

COS Applied Practice Case Study: James (36 Months)

James (36 Months): Assessments and Early Intervention Observations

At 36 months old, James will be transitioning into a preschool program next month for 2 days a week. He has been attending a local center-based child care facility for 4 days a week since he was 1 year old, when his mother, Amber, went back to work.

James has a history of congenital cataracts that resulted in significant visual impairment. In addition to surgery to remove his clouded lenses, he has had ongoing ophthalmology appointments to monitor his eye pressure. He wears contact lenses that still do not provide him with corrected vision. James and his family have been receiving early intervention services in their home since he was 6 months old.

In preparation for his transition out of early intervention services, Ellen, his teacher of students with visual impairment (TSVI), has completed the Measure of Engagement, Independence, and Social Relationships (MEISR) with Amber over a series of virtual and home visits. Along with James's occupational therapist, Cathy, and his child care primary provider, Angela, they have filled out the Early Intervention Developmental Profile, revised edition (EIDP-R), after observing James in his home and child care settings. In addition, Ellen has administered the Boehm-3 Test of Basic Concepts - Tactile Edition to James over several sessions at home to determine his understanding of early literacy and numeracy concepts.

The MEISR provides a comprehensive look at James's development in the context of

functional routines throughout the day. The items considered include engagement, independence, and social relationship skills; five developmental domains; and the three child outcomes.

Consistent with interventionists' and caregivers' observations, the MEISR indicates that James has mostly age-expected skills in his daily routines with adult assistance. Some daily routines require a mix of skills that James has not acquired: mealtime, getting dressed, play time with others, hanging out/watching TV/books, and outdoor play. James demonstrates the ability to seek out adults for assistance, uses appropriate greetings in the child care setting, and is curious about new adults who visit the child care facility.

He prefers to play on his own, with limited interactions with the other children. His favorite areas are the quiet book corner, where he chooses mostly tactile books, and the sensory table. When other children approach James, he is quiet and does not answer requests or engage in imaginary play in the kitchen area or the block corner. James independently takes a hat with a brim and sunglasses provided for him before going outside to play, but he continues to stay close to the adults and has to be encouraged to interact with the playground equipment or ride-on toys. He prefers to watch what is going on with the other children, rarely joining in.

Although James is competent in matching and sorting objects by color and shape, he struggles with any task that requires putting pieces together and using tools such as scissors or crayons. He still requires adult assistance to open packages or wrappers at snack time. He

can put on his own coat but cannot manage all the fastenings.

Although many of James' skills are affected by his visual impairment, developmental differences in his fine motor skills are of concern, and he continues to require assistance with social interactions with his peers.

The EIDP-R is an observational and interactive assessment for children ages birth to 3 years that covers major developmental milestones in six domains. Items are scored with "passing," "not passing," and "omitted," allowing for certain items to be removed if they are inappropriate because of a sensory loss or a need for adaptation. The Profile Graph provides a visual overview of developmental skills in the six domains and gives some guidance on where intervention may be required. James's EIDP-R scores indicate age-expected skills in the cognitive and gross motor domains and in the toileting and dressing section of the self-care domain. As on the MEISR, James shows a mix of skills in fine motor, language, and social domains and in the feeding section of the self-care domain.

Observation of James in the child care setting confirms his difficulties with peer interactions. He does not appear to be able to approach small groups that are beginning to form as the children play with each other. He watches these groups but prefers to play on his own at a distance. Adults' efforts to engage him with other children require a high level of intervention, such as setting up an activity and giving direct instructions on what to say and do.

James enjoyed the administration of the Boehm-3 Test of Basic Concepts - Tactile Edition by his TSVI, Ellen. This assessment is a series of performance items (Can you point "up" with your finger?) and 2-D tactile pictures (Which is the bead on the "top"?) that allow a young child to demonstrate knowledge of

directional concepts critical for early literacy, numeracy, and orientation skills. James has recently become interested in tactile books, spending hours in the book corner at child care on his own. He is also excited about making his own tactile books with his family, and he has built a small library of short, narrated homemade books that he seeks out daily. The Boehm-3 Test of Basic Concepts - Tactile Edition was completed over three sessions during home visits, and his responses indicated an above-average understanding of relational concepts for his age (< 27).

Overall, observations of James in multiple settings from multiple individuals and performance data show consistent age-expected results for early literacy and numeracy skills, social relationships and language use with adults, most self-care tasks, and understanding of safety. Although James is a cautious child, his gross motor skills are developmentally appropriate.

James (36 Months): Parent Observations

At 36 months old, James will be transitioning into a preschool program next month for 2 days a week. He has been attending a local center-based child care facility for 4 days a week since he was 1 year old, when his mother, Amber, went back to work.

James has a history of congenital cataracts that resulted in significant visual impairment. In addition to surgery to remove his clouded lenses, he has had ongoing ophthalmology appointments to monitor his eye pressure. He wears contact lenses that still do not provide him with corrected vision. James and his family have been receiving early intervention services in their home since he was 6 months old.

Amber reflected that over the past 3 years except for his vision, James has been fairly healthy:

"James still needs drops for his eyes every day to control the pressure, and changing from his very strong glasses to the contact lenses was quite a struggle, but I think we have that all part of our routine now. He has had a few colds and respiratory illnesses, but I think that is to be expected when your child attends child care. I have no concerns about his health."

Even with all the excellent eye care James has received, his vision obviously is still poor. Amber shared,

"It is amazing to me how much young children need to learn through imitation and what they see around them. We adapt a lot of things for him at home. The ophthalmologist thinks James will be a candidate for lens

implants in 2 years or so, and we are looking forward to that. It may mean his vision will be fully corrected, but for now we assume he cannot see most things we do."

While going through the Routines Based Interview (RBI) with the service coordinator and the Measure of Engagement, Independence, and Social Relationships (MEISR) with James's teacher of students with visual impairment (TSVI) and occupational therapist, Amber was pleased to relate how many things are going well at home.

"Our family has some nice routines in place that I think really help James make it through the day. I'm grateful for all the help we have had from early intervention services, and we have learned so much about how James's vision loss can affect his development."

Amber is happy about how independent James has become at home.

"We follow a schedule throughout the day so James knows what to expect, and we have made some adaptations to the house to help him, such as placing contrasting color rugs wherever there is a change in the flooring level or he should be aware of an edge. He is so comfortable at home that sometimes I forget he has a visual impairment. I am quickly reminded when we go somewhere new and he is hesitant to leave my side or shuffles his feet or trails the wall. His orientation and mobility specialist (O&M) is starting to introduce a white cane to him so he can be as confident in other settings as he is at home."

James is almost completely independent at mealtimes. He likes to be included in the preparation process, and I know this has helped him understand where the food comes from. He still needs some help with food wrappers and using a fork, but that's about it. I've let him practice spreading peanut butter and jam on bread a few times, and he likes the challenge, even though it's a mess! He helps me put away utensils and set the table when we have time, and he has his own drawer with cups and bowls to choose from.

I expect him to help me with matching socks and putting away the laundry, and this has really helped me to have a better idea of what he sees. He can match and label most colors and patterns, and if I ask him to find an item of clothing, he usually can remember where it is. He's good about asking us for help if he needs it. I know he is good about that at child care, too, but if we are visiting my parents, who he does not see very often, he may not ask for help. I'm a little nervous about him going to preschool, as the teachers will be new to him.

James loves books now, especially books with textures or books we have made together. This has been a struggle. He has always loved being read to, but until the last 3 months, he had no interest in the books themselves. Now I will find him curled up on the couch pretending to read a book we made together. His TSVI calls them "experience books"! We have one about a trip to McDonald's and one about going to the park. His

TSVI is introducing braille, just in case future surgeries are not successful, but he is not as interested in the letters as he is in the stories he makes up. We tried a trip to the library the other day, and I think he was a little overwhelmed. He wouldn't leave my side and hid his face when the librarian tried to share a book. I guess we will have to make more trips there. I'm just glad he is finally interested in books.

Some of James' favorite activities include counting objects one by one and playing with the small garage his grandfather built for him. He will spend hours moving the cars around, pretending to fix them, and talking with "customers" who come in "the shop." His imagination is wonderful! His father is a mechanic, and sometimes we go to visit him at the garage. I think he likes the darker lighting and the sounds and smells of the garage. We have set up a little workbench for him in the garage at home, and he will organize nuts and bolts into different containers, and the other day I heard him count to 100! I'm happy with his progress, but he struggles with putting things together. I'm not sure if it is because of his poor vision or his fine motor skills. Even using large building blocks or two-piece puzzles is frustrating for him. We are working on this with his occupational therapist.

Outdoor play is very challenging for James. We go to the park every weekend so we can practice on the equipment, but I still need to help him or stay close. I think the glare from the sun diminishes his vision

significantly. He's starting to try the slide on his own and will go on the swing on his tummy. He will not sit on the swing. He screams and will not let go of me. I'm not sure what to do, so we've stopped trying for now. There are several children in the neighborhood James's age, and I have tried to get James to interact with them, but he is resistant. My sister lives nearby, and we visit often, and she has a daughter who is 6 months older than James, and they play next to each other but not with each other. This is probably my greatest concern, that James has no interest in other children. I know his child care provider is concerned about this as well.

Once or twice I have seen other children approach James, but he just doesn't seem to know what to do. If a child offers him a shovel, he just sits there and does not respond. If they take his hand, he pulls back. He is content to sit next to the quieter children but avoids the more active ones and often seems surprised if a child has left unexpectedly, which they often do. Sometimes I think the other children move too quickly for him. He navigates the child care classroom independently but not as quickly as others. I am hoping that as James begins preschool this year, there will be opportunities for him to work more with other children in the class."

James (36 Months): Observations from Child Care

At 36 months old, James will be transitioning into a preschool program next month for 2 days a week. He has been attending a local center-based mixed-age child care facility for 4 days a week since he was 1 year old, when his mother, Amber, went back to work.

James has a history of congenital cataracts that resulted in significant visual impairment. In addition to surgery to remove his clouded lenses, he has had ongoing ophthalmology appointments to monitor his eye pressure. He wears contact lenses that still do not provide him with corrected vision. James and his family have been receiving early intervention services in their home since he was 6 months old.

The staff are familiar with James's visual impairment and are willing to adapt routines and activities if they are aware of a need. His primary care provider at the center, Angela, is most concerned about James's social skills.

"James is always ready to try a new activity as long as an adult is nearby. He knows the classroom routine and is first to wash his hands for snack! He is independent at mealtime except for opening some food wrappers and can complete most tabletop activities. He greets the adults in his classroom and will answer questions about how he is feeling or what he did over the weekend, and he is curious if there is a new adult in the room. However, he is hesitant and quiet around his peers. He will stand or sit next to them at circle time or in activity centers facilitated by an adult, but he prefers to play on his own. When allowed to choose an activity, you can find him in the book corner with

our collection of tactile books or at the sensory table practicing his pouring and filling with cups that he has organized by color and size. Many of the other boys in the room are in the block corner, building or driving their cars, and even though James has showed interest in these materials he still has to be encouraged to join them.

I know that James has the language skills to interact with his peers because he uses them with me! He still struggles with entering the groups though, and I'm certain it is because he can't see which children are in which group to approach them."

Angela is starting to notice a difference in how the other children react, too.

"Up until now, all the children in James's group have been learning how to interact with each other. We are starting to see some children emerge as leaders; they are particularly good at starting an activity or imaginary game. They approach James and seem to be a bit confused when James does not respond or turns away. I see less efforts by the other children as time goes on. If one of the adults can be there to support James, he will talk with the others, but sometimes the moment is missed. I'd like James to have more "tools" to interact with the children when they approach him."

Angela also has concerns about James when they are out of doors.

"Sometimes, on sunny days, it is as though he is a different child. He stays close to me or one of the other

teachers, and unless he can find a shaded area in the sandbox or under the awning, we can't get him to participate in any activities. James has sunglasses and a hat with a brim that is available for him to wear, but some days it doesn't seem to make a difference. He is good about going to his cubby and remembering to put them on before we line up. He loves to do the same kind of "safe activities" outside that he does inside: building roads with trucks in the sandbox, counting rocks, and even putting the different playground balls into containers by color and size! However, getting him to play ball with another child is something we supervise because his frustration level is low for retrieving the ball.

I don't know, it seems like he wants to be engaging with the other children, but something is holding him back. An example would be that we all go outside and most of the children find a tricycle or a ride-on toy of some type, and James will just stand next to me until I guide him to one. He likes a small car we have where he can keep his feet on the ground, but often he will simply refuse to be left. If he does get into the car, he will sit and watch the other children riding by and not try to catch them or move around the playground.

James has made progress in using the playground equipment. His mother says he likes the slide and swings at the park by their house, but

it has taken a while for him to even try ours. I'm worried what will happen when he goes to preschool in the afternoons and they have a different playground. The O&M specialist from early intervention visited James here at child care one day and she had some great ideas. One of her strategies was to bring small toys that look like our playground equipment (slide, swing, riding car). Using little toy people, she demonstrated how James could try each of these items and what he could do. James has a great imagination, and he continues to remember that imaginary play session as he has mentioned it to me several times. One day he even said, "I'm sitting in the riding car like the little toy person!" I'm considering setting up an "outdoor play" center in the classroom for all the children so we can practice playground safety and maybe some social interactions with the group.

Another idea the O&M instructor had included taking James on the playground without the other children and let him explore with support. Since that day, I have seen James go down the slide once or twice on his own. I wish he could have more time with the O&M provider; it's great to see him initiate some active play. It has really encouraged all of us to think about overall safety on the playground for all the children."