

Case Study 1

Adella Gamez is in first grade. She lives with her parents, who do not read or speak English fluently. Spanish is the primary language spoken in the home. Adella has a brother who is in kindergarten.

Adella is having a great deal of difficulty with reading and writing, but she is especially struggling with spelling. Her teacher sends home a letter stating that Adella is deficient in all areas of written language and requests a meeting. Although Adella's parents cannot read the letter fully, with Adella's help they understand that they have been requested to come to the school next week for a conference. They realize that the meeting is not "good" news.

They meet with the principal, classroom teacher, SLP, a resource specialist, and a Spanish-speaking interpreter. The team recommends that Mr. and Mrs. Gamez read to Adella every night. They are too embarrassed to ask whether or not reading to her in Spanish is okay because of their difficulty reading English, so they simply nod and agree. The classroom teacher notes that frequently Adella's homework is not completed when she comes to school. She suggests that Mr. and Mrs. Gamez become actively involved in the completion of Adella's homework every night. Again, they nod in agreement but know that they cannot provide Adella help with her homework.

The principal also emphasizes the need for Adella to come to school consistently, and admonishes her parents for her repeated absences. Mrs. Gamez apologizes for Adella's absences but explains that when Adella's brother is sick, she needs her to stay home and take care of him. Mrs. Gamez sees the disapproving looks that pass between the school personnel but what she doesn't tell them is that in coming here today, both she and Mr. Gamez were threatened with termination should they ask off again.

The school personnel further suggest that Mr. and Mrs. Gamez speak to Adella about her attitude toward school. The classroom teacher notes that Adella frequently appears unmotivated, laying her head on the desk, and is the last to submit assignments. Again, her parents nod in agreement when they hear this news but really have no idea what to do. Mr. and Mrs. Gamez leave the meeting downhearted, lost, and wondering what to do. They have no idea how to help Adella. No special education services were offered, and no resources were suggested.

How could this meeting have been restructured, and what are some alternatives to this "wait-to-fail" approach?

*Modified Case Study from Roseberry-McKibbin (2012).

Case Study 2

John Williams is a 5 year, 6-month-old male who attends a local Title I public elementary school. He is the middle child of a single working mother. He attended a Head Start program prior to enrolling in kindergarten. John receives free/reduced lunch.

His teacher is concerned about his academic performance and requested a parent conference. She is also concerned that on Mondays he eats breakfast extremely fast. John's mother did not show up for two previously scheduled meetings; however, with some persistent calling and messaging, the teacher was able to meet with Ms. Williams last week. John's mother answered questions about John and his likes and dislikes. She reported to the teacher that he has developed skills at about the same level as his older sister. She reported that he gets along well with other children who live in the apartment complex and in the neighborhood. She stated that his 12-year-old sister must take care of him after school until she finishes work, which is typically after 9 p.m.

The teacher reported that John demonstrated difficulty in several Pre-Kindergarten tasks in the classroom setting; however, gets along well with other children. It was noted that he is eager to please others and is always helpful.

According to recent curriculum-based assessments, John scored below average when compared to his peers in reading. He obtained average scores in mathematics. John passed a hearing, vision, and articulation screening.

Based on the information provided, what should the next step be for John given that this is the 8th week of school?