficient. Also, Brandon should be allowed to use paper that helps organize space. Graph paper, for example, helps to keep problems lined up.

Whenever possible Brandon should also be taught how concepts relate to each other. Because cognitive flexibility is a weakness, he needs to be directly taught generalization skills.

Brandon should also be allowed extra time to complete assignments or he should have shortened assignments. Any time a long-term project has been assigned to Brandon, a teacher or other adult should sit with him to sub-task it into smaller parts in order to make it more manageable. Timelines should be established with a checklist so that Brandon can monitor his progress and determine whether or not he will finish in a timely manner.

Lastly, Brandon has some emotional concerns that need to be addressed. He should have a safe person he feels comfortable talking to when he gets overwhelmed. He should be allowed to go to this person or a safe place when he feels he is losing control. He may need a hand signal or sign to let his teachers know when he needs to get himself together. He should also be taught coping strategies that will enable him to manage his emotions in the classroom better.



*Gifted students' learning and growth  
ensured by needed provisions and advocacy*

## **Some Recommendations for Brandon's Educational Team**

### **Addressing Strengths:**

Brandon has some significant strengths and should be allowed to use them as much as possible. For example, because he has strong verbal skills he should be allowed to give oral presentations and to use oral assessment. Brandon enjoys reading, so he should be allowed to have choice in his reading material. Choice will help Brandon to maintain his enjoyment of reading.

Additionally, he would benefit from group work where he where he can use his strong interpersonal skills. The remaining group members may have strengths that could balance out Brandon's weaknesses.

In mathematics, Brandon should be pre-assessed to determine what he already knows and should then be provided with more advanced levels of instruction. The "most difficult first" strategy should be a regular part of Brandon's assignments. This will help him to receive appropriate credit for what he has learned while eliminating the opportunity for him to lose his work before he can turn it in. Curriculum compacting and acceleration in mathematics will allow Brandon to continue his learning in the content area of his talent.

### **Addressing Challenges:**

Brandon is the type of student most likely to be labeled lazy. Because there is such a large discrepancy between what it seems like he should be able to do and what he actually does, teachers may struggle to understand why accommodations are necessary. First and foremost, all of his teachers need to understand that, while his verbal reasoning skills are quite strong, he will need support in the classroom.

To support Brandon with following directions, several steps should be taken. All directions should be provided both in writing as well as verbally. Before directions are given, Brandon should be cued that something important is coming. This could be a hand signal, teacher proximity, an announcement with wait time, etc. Directions should be given in a step-by-step manner (first, next, last, etc.) when possible. The teacher should also have Brandon (or other students) clarify directions in their own words (for example, "What will you do first?" or "Turn to your partner and explain in your own words what you should do.") Frequent check-ins at the beginning of an assignment would also be beneficial.

In terms of organization, Brandon and a trusted adult should come up with a plan for keeping him organized, and should meet regularly to evaluate the system. Brandon needs to have a voice in how this occurs or he will be less likely to buy in to the plan. Also, Brandon should be included in order to empower him. Teachers should ask, "Where are you going to put this?" and "How will you remember where it is?" frequently until this becomes routine for him.

## Some Recommendations for Alicia's Educational Team

### Addressing Strengths:

Allowing Alicia to use oral expression for demonstration of learning will be beneficial. With her advanced vocabulary and excellent memory, she should be encouraged to further develop her presentation skills. Perhaps this could include observing public speakers and television news personalities.

Research conducted on the computer has been successful for Alicia. Thus, this method should be encouraged in lieu of methods more tedious for her. She should also use the computer or other similar keyboarding mechanism to word-process her writing, which already exhibits creativity and good ideas. Her writing talent should be even further developed in the areas of voice, perspective, and word choice. She should be writing in a variety of styles and for a variety of purposes and audiences. As she develops her confidence in her writing ability, the grammatical and spelling difficulties can be addressed by the teacher, or other individual, acting as her editor.

Alicia should be allowed to use her passion for horses whenever she chooses to do so as she learns other skills. Alternate assessments that incorporate choice for Alicia to use her artistic ability would provide an appropriate means to demonstrate learning.

### Addressing Challenges:

Alicia's phonemic awareness should be tested. Given her trouble with decoding and spelling there is a strong possibility that Alicia does not have strong letter-sound correspondence. With a systematic, structured approach to provide instruction at her level, such as a multi-sensory phonemic awareness program, Alicia should be able to overcome this.

Alicia's teacher should help her to understand herself as a learner and as an individual. Talking with her about the fact that she is not stupid, but that she simply needs to be taught in another way, will help.

Alicia should be given opportunities to read texts at her instructional level. In content areas, she should not be required to read aloud in front of the class. The teacher could have the students choral read, read with partners, pre-read, and then read as a class. During this process, the teacher should make sure Alicia is able to figure out all the words before the final step. This will alleviate a lot of stress for Alicia. Also, whenever possible, the teacher should pre-teach vocabulary. This would allow the students, and Alicia in particular, to become more familiar and comfortable with vocabulary before reading it in a passage.

In writing, Alicia should be taught how to use graphic organizers for pre-writing activities. She should be encouraged to write in stages (get thoughts and ideas down first, then go back to edit for spelling, then go back to edit for organization, and so on). Because Alicia relies upon and is successful using her visual memory, she can be taught to practice her spelling words using visual methods (colored marker, word shape, etc.).

It may be helpful for Alicia to have a lunch group so that she can learn how to interact better with her peers. This should be facilitated (at least in the beginning) by an adult, and she should be taught some strategies on how to initiate conversations with peers, and how to find out what they might have in common.

## Some Recommendations for Doug's Educational Team

### Addressing Strengths:

Matching Doug with a mature mentor/professional in the field of music could benefit him in many ways. The mentor could assist Doug to develop his skill in writing musical lyrics and could even help him explore career opportunities and college pathways. Doug should identify the skills necessary and ideal level of education for his future aspirations. He might be interested in learning about graphic design or directing. He should "discover," with guidance, why skills in school are important for his aspirations. Finally, this mentor should be someone Doug can look up to as a positive leadership example.

A natural leader, Doug should be offered opportunities to develop this talent in a positive manner. Specific leadership instruction in a small focus group could be provided. At the appropriate time, Doug could be encouraged to start an after school club, sponsored by a teacher, for students interested in starting a rock band or learning an instrument.

Finally, his artistic talent should be encouraged by an art teacher. He should be allowed to use his artistic and musical talent in products to show learning and as alternate assessments.

### Addressing Challenges:

Educators should take the time to get to know Doug — not with regard to school topics, but what he does for fun, what bands he likes, what instrument he wants to play; they should ask to see his CD designs and his artwork. Doug needs to have a connection to his teachers and to feel important and valued.

Doug would benefit from small-group projects where he could use his talents. Making him a group leader, and talking to him privately about how well he is expected to perform, would be helpful.

During instruction, the teacher's use of examples that connect to Doug's interests will help him to become engaged (for example, CD sales in a math lesson). This does not have to be daily, but from time to time.

Doug would also benefit from being allowed choice in his learning and in activities. This can help him feel empowered. However, the teacher must always make clear the expectations and parameters.

Doug will need frequent positive feedback with regard to his strengths and what he has done well. This should be specific and genuine. He will see through artificial attempts, and this could damage any rapport an educator would have established with him.

## Some Recommendations for George's Educational Team

### Addressing Strengths:

As with many gifted learners, George enjoys learning to greater depth, as evidenced by his "why" and "what if" questions. Thus, complexity and higher-order thinking skills should be embedded in his instruction and in his activities. Lessons should be designed that allow George to delve into a topic in more depth.

Special attention should be given to George's areas of strength. Utilizing the body of evidence that has been compiled for his gifted identification should reveal some of these areas.

George has an interest in science-related themes and is already beginning to investigate UFOs and extraterrestrial beings. Allowing George to utilize this topic for writing, for research, and for investigating mathematics when he so chooses may help him to maintain interest in his work.

### Addressing Challenges:

Because George works so well in small groups, he should be given opportunities to do this often. During independent work time, it would be helpful to use a timer for George. Start small — ask him to work for five minutes. Then allow a short break to get a drink, stand and stretch, or run an errand. Using a timer will help George to focus for a set amount of time that he can see. Give him goals such as "I want you to finish three sentences before the timer goes off."

When giving directions, give the big idea first, such as what the outcome will be, or the purpose of the assignment, and then provide the details. George is a big-picture thinker, and would greatly appreciate this. Use nonverbal cueing such as close proximity, standing in a specific spot in the room, a hand on George's shoulder, etc. Directly instruct what to look and listen for when important information is about to be given: identify students doing the right thing and call the class's attention to it. Change tone of voice during large-group instruction: sometimes a quiet voice is more powerful than a loud one. Positively reinforce the small things that George does right, being specific and genuine. After giving directions, have him restate them in his own words or through choral response by having several students do this. Provide important information both in writing and verbally.

During transition times, prompt George with cues about his belongings. For example, "George, we are going to gym class now. What will you do with your math paper?" or "Good morning George. That's a nice jacket. Where could you put it so you won't forget it at the end of the day?" Reinforce positively the occasions that George does keep track of his belongings.

## Some Recommendations for Jason's Educational Team

### Addressing Strengths:

Acceleration may be appropriate for Jason, given the fact that he is working above grade level in some academic areas. Thorough and ongoing assessment should be conducted in order to make appropriate decisions regarding the correct instructional level for Jason.

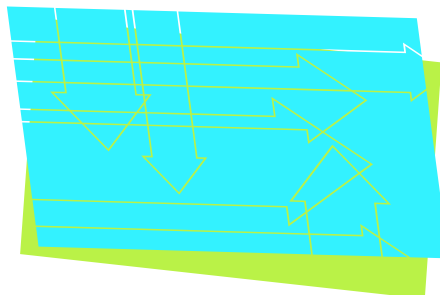
His obvious strength in the language arts seems to be encouraging him toward a life goal of becoming a writer or actor. Thus, an instructional focus to help Jason further develop this writing talent should be part of his educational plan. He should be guided to explore careers in this field and to engage in early college planning, particularly given the fact that Jason can likely be accelerated in this content area. Providing access to competitions and opportunities for publishing will provide an authentic audience.

### Addressing Challenges:

Jason should be asked to identify a student with whom he feels he has something in common. Ideally, it would be a student from Mrs. Francetti's class. This student, or several students, can be his buddy — he or she can help Jason figure out what he missed in school and keep up. It might even be nice if arrangements could be made for the buddy, or buddies, to go to a doctor's appointment with Jason, if Jason and his parents agree. Or, the buddy could visit him after a surgery to learn what Jason goes through, to befriend him through his recoveries, and to foster the friendship.

Jason should be encouraged to research successful people who also have disabilities. He and his parents would benefit from learning how they overcame their difficulties to take care of themselves and be successful. Perhaps he could even find a mentor in his community with cerebral palsy with whom he can share successes and frustrations.

Finally, Jason should be given opportunities to shine while he is in school. Projects where he can work with other students and use his creativity and humor would help him get to know other students and continue to feel proud of himself.



## Some Recommendations for Wilfredo's Educational Team

### Addressing Strengths:

Wilfredo should be encouraged to continue to use his leadership skills and to improve them through service learning opportunities, leadership conferences, being part of a Destination Imagination team, etc. He should be allowed to work with other students as often as appropriate. He should explore careers that interest him and incorporate his strengths. Early college planning will ensure that he has taken the advanced classes that he needs in order to pursue a career in his chosen field.

With strength in writing, he should develop his skill through writing for various purposes, for a variety of audiences, and in various styles. He could even use advanced standards to provide a continuum of learning. He should be encouraged to utilize this talent in connection with his leadership pursuits. For example, he could write a script for his Destination Imagination team.

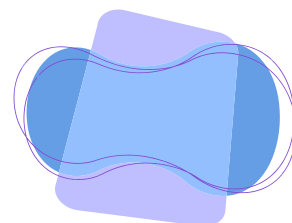
Wilfredo might benefit from starting an after-school club or activity. If he truly is interested in music, he may want to start a "beginning band"; or he could be encouraged to start a newspaper to build on his advanced writing composition and vocabulary. Wilfredo might like a "Quiz Bowl" team or other such activity that would allow him social time with students who have similar interests.

### Addressing Challenges:

Reading materials and other texts should be immediately available in appropriate alternative media. For math, Wilfredo may benefit from a homework buddy. He could be paired with a student with whom he could do the first few problems to ensure he understands concepts. Manipulatives may be helpful as he learns mathematics.

Wilfredo should continue to learn to use various assistive technology devices. He should be taught how to keep up with the latest technology and where to find it.

It might be helpful to have Wilfredo study other successful people with vision impairments, or even find a mentor who is visually impaired. This would help him to realize how other persons perform various tasks, particularly in their chosen career.





Jerry would like to plan and/or conduct some or all of this training with the teacher of the deaf and/or one of his general education teachers. Ask Jerry if he would like to join a school team and help him plan for joining one at the next opportunity. Be sure the coaches receive basic inservice and communication information as well as tips for successfully communicating with or without an interpreter.

Consult a technology expert to determine what other technology options there might be for Jerry. Using an interpreter can work well in some classes, but sometimes it can be limiting. Just as hearing something doesn't necessarily mean understanding it, seeing an interpreter sign something doesn't necessarily mean knowing it. Many college students who are deaf or hard of hearing use Computer-Assisted Notetaking (CAN) or some kind of voice recognition software. Therefore, not only do students get the full benefit of what's being said during class, but they also have the copy of the "transcript" later so they can refer to it. It is a good idea for high school students to try out various access options prior to attending college. Someone on the educational team (maybe Jerry?) should contact National Technical Institute of the Deaf (NTID) right away for suggestions that will help him prepare for college, whether it is working on academic content knowledge, skill development in the use of technology, or other access skills.

