

## **Aran Berwari Simulation**

### TEACHER INTERACTION PROTOCOL

STUDENT: ARAN BERWARI  
Male, Age 12, White, Low SES, 6<sup>th</sup> grade  
GUDHAR BERWARI AND MARYAM

PARENTS: SAHIL  
Age: 45 and 40

CONFERENCE  
TYPE: Teacher-Initiated

Aran Berwari is one of 23 students in your general 6<sup>th</sup>-grade class at McMurray Middle School in Nashville, TN. During the first seven weeks of school, you have gotten to know Aran both as a student in your first period class as well as in your homeroom. In class, he is quiet and hardworking. He is very polite, respectful of his classmates and of you, and stays on task during independent and group work time. He rarely raises his hand to ask or answer a question, but he attempts an answer if called on directly. Aran is quiet, but he does seem to have a few close friends, mostly other boys in your homeroom – Hedi and Raman in particular. Aran is an average student, with mostly B's and C's on his report card, and occasional strong project-based performances in science and social studies. Aran's fifth grade TCAP scores showed him as below basic in English and social studies, nearly proficient in science, and proficient in math (see 2014 TCAP scores).

Aran's teachers met last week to talk about their concerns that he may have a learning disability and need support services in some of his classes. All of his core teachers shared concerns around his reading and writing. Several teachers mentioned Aran's challenges when reading aloud – he replaces words in the text with similar words that do not make sense or reads the words out of order. When he does read the word accurately, there is little fluency, which seems to affect his ability to comprehend. In passages with more difficult academic vocabulary, he has trouble recalling basic information, seemingly distracted by the new terminology. One teacher noted that he sometimes misspells the same word – often a new term for the unit – several different ways in the same assignment. Other teachers, including his elective teachers, note that Aran has challenges following multi-step directions. He appears to be listening when directions are given but then forgets the next step once he has completed the first one. In general, Aran seems to want to do what is he supposed to and tries his best, but he is struggling with reading comprehension and written assignments in multiple classes, suggesting that it goes beyond difficulty with a particular subject area. In the meeting, teachers reported trying similar things to support Aran in their classrooms, like using Marzano's six steps for new academic vocabulary (something the faculty recently

received PD on), providing an option for partner work to support his reading comprehension, having him repeat back multi-step direction as a reminder for the whole class, and just checking in on him more often during class. Thus far, none of these but the partner work have resulted in much improvement. Conversations with Aran's 5<sup>th</sup>-grade team reveal similar patterns of challenges in the prior year, but not enough to warrant support services. From Aran's file, you see that Aran also has a sister at the school in 8<sup>th</sup>-grade named Kaja. His family moved to Nashville the year prior, so Aran and his sister have only been at McMurray for two years. Prior to Nashville, the family lived in Houston, Texas, where Aran was born. His file indicates that Kurdish and Arabic are spoken at home.

As his homeroom teacher, you have been asked to hold a conference with his parents to talk about Aran's challenges in school and develop interventions to implement across the 6<sup>th</sup>-grade team prior to possible referral for an S-Team. In addition, you need his parents to consent to the testing needed for exceptional education services, should the S-Team deem this necessary later in the process, and make them aware of their rights as parents during the referral process. Your interactions with Aran's parents prior to this meeting have been limited. Aran returns school-wide forms sent home the next day with a parent signature, and the one teacher on your team who sent home a personal note to his parents also got it back with a signature at the bottom, even though it was not specifically requested. You and two other teachers on the 6<sup>th</sup>-grade team have called home to share your concerns about Aran's challenges. You have so far been unable to reach his father but have talked twice with his mother. You could tell from the first phone conversation, made about a month into the school year, that English was not her native language, but she seemed to understand and respond well enough. She said she and Aran's father would make sure he worked harder at home on his schoolwork. She said several times on the phone that she really appreciated your calling and that she really likes Aran's teachers this year. In the second phone call last week, you set up the parent/teacher conference and offered to have a translator available, but she said she did not need one.

This afternoon, you are meeting with Aran's mother, Maryam, to begin the S-Team referral process (see Form SS 3.11, Procedure B.1).

See also: MNPS Form SS 3.11; 2014 TCAP scores; IDEA Procedural Safeguards booklet; MNPS S-Team referral Form 10.

Aran Berwari Pre-Reading

Prior to the simulation next Wednesday, read the Teacher Interaction Protocol and respond to the following questions. Submit your response to Liz Self by Tuesday tonight.

1. Choose one word or phrase that underscores what this simulation about.

**Learning disability**

2. What do you expect will happen during the simulation? What information in the Teacher Interaction Protocol shaped this view of simulation?

**Aran's mother is going to be nervous about her son's performance in study. It seems she does care about her son's study. She even signed on a personal note. I guess she wanted to show the teacher she did read the note and she did want to know how her son performed in school. She might feel helpless. Although she promised to monitor her son's work, she might be unable to help. Perhaps she has no time to do it, as she has to worry about family living stuff. Living in low socioeconomic status is going to be hard. Or perhaps because her own limited English proficiency, she can't understand what her son's subject (U.S. history, which is not culturally relevant to the family's background) is talking about. Also she will be quite cooperative with the teacher. She appreciated the teacher's efforts in the second call. But I don't think she will accept the suggestion of S-Team. When offered translator, she rejected it. She seems not to be recognized as an individual who needs help with her English. I guess she does not want help if she knows her son's having problems in reading and following directions probably due to language barrier.**

3. If this situation happened in real life, what additional information do you think you would have? What information do you wish you had going into the simulation?

**Aran was born in America. He should have been exposed to great input from 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> grade at school, despite the fact he speaks his native language at home. The possibility could be that he didn't get due attention since he started school as an English language**

learner. Now although he's in 6<sup>th</sup> grade, his reading level might only be at 4<sup>th</sup> grade. To make sure whether he has learning disability, I wish to have the following information –

- What was his life like before he started school?
- What were his previous class and teacher like prior to their move to McMurry?
- How's his sister's reading performance? Is it possible to ask his sister to offer some help?
- How is the community he's living in now? Does he get any chance to talk to native speakers?
- How's his reading performance in his native language?

#### 4. How will you prepare or have prepared for the simulation?

I will ask Maryam the above questions before I make my decision.

The situation produces conflicting emotion. I'm struggling whether I should convince Aran's mother or not that his son might have learning disability. It seems to me, at least, the kid does not have learning disability. He understands well in science and math subjects.

I once tutored a reader at Bailey Middle School as a requirement for my course *Reading with New Print and Media*. He's an English language learner and has the same symptom with Aran. He can't pronounce well but he can read. First of all, reading fluently does not mean one is a good reader. He's easily distracted by new terminology. It's highly possible that he is not taught reading strategies that could facilitate his reading. The more irrelevant and difficult reading materials are, the worse the situation will be. By far, what I see as relevant is to cooperate with Aran's mother to identify his reading problem and see if we can create opportunities to improve his reading.

### Aran Berwari Re-Reading

Following the simulation on Wednesday, re-read the Teacher Interaction Protocol and watch your video on b-line in order to respond to the following questions. Save your file as LastnameFirstinitial (ie. SelfE) in a word processing document and email it to Liz Self ([elizabeth.self@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:elizabeth.self@vanderbilt.edu)) by **Monday night**. Please also bring the data compiled for the re-reading and your answers to the attached About Aran questionnaire to **class on Wednesday**.

To watch your video: Go to <http://bline.mc.vanderbilt.edu/> and log in using your VUNetID.

1. Choose one word or phrase that underscores what this simulation was about.

#### **Communication**

2. Did the simulation unfold as you expected? Why or why not? Was there anything in the TIP or other materials that might have helped you anticipate something that was unexpected?

**Basically, it happened as what I expected. She looked nervous. She was being very cooperative with what I said. And she strongly believed her son could read. Every time I mentioned the word “read”, she would immediately respond, saying, “He knows how to read.” What I didn’t expect was her limited response to my questions with short words. According to the protocol, it says she’s not a native English speaker, but she seems to understand and respond well enough. I don’t think this is the fact. When I reviewed the video, I find I shouldn’t have talked to her about very pedagogical terms. However, for daily talk or life issue inquires, she seemed to have a difficult time understanding me. She looked very focused and kept nodding all the time, but I’m sure what I said sometimes did not make sense to her. I should have used simple words and checked for her understanding frequently.**

3. From your video:

- a. Approximately how many minutes did you spend talking during the SIM?  
How many did Maryam spend talking?

**I spent around 12 minutes talking. Maryam spent less than 1 minute talking.**

- b. In the minutes you spent talking, how many minutes were spent:
- i. Describing Aran and his learning challenges from your/the teachers' perspectives  
**1 minute**
  - ii. Explaining the resources available or S-Team process  
**1:29 minutes**
  - iii. Asking questions of Maryam  
**Around 7 minutes**
  - iv. Responding to a question from Maryam or otherwise clarifying something you already said (that doesn't fall into an above category)  
**46 seconds**

- c. Make a list of all the questions you asked. Put them in categories – for example, asking about home life, seeking outside resources, checking for understanding, etc.

Questions	Topic
What was his life like before he started school?  How was community then?  What kind of people he usually talked to?  How's your daughter?  When you are together at home, what do	Home Life

<p>you guys usually talk?</p> <p>Did he have any chance to go back? Did he see any person there?</p> <p>Do they spend (Aran and his sister) time together? What do they usually do? Like What?</p>	
<p>How was his class then? How was his teacher? Do you think she taught good lessons to your son?</p> <p>How's her (Aran's sister) schoolwork?</p> <p>Do they tell you something about school? Like their feelings about the school? About the teacher? Aran's feeling about me?</p>	<p>School Life</p>
<p>They (Aran and his friends) never study together?</p> <p>How's his reading ability in Kurdish?</p> <p>Does he read a lot in his spare time?</p> <p>Does he have any other hobbies?</p>	<p>Aran</p>
<p>Have you ever been to Nashville Public Library?</p> <p>Is it possible you can go to the library?</p> <p>Do you have any transportation?</p>	<p>Seeking outside resource</p>

- d. Based on the data compiled above, describe your encounter with Ms. Sahil in a few sentences.

**I do think the encounter with Mrs. Sahil was a failure. Though I asked her a lot of questions, but what I got couldn't help me much. She either said one-word answer or did not elaborate. When she mentioned her home back, she talked a little more. I think I should have refined my way of asking. I overestimated her English proficiency.**

- e. Complete the attached About Aran questionnaire.
4. Based on your re-reading of the simulation, what do you most want to focus on during the debrief on Wednesday?

**Teachers could have really good intentions to talk or offer help to parents like Maryam who have limited English proficiency. But to truly help them cannot be realized through several times teacher-parent meeting. Teachers need to spend more time with families outside of school to well know them. So what should be the goal of a teacher-parent meeting? How could I elicit the information I need?**



### About Aran Questionnaire

Based on what you learned in your encounter with Ms. Berwari (and not from another teacher), answer the following questions. If you cannot answer the question because you did not specifically ask about it, answer DNA (did not ask).

#### About Aran

1. Has Aran previously been assessed for exceptional education? DNA
2. Have Aran's parents noticed any problems with Aran's reading or language processing at home? No.
3. What language and dialect does Aran primarily speak outside of school? Kurdish.
4. At what age did Aran really start to learn English? DNA
5. What languages does Aran speak, understand, and read or write? DNA
6. Did Aran attend preschool or any other educational setting prior to kindergarten? DNA
7. What are Aran's favorite things about school? DNA
8. How does Aran spend his time outside of school? Play balls with his friends outside.
9. Is there anything going on outside of school or at home that may be affecting Aran's learning? DNA

#### About Aran's family

10. How long has Aran's family lived in the United States? DNA
11. How many siblings does Aran have? DNA
12. Did any of them receive ELL/ESL services? DNA
13. Were any of them assessed for or provided with exceptional education services? DNA
14. Where are his siblings presently and what are they doing? Iraq; DNA
15. What kinds of activities does the family do together? DNA
16. Where does the family attend religious services? DNA

#### About Aran's parents

17. Where did Aran's parents immigrate from and when? DNA
18. Why did they immigrate to the United States? DNA
19. What does Aran's father do for a living? DNA
20. What is Gudhar's highest level of education? DNA
21. What does Aran's mother do for a living? DNA

22. What is Maryam's highest level of education? DNA
23. What do Aran's parents understand what it means to be "involved" in Aran's schooling? DNA
24. Are Gudhar and Maryam able to help Aran with his homework? No.
25. Do they have any concerns about Aran at school? No. She was told by her son he has no problem in school.
26. What do they think about Aran's educational experience thus far? No problem.
27. What are Aran's parents' goals for him educationally? DNA
28. What or who does Maryam think EE services are for? DNA
29. Why did Maryam decline a translator for this meeting? DNA