REPORT OF A PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT IN A SCHOOL SETTING

HEDWIG TEGLASI
University of Maryland

Guidelines are provided for the effective writing of psychoeducational reports based on a review of the literature and logical analysis. The literature on psychological assessment was selectively reviewed in terms of implications for effective writing of reports in a school setting. The literature reviewed consists of three broad areas: (a) surveys of consumers' opinions regarding various aspects of assessment reports; (b) research studies examining the content, format, and clarity of assessment interpretations; and (c) a number of "how to" books and articles describing the mechanics of report writing.

The literature which has implications for writing an effective report of a psychoeducational assessment in the school setting falls into three broad categories: (a) surveys of consumers' opinions regarding various aspects of assessment reports; (b) research studies examining the content, format, and clarity of communication of assessment interpretations; and (c) a number of "how to" books and articles describing the mechanics of report writing. In addition, models of assessment and communication dealing primarily with philosophical, professional, or legal issues such as the mandate of PL 94-142 that assessment be a multidisciplinary process are currently receiving attention. The recently emerging view that assessment be a shared process between assessor(s) and the assessee (Dana & Leech, 1974; Fischer, 1972; 1978a, b; 1979), and that simultaneous and joint feedback be given to assessee and referral source (Dana, Erdberg, & Walsh, 1978; Erdberg, 1977) influences the overall process of the communication of assessment findings. The present paper will give guidelines for the effective writing of psychoeducational reports based on logical analysis and a selective review of the professional literature.

The report content has multiple purposes, and must be written in accordance with the following considerations (Meyers, Sundstrom, & Yoshida, 1974; Tallent, 1976): (a) to address the immediate need as indicated by the referral issue which may include input toward the development of an individual educational plan (IEP), documenting eligibility for special service, or providing the basis for a coordinated behavior management plan; (b) to anticipate future questions and other matters needing attention; and (c) to create a written record that may eventually be used for a number of purposes, such as research, evidence in a court case or due process hearing, baseline for future assessment, internal evaluation of school district processes, establishment of time trends, or responses to inquiries made to the school board.

An effective psychological report accomplishes two major purposes. First, an effective report clarifies the nature of the problem, so that the personal feelings of teachers (family, clinicians, social workers, etc.) toward the child are altered and result in more constructive contact between school personnel, family, or therapist and the child (Affleck & Strider, 1971; Grubb, Petty, & Flynn, 1976; Hollis & Donn, 1979; Lidz, 1981). Two-thirds of the teachers responding to Grubb, et al.'s, survey perceived that the greatest use of a psychological report was in helping them clarify their thinking about individual children. The psychological report can facilitate positive attitudes on the part of teachers, parents, and others by providing a different perspective and added understanding.
Second, an effective report provides implications and/or guidelines for action that are utilized by consumers of the report (Dailey, 1953). In order for the recommendations in a report to be utilized, the school psychologist must communicate effectively with other school personnel. The clarity with which a report is written affects its ability to communicate accurately. However, communication is also affected by a number of other factors operating within the school system, such as the quality and amount of contact and cooperation among individuals who are partners in the assessment process (the assessors, the student, the classroom teacher, parents, and the administration). In the past, school psychologists have been criticized for their failures to develop effective communication within the schools. In order to minimize the problem, several authors have suggested that formal reports be supplemented with face-to-face contacts between the psychologist and relevant school personnel (Chouvan, 1968; Singer, Whiton, & Fried, 1970). In a school setting, the report of an evaluation may be a team effort, rather than the sole responsibility of the psychologist. While innovative approaches to evaluation and report writing to meet specific needs of the setting should be encouraged, guidelines for the written communication of test results are needed as a foundation, particularly for beginners.

Seagull (1979) discusses the importance of a clear format, and emphasizes that unless a report is very short, the use of subheadings will enable the reader to follow the logical progress of the assessment and to find specific information very quickly. The format exists, however, to guide the reader's thinking, thereby enhancing the understanding of the information being presented, and should be varied as factors in the working situation require (Tallent, 1976). A relatively standard report outline is presented below. After each subheading, a discussion of the literature along with specific guidelines relating to that portion of the report is presented.

**Identifying Information**

Depending on the practices of the setting, the following information (not an exhaustive list) may be included: name, date of birth, chronological age, grade in school, date of examination, date of report, tests administered (give specific information as to what test was used and what form of the test when alternatives are available; include full name of test with abbreviation in parentheses), and other sources of information (e.g., interview, checklists, classroom observation). Settings frequently use a standard form with spaces to indicate appropriate identifying information.

**Reason for Referral**

A major criticism of psychological reports is that they do not answer the referral question (Rucker, 1967a). We cannot afford to engage in extensive testing, but must focus on the exploration of specific problems that have been raised (Holzberg, Alessi, & Wexler, 1951). If the reasons for referral have not been fully explored, questions may subsequently arise that cannot be answered on the basis of the available data. The choice of assessment procedures also depends on the nature of the questions being asked. While the psychologist preselects a battery of tests based on the questions to be answered, some of the desired information may not emerge, and some unanticipated data may appear. Thus, the psychologist may add or subtract tests from the battery as the assessment proceeds in order to answer fully the referral questions and explore some issues that may have arisen during the testing.

Since answering the referral question constitutes the immediate mission or the purpose of the report, this issue must be clarified with the referring person so that there is a
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mutual understanding regarding the purpose of the assessment and the kind of information the evaluation could provide (Grubb, et al., 1976; Kurpius, 1978; Rich & Bardon, 1964; Seagull, 1979). A vague description of a reason for referral does not give an adequate basis for test selection and organization of the report. The school psychologist is responsible for fully clarifying the referral problem, based on interviews with relevant persons and on a careful review of available information (e.g., previous assessment, group tests, academic achievement, cumulative record, or health history).

The following is an example of an inaccurate and imprecise statement of the referral problem:

"Johnny was referred by his parents for perceptual problems."

A more precise description of the referral problem that includes a brief description of the presenting problem and identification of the referral source follows:

Johnny was referred by his parents after a conference with the teacher during which she stated that Johnny is not achieving in school and that this lack of achievement may be related to some perceptual problems. The teacher also stated that Johnny frequently sits out of his seat and concentrates on his work only for short periods of time.

If the evaluation were done merely to rule out or to explore perceptual problems, it would have a different mission than a more general investigation of the reasons for poor academic achievement. In this case, the parents' initial concern may have been centered around the "perceptual problem." However, it is the psychologist's duty to explore fully the parameters and implications of the referral issue, and, if appropriate, to redefine the question with the referral agent(s). The questions asked must be those that can be answered by the school psychologist or other school personnel through the means available to them. A decision should be made as to which areas are to be evaluated, and the appropriate professionals assigned to administer the tests. After a careful review of the evidence, the decision may be that a formal evaluation is not needed. Other intervention strategies may be implemented on a trial basis, and further relevant information gathered.

**Previous Testing**

Information about previous testing and about previous contact with other professionals should be included in the report (either in a separate section or with the background material). Experiences with other helping professionals give important historical information, and may set the stage for the present consultation. The examiner determines the manner of integrating previous test results with the current assessment, and judges the validity of the former findings.

**Background Information**

Professional opinion (O’Leary & Johnson, 1979; Salvia & Ysseldyke, 1978), as well as federal and state legislation, emphasizes the importance of using multiple types of assessment information and using multidisciplinary teams to determine appropriate programs for students. One important source of information is a detailed history of the problem, including onset, severity, frequency, and duration in the context of other relevant information. Such information may include developmental history (emphasis on various aspects, depending on nature of the problem and orientation of the psychologist), health history, and current and past environment as related to the child's temperament (reactivity to the environment). Perceptions of significant others about the problem provide a perspective, and give information that can be utilized along with the test
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reason for referral was concern that the child is not achieving up to his potential in school. During the conference, the mother reported that because she is attending college, she often does not come home until 10 PM, and the children (ages 7 and 8) remain indoors until she arrives. The child's projective material suggested acute disappointment in authority figures who don't give adequate guidance and fail to set limits. The child's need for structure and encouragement was evident throughout testing, as he needed frequent reminders and "chatting breaks" to stay on task. The fact that the child's mother is extremely busy and preoccupied with school contributes to the distress of this child and detracts from his academic progress. Yet, there is no need to state specific details that may appear to condemn the mother (such as the time of her arrival). Unless the mother's understanding of the situation changes, reporting something she already knows is not productive.

Robinson and Cohen (1954), in a study of three clinical interns, discovered pronounced and reliable differences among all three interns in the reports of each intern. Such findings make it essential for examiners to be aware of any biases they may have related to drawing conclusions or making inferences based on various sources of evidence. Assuming that the examiner has come to a full understanding of his/her biases and impact on the testing situation, the same caution is warranted to avoid accepting the inferences of others who report the child's behavior from their vantage points. There are two things to consider here. One is that different people (e.g., parents) may draw different conclusions from the same behavior on the part of the child. The other is that the child's behavior does not occur in a vacuum, but as part of an interaction with the environment. Therefore, when dealing with parents' perceptions or interpretations of their child's behavior, specific examples should be elicited, so that the psychologist can form his/her own conclusions, rather than relying on parental inferences. One parent of a 15-year-old stated that the youngster was "very independent." Yet when asked to describe a "typical day," there were indications that this adolescent, in fact, is highly dependent and required a great deal of help and support in accomplishing routine tasks.

Differentiation should be made among various sources of information. The psychologist reports the source (teacher, parent, school records, or physician) of all background material. Otherwise, if all information is stated as factual without attributing it to specific sources, a false impression of objectivity is given. If more than one source gives the same information, a statement should be made indicating that, for example, "there was agreement among parents and teachers that..." If two (or more) versions each have merit, both sets of data should be stated, and the sources presenting the discrepant information identified (Seagull, 1979). However, caution should be taken not to invalidate the perceptions of any of the sources. For example, a child was brought in (to a private agency) by his mother for poor achievement, but a conference with the teacher and checking school records revealed that the boy had been a consistent A or B student for the past two years. In this case, it would be easy to state the mother's concerns and then systematically undermine them. A more fruitful approach may be to find out more about the mother's perceptions and expectations, and to express the discrepant views in a framework that yields a new understanding.

**Behavioral Observations**

According to Sabatino, Goh, and Jensen (1982), psychological assessment in the schools should focus on discovering the most appropriate and beneficial placement for handicapped students, and also delineate the most desirable instructional approaches and
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procedures. Within this framework, formal test results can be conceptualized as behavior samples that can be used as a basis for program planning. Information about the child's approach to a variety of tasks may at times contribute as much to understanding the referral issue as the test scores. For example, a child who is so perfectionistic that he takes 22 minutes on the Bender-Gestalt, though not making one error, will still have trouble functioning in the classroom. In addition, the child's behavior during testing should provide a context within which to evaluate the validity of test results.

Sattler (1982) emphasizes that skilled observations of behavior require training and lists a number of behavioral cues with which to discern the following factors: attitude toward the examiner, attitude toward the test situation, attitude toward self, work habits, language, and visual-motor development. The following characteristics are generally noted in the behavioral observations section: (a) physical or attitudinal characteristics that might affect test performance, such as poor motor control, adjustment to the testing situation, level of interest, effort, and cooperation; (b) information about the child's approach to a variety of tasks that vary in terms of degree of structure, familiarity, difficulty, and so on. It is also important to note that behavior in the one-to-one situation of testing may differ markedly from that which occurs in the classroom or home; (c) procedures that the examiner used that were effective in helping the child focus attention and respond cooperatively.

In writing up the behavioral observations, the number of observations, the setting in which they took place, and the person making the observations should be specified. The following example does not indicate the source of the information: "In the classroom, Kate was a willing participant in group discussions." A slight modification provides a clearer communication: "When observed by the examiner in the classroom on three occasions, Kate was a willing participant in group discussions." When observing a child outside the testing situation (e.g., in the classroom or on the playground), the psychologist should check whether the behavior observed was typical of the child, even when the observations are done over several sessions.

Test Results and Interpretations

The portion of the report dealing with the interpretation of test results should be focused around the concerns expressed in the referral issues. All data presented should contribute to the understanding of the child, and clarify the purpose of the assessment. One may, for the sake of organization, subdivide the report into separate headings (such as cognitive, perceptual-motor, achievement, personality) or merely by paragraphs. Each issue or theme may be handled in a separate paragraph. All types of data, including interviews with parents, teachers, and child, behavioral observations, checklists, cumulative record, and samples of students' work may be integrated with test results. Tallent (1976) warns that when a psychologist is following an outline, s/he often proceeds test by test, including in the cognitive section the results of intelligence tests, while leaving the discussion of cognitive aspects emerging from the Rorschach in the personality section. Similarly, approaches to the Bender-Gestalt that reflect emotional development may be saved for the perceptual-motor section of the report. However, test-by-test interpretation without integration does not convey an adequate picture of the individual. The functionally integrated report has meaning that is not to be found in the separate information units with which the psychologist initially deals.

Tallent (1976) suggests that test-by-test reporting, as contrasted with a more person-centered approach in which test results are organized around the issues presented by the
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assessees, is related to the professional's attitude toward the tester's role. The evaluation is not merely what some battery of tests yields, but the selected interpretation and integration of data from various sources. The tests do not tell the results; rather, the psychologist reports the results after using the tests to arrive at interpretations, conclusions, and recommendations. The psychologist considers much more than specific test scores. In some cases, aspects of the child's behavior while taking tests may be as important as data produced from the tests themselves (Holzberg, et al., 1951). The behavior (and sometimes past history) of the child defines the frame of reference within which interpretations of the data can be made. Furthermore, one response takes on different meaning when the entire pattern of responses is considered, and rarely is there a one-to-one relationship between a test response and a conclusion. Thus, according to Tallent, the psychologist shifts responsibility from the self to the tests when using phrases such as "psychological testing reveals that..." While the validity of each test can be challenged, the degree of confidence placed on an interpretation is strengthened when there is confluence of data from different sources that consistently suggest the same conclusions. The psychologist must synthesize and integrate data from various sources to organize the material around the relevant educational and/or clinical issues.

The psychologist uses professional judgment in deciding what tests to select and what areas to emphasize in reporting the test results. Knowledge about the context in which the testing took place (child's motivation, reaction to test materials, etc.) gives the psychologist a frame of reference within which to interpret the tests and to judge the validity of the results. Relating test data with other sources of information gives further perspective. Attention to patterns of test (or subtest) results, along with knowledge about reliability and validity of tests and subtests under specific circumstances, may temper the conclusion drawn. For example, the pattern of test responses on an intelligence test may make the Full Scale IQ score largely irrelevant in understanding the child's cognitive functioning or in clarifying the problem at hand (Sattler, 1982). While the school psychologist has a lot of freedom to exercise professional judgment, s/he needs to document how interpretations and conclusions were reached.

It is useful to remember that information from different sources is like different sides of the same coin. When such data are combined, a fuller and more comprehensive picture emerges. For example, the Thematic Apperception and Incomplete Sentence Tests represent the child's subjective perceptions, which, in order to be fully understood, must be compared with the child's behavior and with objective factors in the environment. One should not assume that perceptions expressed on projective tests accurately reflect reality; rather, the projectives represent interpretations and subjective experiences. A child whose projectives suggest extreme fears and anticipation of uncontrollable catastrophic events, but whose situation is not consistent with such apprehensions, presents a different picture from that of a child experiencing situational distress. In addition, comparison of information that a child is freely willing to express can be made with material that emerges in projective testing. Thus, various sources of data are logically integrated to explain or clarify referral issues.

Lack of distinctions between objective data results and subjective interpretation by the psychologist creates an impressionistic overlay to the report that some readers find offensive, and that interferes with clear communication (Drake & Bardon, 1978; Smyth & Reznikoff, 1971). The report writer needs to state conclusions clearly, and then identify the bases for these inferences. The psychologist typically has access to multiple sources of data that must be identified and related to each other in a systematic way.
Ideally, information from observed behavior can be compared with data from personality tests which, in turn, are integrated with background factors and cognitive functioning. This synthesis gives both clarity and credibility to the conclusions.

Psychological report writers sometimes fail to communicate their intent to the readers. Studies that attempted to investigate how well the conclusions of the psychologist came across to readers (Cuadra & Albaugh, 1956; Dailey, 1953) found that the degree of correspondence between the report writers' intended meaning and the judges' interpretation was slightly over half. Cuadra and Albaugh studied reasons behind a breakdown of communication between the report writer and the reader, and found that the authors and judges frequently did not agree as to the degree or amount of some feeling or other personality characteristic. Thus, whenever possible, reports should indicate explicit statements of degree. Interpretations of topics that were not discussed were also problems in the Cuadra and Albaugh study. For some readers, the absence of a characteristic was implied because it was not included in the report.

Implications and interpretations should be given, along with presentation of data. Patterns and discrepancies in various test scores should be noted, with their significances clearly explained. The writer needs to differentiate what is clinically or educationally significant from what is not (Cuadra & Albaugh, 1956). For example, it is useless to state simply that there is a Verbal-Performance discrepancy unless the psychologist intends to interpret and discuss its significance.

Readers may have specific questions in mind, and if these questions are not dealt with directly in the report, there is a strong tendency to answer them by some process of elimination or inference. The psychologist must explore the pertinent questions so that they are specifically dealt with, even if no definitive answer can be given. A description of both strengths and weaknesses of the client might avoid the implication of lack of resources, and presents a balanced picture.

The use of jargon (Mayman, 1959; Rucker, 1967b; Smyth & Reznikoff, 1971) in psychological reports is frequently viewed as contributing to miscommunication. Naming subtests on an intelligence test or specific Rorschach responses without describing what they mean also leads to lack of clarity. A subtest may be mentioned by name if one explains its meaning (e.g., Digit Span, a measure of short-term auditory memory). However, a particular subtest may measure more than one function (e.g., Information taps general fund of knowledge, long-term memory, and richness of educational background). Therefore, the psychologist must organize the scores on various subtests according to their meaning as suggested by the pattern of responses (see Kaufman, 1979, for examples). Some guidelines on how technical terms could be translated into practical language are provided by Klopfert (1960) and by White and Harris (1961). Sattler (1982) provides numerous illustrations on how various patterns of performance on particular cognitive tasks may be interpreted in ways that meaningfully relate to the child's everyday functioning.

The question that psychologists often ask is how much raw data should be presented along with interpretations in order to write an effective report. Tallent (1976) reports that psychologists object to being required to support conclusions with data, since the procedure may imply that other professionals have the same qualifications to interpret the data. Holzberg, Alessi, and Wexler (1951) state that there is no inconsistency between presenting data as evidence for one's thinking and maintaining one's professional status. On the contrary, they state that it is an earmark of a careful scientist to make no interpretations or generalizations without adequate evidence. Furthermore, a generous
number of examples are needed to present a rich and vibrant picture of the personality. Meyers, et al. (1974) encourage the description of children's performance (e.g., approach to Bender-Gestalt) to give a clear impression of present cognitive and perceptual functioning.

While examples convey a vivid picture of the client, illustrative material must be chosen with great care (Mayman, 1959). When direct quotes are used as evidence to help bolster one's conclusions, or as data from which the reader is expected to draw conclusions, they usually weaken a report. The injudicious selection of an example could lead a reader who is unaware of other factors in the testing situation to make a different interpretation, perhaps calling into question the judgment of the report writer. Problems also could arise when one conveys the impression that the writer's conclusion was based solely on the evidence cited (which may appear trivial). For example, "... was struggling to gain the approval of her father. When asked to draw a person, she drew a picture of her father." Typically, a conclusion is based on multiple sources of data, and citing one example to explain or bolster the interpretation misrepresents the process and detracts from the credibility of the report. The workshop participants in Mayman's study concluded that the report reflects the fact that the psychologist has carefully sifted the relevant material and eliminated wild or unsound speculations. Yet, this impression is achieved without cluttering up a report with evidence or complex inference chains.

The degree of certainty expressed in one's interpretations and conclusions may vary from a tone of absolutism in one's assertions to a feeling that the writer had no confidence in any of the interpretations. Reports that use a great deal of what Hollis and Donn (1979) call "weasel words," such as "it appears that," "it may well be," or "there is some possibility," sound as if the writer is hedging. Granted, the psychologist, aware of measurement error and other factors attenuating the validity of tests, may not want to state all conclusions with certainty. However, when multiple sources of data strongly point to a specific conclusion, such interpretations may be made with a fair amount of confidence. On the other hand, reports that do not carefully document interpretations, and that present a uniformly high level of certainty may give the impression of irresponsible interpretation and overspeculation. The suggestion of Foster (1951) is pertinent: "Be positive when sure and qualify when in doubt." Furthermore, speculations should be clearly labelled, and when a psychologist is uncertain, s/he ought to suggest ways to verify hypotheses.

Generally, it is best to focus on what is important in the case, and emphasize that subject without diluting its impact with other information that may theoretically be important, but may not relate to the case. A concise report, significantly related to the referral problem, is much better received than a long, rambling one that attempts to present an all-inclusive personality picture (Garfield, Heine, & Leventhal, 1954).

Concepts or themes can be related to each other and points can be emphasized by deliberate and judicious use of repetition. The entire test results section could be organized around three or four major topics and data discussed in terms of implications for these themes. In some cases it may be appropriate to organize all ideas around one overriding issue or theme by relating data to one central concept. Thus, the report is not written in segments; rather, the relationship among data reflecting intellectual, perceptual, achievement, and personality functioning are conceptualized vis-a-vis the referral issue. When the main topics for the report are delineated, the test data are organized and systematically discussed in relation to the identified issues. A report is more useful if important material is emphasized, while less relevant data are subordinated or discussed in
Personality. 

A balanced approach to an individual's intellectual functioning must be integrated into the report. Results of intellectual functioning need to be presented in context, in terms of their contribution to the larger picture. Tallent's suggestion of a hierarchical presentation of conclusions, along with identification of the major bases for the conclusions, is pertinent.

While results of intellectual functioning are typically presented first in a school setting, it is not necessary to begin with a detailed description of the intelligence tests, including analysis of subtest scores. An overriding issue may be a child's fear of failure and reluctance to take risks, which are manifest in a variety of ways, such as refusing to attempt unfamiliar tasks and avoiding situations where performance is evaluated. The report might begin with the central concept and weave in performance on intelligence tests and behavioral observations during testing and in the classroom situation, as well as personality and historical material.

In describing performance on tests and subtests, words such as "good," "poor," or "excellent" (e.g., good reasoning ability) are imprecise and seem unnecessarily value laden. Frequently, such adjectives are used to compare a student's relative strengths and weaknesses, but such descriptions do not provide an objective indication relative to norms. In some contexts, "good" may refer to a low average performance, while under other circumstances it may refer to above average scores. When making intraperson comparisons (on norm-based tests), statements that also provide a normative anchor promote a clearer understanding than the use of qualifying adjectives. For example, "... has age-appropriate knowledge of words and their meanings" is better than "good knowledge of words...." Similarly, "... performance on tasks requiring concentration and attention was relatively weak, though still on the average level" gives an indication of relative strengths and weaknesses (intraperson), as well as a more objective statement (interperson) of level of functioning.

Personality descriptions should be focused to give as thorough and as comprehensive a picture as is necessary to clarify the problem at hand, but should not attempt to present an extensive and global depiction of the individual. Information about subjective perceptions should be differentiated from, yet integrated with, material about cognitive functioning, background history, behavior, and objective factors in the environment.

Personality may be regarded as encompassing a number of organizational levels varying in degree of accessibility to observation by the self and by others. A frequent criticism of reports (Mayman, 1959) is that statements often remain descriptive, rather than explanatory. For example, a report writer should do more than just itemize a person's salient defenses; s/he should try to state the purposes of the defenses, the conditions under which a particular defense is most likely to be mobilized, effectiveness of the defense, and what tends to follow a failure of the defense effort. Furthermore, a statement should be made about what the person is like under conditions in which s/he doesn't manifest a particular defensive position. If tight controls are mentioned in a report, it would be useful to add how seriously these controls limit the child's spontaneity, how serious is this problem, and what areas of functioning are most affected. Also important is a description of how the personality assessment results relate to effective ways of interacting with the child in the classroom, in the family, or in a therapeutic setting.

Recommendations or Summary and Recommendations

If the report is short, there is no need for a summary; in a longer report, a concise summary of key findings may be helpful to the reader. No new information should be included in the summary (see Sattler, 1982, for further discussion of the summary). Before
making any recommendations, and preferably prior to the initiation of testing, the psycholo-
gist must be aware of measures already taken to alleviate the problem (Grubb, et al., 1976). Separate recommendations may be made that are appropriate for school and at home. However, care must be taken that recommendations are not seen as infringing
on the prerogatives of parents, teachers, or other professionals (Ford & Migles, 1979). Recommendations must be flexible, but specific and detailed enough to provide adequate
guidelines to those charged with their implementation (Meyers, et al., 1974). Recommendations must be realistic and take into account the constraints of the setting, as well as
limitations on an individual's ability or inclination to carry out the recommendations.
For example, it is counterproductive to encourage a parent to tutor a child in math if that
parent reacts with impatience to the child's difficulty. Teachers are not likely to follow
recommendations that require undue effort (Frankel & Kassinove, 1974). Teachers
responding to Rucker's (1967a) survey praised reports in which given recommendations
could be implemented easily without singling out the child.
Consumers, in general, are most interested in and at the same time most critical of
the recommendation section of the report (Baker, 1965; Berry, 1975; Ford & Migles,
1979; Gilmore & Chandy, 1973; Grubb, et al., 1976; Isett & Roskowski, 1979; Mussman, 1964). Local customs, the availability of services, and constraints of the set-
ing may affect the recommendations made. Making recommendations can be com-
plicated by a number of circumstances. At times, the appropriate services are not
available to the children either through the school district, family, or community. At
other times, a child is not entitled to services unless a specific label with a diagnosis that
is not appropriate is applied. When alternative middle-ground programs are not
available, the school psychologist is in a quandary. Some of the options may be to: (a)
recommend the next best alternative that can be provided; (b) recommend the ideal in-
tervention approach, knowing there is little chance for its implementation; (c) com-
promise by describing characteristics of the ideal intervention and recommending the
most reasonable alternative that is available, or that can be made available; in this way,
the best interests of the child are protected, and persistent needs for a particular type of
service can be documented; (d) describe the child's needs vis-a-vis the learning and/or the
interpersonal environment, with the implicit or explicit understanding that the delivery of
these services is an administrative function.

Follow-Up

The quality of the relationship between the school psychologist and the teacher
affects the psychologist's willingness to make specific recommendations, as well as the
teacher's willingness to carry them out (Baker, 1965). Psychologists are understandably
reluctant to delineate a list of specific recommendations when little or no follow-up or
opportunity for revision is anticipated. When follow-up is part of the process, then the
finality of "one-shot" specific recommendations that psychologists are reluctant to give
can be eliminated. Follow-up contacts may lead to greater implementation of recommenda-
tions and to an increased sense of cooperative planning. A sense of closure and mutual
cooperation is achieved when the psychologist shows a continued interest and willingness
to follow up on a case. Inadequate follow-up and insufficient involvement of the teacher
in the various phases of the assessment process are common sources of dissatisfaction
voiced by teachers in a number of surveys (Baker, 1965; Gilmore & Chandy, 1973;
Granowski & Davis, 1974; Grubb, et al., 1976; Lucas & Jones, 1970; Roberts &
The psychologist's job does not end when the report is finished (Meyers, et al., 1974). Steps taken to implement recommendations made in the report are documented. A regular schedule of follow-ups may be appropriate, and, if the situation warrants, the date for the case review should be specified. Whenever recommendations are made, problems in implementation may be encountered, and procedures may need to be modified. Recommendations may be stated tentatively by specifying steps on a trial basis for a given duration, so that continued contact is implicit. The psychologist could invite those carrying out recommendations to call when questions or difficulties arise. As an alternative, follow-up discussions may be scheduled in advance. If everything is going well, a prearranged conference may be cancelled.

Miscellaneous

A psychological report is not a substitute for face-to-face contact, and the appropriate use of a report within a particular setting may be determined by the professional. Communication between the psychologist and other professionals (school personnel and community agents) often can be facilitated by sending an informal memo highlighting aspects of the report that have particular relevance to the individual receiving it. While a formal report is always written (Meyers, et al., 1974), the communication of results to others may be more individualized in order to optimize the usefulness of the findings. For example, the classroom teacher may not find it useful to read a detailed physical description of the child nor a repeated description of the child's behavior in the classroom. Yet such information may be important in a formal report as part of the record. A shorter, less formal report, perhaps emphasizing recommendations in a manner that capitalizes and builds on previous interactions, could be given to (and discussed with) the teacher. Using informal memos as adjuncts to communicating via the formal report has the added advantages of promoting a more personal flavor to the interaction and enhancing the sense of involvement and cooperation of those who are charged with the implementation of recommended strategies.

REFERENCES


