

## Case for Academic Half Day

Per CPS statement:

- Awareness of personal values
- Awareness of how culture may impact health
- Awareness of how culture may impact management of illness
- Be aware of: values implicit in current medical models
- Listen, explain, acknowledge, recommend, negotiate
- Recognize that diversity exists within groups and avoid generalizing

Case: Jonah

Jonah is a 7 year old child, new to your clinic, who started grade 2 three months ago at a new school. His mother brought him to your general pediatrics clinic for behaviour problems which have been occurring at the school. She is frustrated because she says the school is calling her almost daily to discuss her son's negative behaviour. She does not feel that she sees similar behaviour at home. She admits that she has kept Jonah at home more days than she has sent him to school in the past month.

A letter from the school is as follows:

"Although Jonah is generally a happy and energetic child, we have had consistent difficulties with his behaviour in both structured and unstructured school time. Jonah has great difficulty remaining seated when he is expected to. He often approaches other children's personal space and is very frequently "hands-on". Jonah will only engage appropriately with preferred activities, which include playing at the sensory station, colouring, and going for body breaks with an EA. Jonah will rarely engage with learning behaviours and has fallen significantly below grade level in all aspects of his learning.

Jonah often disregards the authority of the adults in his environment and ignores or runs away from teachers he does not prefer. He also displays a lack of empathy towards others- recently he tripped a child on the playground and then laughed when the other child appeared hurt. "

- A. Are there any biases you recognize about yourself coming into this situation?  
(do you have a goal? Ie- making a diagnosis, proving the school wrong because you hate their letter, making sure the child goes to school, making sure the child gets good grades)
- B. If this school is in Saskatoon, what do you imagine their goals might be with suggesting this child come see a pediatrician?  
(Probably: that the child learns well, potentially that they get diagnoses established for additional funding. Also they have to consider health of the entire classroom and their obligation to keep all students safe, also they might want to understand the child better)

C. What is your general approach to school-based behaviour problems?  
(Medical problems- mental health problems- life stress (current-past)- developmental differences- learning differences- relational issues)

D. In what ways can culture impact a child's school experience?

(Language, visible minority, a recent move, bullying, teacher prejudice, differences in school cultures compared to prior, difference in discipline technique, difference in cultural role of classroom education, historical trauma with educational systems)

Who is Jonah? Three cases from my practice

1. Jonah is a Filipino child whose family moved to Saskatoon just before he was born. I have worked closely with this family for two years. Jonah showed symptoms that would be in keeping with ADHD and an autism spectrum disorder. However, his mother did not want to look into the possibility of ASD. She wanted to try to treat ADHD first and see if the symptoms resolve. The school OT and therapies team were quite suspicious of ASD but mom felt they were pushing this diagnosis. Eventually, mom told me she had been a teacher in the Philippines and she felt an ASD diagnosis was going to negatively impact this child's life. **She is keeping her child from school because she is worried he will be pushed into an ASD diagnosis that will have a negative implication on his future possibilities.**
2. Jonah is an Indigenous child who grew up on his reserve. He is used to more independence. Jonah's mother also explains that relationship is much more important to Jonah than authority. He had been at a city school last year but there was mutual like and respect with his teacher and everything went well. This year, there was an incident where a vice principle picked Jonah up while yelling at him when he was playing rough, and Jonah was scared. Jonah now refuses to interact with the VP and most of his negative behaviours are around the VP. Jonah's kokum was a residential school survivor and his mother is completely unwilling to tolerate intimidating school behaviours. **She is keeping her child from school because his integrity and healthy personal relationships are more important than pushing him through a system that isn't appearing to respect him.**
3. Jonah is a child who moved to Canada from Nigeria a few months before this school year started. Jonah had always done well in school in Nigeria. His mother notes two issues- she feels the teachers in the schools here have an approach to discipline which is confusing compared to Jonah's schools in Nigeria (ie the teachers smile while being critical and she feels they let him push them around) and she also feels it is a culture shock for Jonah to suddenly be a visible minority. She wonders if there is bullying from students based on his race and status as the new kid. She also has a gut feeling that his race might be leading to

overly negative evaluations of his behaviour from one or more teachers. **She is keeping her child out of school because she is worried he is experiencing racial bias and bullying and she does not trust the disciplinary structure in the school.**

Resolution: this child switched schools shortly after I met him and things ended up going much better in the new school.