



Case Study: Jerome, Grade 8

Student Background: Jerome is starting the 8th grade at age 13. Jerome loves computers and has a tablet that he uses to communicate. He knows about 30 symbols that relate to social, academic, and personal needs. He can find the right page on his tablet to initiate a communication (e.g., “Let’s Talk,” “My Personal Needs,” “Math Class”). Jerome is eligible for participation in the LEAP Connect due to a Traumatic Brain Injury; he is also paraplegic and uses a wheelchair. He performs best with a touch screen and does not manipulate objects well. He also can use his eyes to choose between symbols or objects. He does not speak. Jerome did not receive reading instruction when he was a child. His IEP includes trying an adapted beginning reading program with him this year that will also include some writing using a software program that involves clicking and selecting words. Jerome is a member of the middle school concert band. He uses his touch screen to activate music loops that provide background rhythm. Jerome is always highly motivated if a lesson has a musical component.

High-Quality Planning and Instruction: Ms. Johnson is the middle school teacher for Jerome. In her school, the special education teachers specialize in teaching either English language arts or mathematics. Ms. Johnson is the English language arts teacher. The regular classroom is currently studying the Guidebook Unit on the short story version of “Flowers for Algernon”. All students are working toward identifying the theme of the story and summarizing the text. Ms. Johnson consults the [crosswalks](#) to determine which content and skills are central to the Louisiana Student Standard.

Louisiana Student Standard	Louisiana Connector
<p>RL.8.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text.</p>	<p>LC.RL.8.2a Determine the theme or central idea of a text. LC.RL.8.2b Analyze the development of the theme or central idea over the course of the text including its relationship to the characters, setting and plot. LC.RL.8.2c Create an objective summary of a text.</p>

Recognizing Jerome’s love for music, Ms. Johnson chose to introduce the idea of “theme” with songs on the previous day of instruction. During the lesson, Jerome listened to clips of the lyrics of four songs to determine the underlying meaning. She asked Jerome, “What is the artist trying to teach us about life?” Ms. Johnson had brightly colored cards with general themes – such as love, loss, triumph – written. As Jerome listened to the music, he pointed to the card that best suited the theme. Satisfied with Jerome’s grasp on theme, she has planned to move to understanding the theme of a text for today’s lesson. Given Jerome’s current level of reading performance, Ms. Johnson creates an adapted version of the story to simplify and abbreviate the text. Ms. Johnson also refers to the [Essential Elements Card](#) for possibilities in developing other, appropriate instructional strategies for this lesson on describing the central message.

In previous lessons, Ms. Johnson has used charts to help Jerome understand sequencing and character traits. This visual has proven to be successful. Ms. Johnson will locate pictures to illustrate scenes that determine important themes in “Flowers for Algernon” (e.g., white mouse in maze, Charlie with doctors, Algernon’s grave, Charlie’s former coworkers, ink blot test). She will then support Jerome in choosing a phrase for the theme of “Flowers for Algernon” by listing some possible themes as found in the Lesson 24 Guidebook notes (e.g., intelligence, friendship/relationships, medical experiments, belonging/being normal, treatment of those with learning disabilities). Jerome will then select pictures that support the theme using short phrases activated using text-to-speech features. Once the chart is complete, Ms. Johnson will reiterate to Jerome that he has located relevant evidence from “Flowers for Algernon” which helped



develop his identified theme. Once Ms. Johnson is satisfied with Jerome’s ability to identify theme, she will think about how to show the development of this theme over the course of the text.

She will then turn to focus on the Louisiana Connector related to summarization. She has some clear ideas about how move forward with the planning of this lesson. She plans to model summarization by reading the short story aloud and then, periodically, stopping and summarizing what was just read. At the end of the story, the teacher will provide another summary of the entire text. As Jerome’s understanding progresses, she will also plan to vary her approach by using a variety of ways to read the text aloud: sometimes she will read it, sometimes other students will read it, and sometimes she will prompt Jerome to use text-to-speech technology. She will also increase Jerome’s opportunities for demonstrating his understanding of the text, moving from non-verbal gestures to choosing between two summary sentences to creating his own synopsis statements. She will create a page for Jerome’s computer tablet that can be used across texts and chapters to summarize story elements including the setting, characters, problem, and resolution.