

1.2 Examining Sources that Inform a Learner Profile

CHALLENGE

By the end of this session, educators will...

Draft a helpful observation tool to support efforts to better understand and assess a learner's strengths and needs.

GOALS

- 1. To become familiar with the specific documentation that is collected about students with learning disabilities, including where it is located and what assessment data it typically includes.**
- 2. To design a tool that could be used to track focused observations of a student with learning disabilities in order to better understand and assess a learner's strengths and needs.**

SUMMARY

During this facilitated learning opportunity, participants will review different sources of assessment information, including those found in an Ontario Student Record (OSR), that can inform a student's learner profile. They will also determine the relative usefulness of these and other sources in the process of developing a learner profile. Through this exploration, participants will deepen their understanding of how to use various sources and draft a helpful observation tool to support their efforts to better understand and assess a learner's strengths and needs.

FACILITATOR PREPARATION AND CONSIDERATIONS

Read through the activities for the session. Depending on the size of the group, the knowledge and experience of participants (including whether or not they have previously participated in one or more of the other modules), and the grade level they teach, you may need to make choices about presentation style, instructional strategies or activity materials.

The following chart summarizes the challenge, activities and materials for this session.

SESSION TITLE	CHALLENGE By the end of the session, educators will:	OVERVIEW OF SUPPORTING ACTIVITIES	MATERIALS
I.2: Examining Sources that Inform a Learner Profile	Draft a helpful observation tool to support efforts to better understand and assess a learner's strengths and needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Share the goals of the session B. Determine what matters most in a student's Ontario Student Record (OSR) C. Distinguish between observations and inferences D. Prepare for observation E. Revisit the criteria for a robust learner profile F. Practise observation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appendix 5 <i>Reviewing the Ontario Student Record: Document File</i> Appendix 6 <i>Observing Classroom Behaviour (CASE STUDY: Keone)</i> Appendix 7 <i>Recognizing Signs: What Might We Observe?</i>

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

A. Share the goals of the session

- If participants have engaged in Session I.0 or Session I.1 of this module, invite them to share their initial thoughts about what a robust learner profile would look like. Suggest that there will be opportunities to revisit and refine these initial thoughts during this session.

- Invite educators to think about the following questions:
 - When and how is observation helpful in learning about your students?
 - What is challenging about observation as a way to know your learners?
 - What characteristics would be important in an observation tool to make it truly helpful to an educator?
- Encourage educators to jot down some initial responses to these questions, assuring them that they will have the opportunity to revisit these ideas throughout the session. Invite participants to share their responses to the questions with a partner.
- Explain that the purpose of this session is to review and deepen understanding of the different sources of information that can inform a student's learner profile and determine the relative usefulness of different sources. In particular:
 - What might be learned from assessment data documented in the Ontario Student Record?
 - What can be learned from conversations with and about a student?
 - What can be learned from observing and examining samples of student work?
- Share the session challenge: *By the end of this session, we will begin to draft a helpful observation tool to support efforts to better understand and assess a learner's strengths and needs.*

B. Determine what matters most in a student's Ontario Student Record (OSR)

- Invite participants to suggest what must be found in OSRs. Remind educators that OSRs are required to contain:
 - report cards,
 - an Ontario Student Transcript, where applicable,
 - a documentation file, where applicable,
 - an office index card, and
 - additional information identified as being conducive to the improvement of the instruction of the student.
- Invite participants to work with a partner to identify the elements of the OSR that are the most useful when learning about a student. Encourage participants to share their thinking with the whole group.
- Inform participants that they will be carefully examining the Document File and, in particular, the following elements that are often found in it:
 - the Individual Education Plan (IEP), and
 - educational, psychological and health assessments.

Key Point: The Document File often contains pertinent information about students with learning disabilities. For further details about what's typically contained in the Document File, note the components listed in Section 3 of the Ontario Student Record Guideline (2000) found at <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/curricul/osr/osr.html#3>.

- Ensure that all participants have copies of Appendix 5. Prompt participants to examine the documents with a partner and to respond to the following questions:
 - Are any of the headings a surprise?
 - Should any headings be added?
 - What types of information might be found under each heading of the Individual Education Plan and the Psychological and Educational Assessment Report?
- Guide the group in a discussion of their responses.

Consideration: School districts often develop their own specific templates for Individual Education Plans and psychological and / or educational assessments. Consider using the templates used by the district for this activity.

- Direct participants back to their partners and prompt them to develop a list of the evidence, information or data that might support better understanding of a learner.
- Ask groups to share their ideas, and consider recording them on a whiteboard or chart paper. Invite the group to suggest which items from the list might be learned from observing a student or a student's evidence of learning.
- Invite participants to revisit their initial thoughts on the characteristics of an observation tool that would make it truly helpful for an educator.

C. Distinguish between observations and inferences

- Display the image of a bank (Appendix 1) on a piece of paper or using a projector. Invite participants to carefully examine the image and, using visual clues in the image, suggest:
 - when the photograph was taken (time of day, month, year), and
 - where the photograph was taken (city, country).
- Encourage participants to share their thinking with the group. As participants share, prompt them to suggest which ideas might be observations and which

may be inferences. Remind them that observations are details that can be seen or heard, whereas inferences are conclusions drawn from observations, past experiences or assumptions.

- Ask participants to reflect on what inferences might be made when observing students. Encourage them to recall an instance when they may have too quickly formed a conclusion about a student. Conversely, prompt participants to consider an example of when a conclusion about a student changed after a careful observation. Invite participants to share their reflections.
- Invite the group to suggest what might be done to ensure that observations are based on what is seen or heard rather than on what is inferred. Suggest that the ability to make accurate observations can be improved through practice.
- Indicate that this session will focus on developing awareness of the tendency to use inferences, with the goal of developing a tool to help gather and record useful observations.

Key Point: See Session 1.3: Identifying and Capturing Patterns for additional ideas about distinguishing between observations and inferences.

D. Prepare for observation

- Ask participants to read the case study of Keone (Appendix 6). Alternatively, the case study could be read aloud or displayed on a screen.
- Prompt participants to work with a partner to identify what observations and inferences might be made about the student from the case study. Invite pairs to share their thinking with the group.
- Suggest that revisiting understanding of the cognitive processes may enhance our ability to make observations and inferences. Ask educators to work with a partner (if possible from a different grade level / subject area) to review the eight cognitive processing skills in the *York Waterfall Chart: Understanding Learning Disabilities—How Processing Affects Learning* (<https://www.ldatschool.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/LD@school-2017.pdf>). For each of the cognitive processing skills, invite participants to select three “Possible Signs” that lend themselves to focused observation.
- Ask participants to select the possible sign from each cognitive processing skill that would be most readily observable in their particular context (e.g., subject area, grade level).
- Invite participants to work together to suggest two or three pieces of evidence, indicators or “look-fors” that could guide their observations of each skill. Suggest that the chart *Recognizing Signs: What Might We Observe?* (Appendix 7) might be used to help them organize their thinking.

Key Point: Not all cognitive processes lend themselves to focused observation in all contexts and may require further investigation with other educators who know the student. In addition, cognitive processes that can be observed may be affected by context. For example, under Language, one of the possible signs is writing for extended periods of time. In this case, context-specific look-fors are necessary; for example “extended” writing in grade 2 is different than in grade 9.

- Invite participants to suggest how these look-fors might be recorded and organized in a practical observation tool or template that could be used while observing a student. Consider recording and displaying participant ideas on a white board or chart paper.
- Direct participants to work with a partner or small group to begin developing a practical observation tool or template that could be used while observing students. Provide enough time for groups to create an initial draft of their tool.
- Invite participants to share their draft tools with other groups.

Key Point: Information obtained through observation is not often archived in an Ontario Student Record, but it can provide critical, current and contextual data to clarify understanding of an individual student’s profile and ultimately support their individual program.

E. Revisit the criteria for a robust learner profile

- Display the criteria for a robust learner profile generated earlier in this module (see 1.0 Learning Launch). Ask if any refinements or revisions might be made based on the discussions about observations.

F. Practise observation

- Ask educators to discuss the value of information gathered from observations and to revisit the challenges of observing learners that they raised at the beginning of this session. How has their thinking changed or been confirmed? What characteristics make an observation tool most helpful and useful?
- Encourage participants to field test their observation tool by using it in situations such as
 - watching video of a student engaging in classroom learning activities, or
 - observing a student’s participation in learning activities.

Consideration: If criteria for a robust learner profile have not already been developed, see the activity suggestions in 1.0 Learning Launch.

Appendix 5

Reviewing the Ontario Student Record Document File

CHALLENGE

The Ontario Student Record for individual students may contain an Individual Education Plan and / or psychological and / or educational assessment reports. As you read through the headings listed below, which are often found in those documents, consider the following questions:

- Are any of the headings a surprise?
- Should any headings be added?
- How might these documents help inform the development of a robust learner profile for students with learning disabilities?

Consideration: School districts often develop their own specific templates for Individual Education Plans and psychological and / or educational assessments. Consider using the templates used by the district for this activity.

Individual Education Plan (IEP)

- Reason for Developing an IEP
- Student Profile
- Assessment Data (includes the relevant educational, medical / health, vision, physical, neurological, psychological, speech / language, occupational, physiotherapy and behavioural assessments)
- Student's Strengths and Needs
- Special Education Program
- Subjects, Courses or Alternative Programs to Which the IEP Applies
- Accommodations
- Provincial Assessments
- Transition Plan
- Human Resources
- IEP Development Team
- Sources Consulted in the Development of the IEP

- Placement Date in the Special Education Program
- Log of Parent / Student Consultation and Staff Review / Updating
- Psychological and / or Educational Assessment Report
- Reason for Referral
- Background Information
- Educational History
- Behavioural Observations
- Assessment Results (Cognitive / Intellectual Functioning, Visual Processing and Visual-Motor Integration, Phonological Processing, Attention and Executive Functioning Skills, Summary)
- Recommendations

Appendix 6

Observing Classroom Behaviour (CASE STUDY: Keone)

CHALLENGE

Imagine that you are observing the following scenario. As you read through the following case study, note what you learn about this student through your observation. After reviewing the case study, discuss with a partner what might be observed and what might be inferred about the student.

“Ongoing classroom observation, along with the use of various assessment tools that are closely linked to the learning goals and objectives of each lesson and that are designed in a way that enables the student to best demonstrate his or her learning, is critical for determining the student’s current achievement level and readiness to learn.”

—*Learning for All*, page 46

Keone loved Fridays. Every Friday afternoon, her class received the Friday Math Problem on little sheets of blue paper. Keone took special care to read the question off the paper and answer as carefully as possible. Keone was usually one of the first students to solve the math question. On this Friday, however, there was no question on the blue piece of paper. Instead the teacher read the question out loud, “The store manager bought 18 litres of floor cleaner. Each litre of cleaner will clean 40 square metres of floor. The floor of the store is 56 square metres...” The question seemed to go on and on. Keone wrote down the number 40 but she wasn’t sure if that was the amount of floor or the litres of cleaner. The teacher read the question again, this time slowly, but again Keone couldn’t follow along. Eventually the teacher came over to help Keone finish, but by that time the rest of the class was already done.

—Excerpted from J. MacCormack, and I. Mathson,
Understanding Working Memory and Learning Disabilities
(<https://www.ldatschool.ca/understanding-working-memory-and-lds/>)

Appendix 7

Recognizing Signs: What Might We Observe?

CHALLENGE

For each of the cognitive processing skills listed in the following chart, select one possible sign (see *York Waterfall Chart: Understanding Learning Disabilities—How Processing Affects Learning*, <https://www.ldatschool.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/LD@school-2017.pdf>) that that would be most readily observable in your particular context (e.g., subject area, grade level). For each sign, suggest possible evidence, indicators or “look-fors” that you might see or hear while observing one of your students.

Cognitive processing skill	Possible sign	Possible “look-for” (what we might see or hear)
Attention		
Executive Function		
Language		
Memory		
Phonological processing		
Processing speed		
Visual-motor skills		
Visual-spatial (perceptual) skills		