

Case Studies for LASA1 and LASA2

Pick one case study and use it for completing both assignments:

Case study 1:

Brandy is a Caucasian girl, who just celebrated her sixth birthday, and is one of the youngest kids in her first-grade class. Most of the school year has gone fairly well, but she lately has been having trouble at school. Last week she disrupted class and threw her pencil across the room.

The teacher explained to the parents that she has been a bit “emotional” lately, but did not know why. Her mom wondered if it was because she has recently transitioned from graduate school to a new job that keeps her away from home a bit more than before.

Brandy generally likes school, but gets pulled out once or twice a week for special speech therapy as she occasionally has some problems with a lisp. Her parents were hesitant about Brandy being pulled out of class, but when she reported she was getting picked on at school by some classmates, they agreed to the speech therapy.

At home, she has a supportive family and siblings (younger and older) with whom she gets along well. Occasionally she will get into trouble for lying, but most often feels pretty badly about it once she is caught. Her father also has a master’s degree with a full-time job, and she and her siblings attend an after-school daycare program for a couple hours. She plays with the neighborhood kids and her siblings; however sometimes Brandy has communication struggles with others due to her lisp. She loves sports, and just finished playing soccer and is set to start t-ball within the next week or two.

Case study 2:

Brandon is an African-American eight-year-old child in third grade, who is in danger of having to repeat the grade. He continues to struggle with being able to concentrate in class, and says he is “bored” when students have to just sit and read; sometimes he talks and walks around the class and other times he draws pictures and pays no attention at all. He frequently gets sent to the principal’s office for this behavior, but does not seem to mind because the principal lets him play and gives him snacks (as he always complains about being hungry). Often the principal compliments him on his artwork.

When his parents were told about his behavior, they were exasperated. The parents said he behaves even more poorly at home, stealing and breaking his siblings’ things and sneaking food into his room. He even has nightly bed-wetting accidents on a fairly regular basis (the doctor has ruled out physical problems as a reason for these).

His mother works a part-time job at a local gas station when the kids are in school. His father used to come home around dinnertime and was often tired; but he was recently laid off and is depressed and spends a lot of time in bed.

Case study 3:

Jayant (or “Jay”) is a seventeen-year-old Indian student in his senior year in high school. He is taking several classes at the local community college as part of an accelerated honors program. He never really wanted to take these college classes, but was pressured by his extremely domineering father, who is a professor of physics at one of the local universities.

Johnny is falling behind with all his courses, particularly his psychology coursework. He says it is because he keeps relating what he reads to his own life situation and problems. He tends to be alone most of the time, although he is very curious about people and watches others interact. Jay has a social immaturity about him that prevents him from making many friends. If he complains about not getting along with others, his father reminds him he is not in school to socialize but to succeed in life.

He feels like he does not fit in anywhere at the school because his few acquaintances are not in the accelerated honors program. This adds to the stress at home because he has no outlets from the constant pressure and criticism from his father. He is often reminded that if his mother were still alive, she'd be a resource and a buffer from his father.

Recently, he had to volunteer at a local community center as part of a course assignment, and chose to work with the local Boys and Girls Club. He enjoyed this so much that he has decided to continue volunteering even when the class ends.

Case study 4:

Soo-Kyung (or "Sue") is a sixteen-year-old Korean student, with a history of self-harm, drug abuse, and theft. She has to go to counseling at the school as a condition of her probation, and to have any chance of having her record expunged when she is an adult.

Sue is usually shabbily dressed, has bad body odor, is hostile and refuses to open up or discuss anything at length with her counselor. She has been seen around school with one kid and was seen talking to that kid in the hall before she came into your office. You have found some information in her school file that appraises you of some pertinent details of her past experiences: You learn that she had an alcoholic mother, who was in and out of a series of relationships when Sue was a child, resulting in frequent moves and a string of different schools. A period of sexual abuse by one of her mother's boyfriends at the age of 14 led Sue to attempt suicide. Subsequently, she has frequently inflicted injuries on herself.

She finally moved out of her mother's house and is living with an aunt, who although she does not have a drug problem, works three jobs to provide for Sue and her five nieces and nephews, and is rarely home. Sue loves helping out with the kids and likes her aunt. Her aunt comes to the school occasionally for parent-teacher conferences, and will ask for suggestions or help, stating that she is trying to help Sue, but has limited resources in terms of time and money.

Some ideas were used from Psychology Applied Learning Scenarios (PALS): A practical introduction to problem-based learning using vignettes for psychology lecturers by Lin Norton funded by LTSN Psychology. "All the materials provided in this pack are free to use in their original format or can be adapted, giving acknowledgment to LTSN Psychology."