

*How to Understand
Students with
Disabilities by their
Support Needs Instead
of their Deficits*

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The Supports Intensity Scale –
Children's Version

Grand Hotel Reykjavik

June 20, 2018



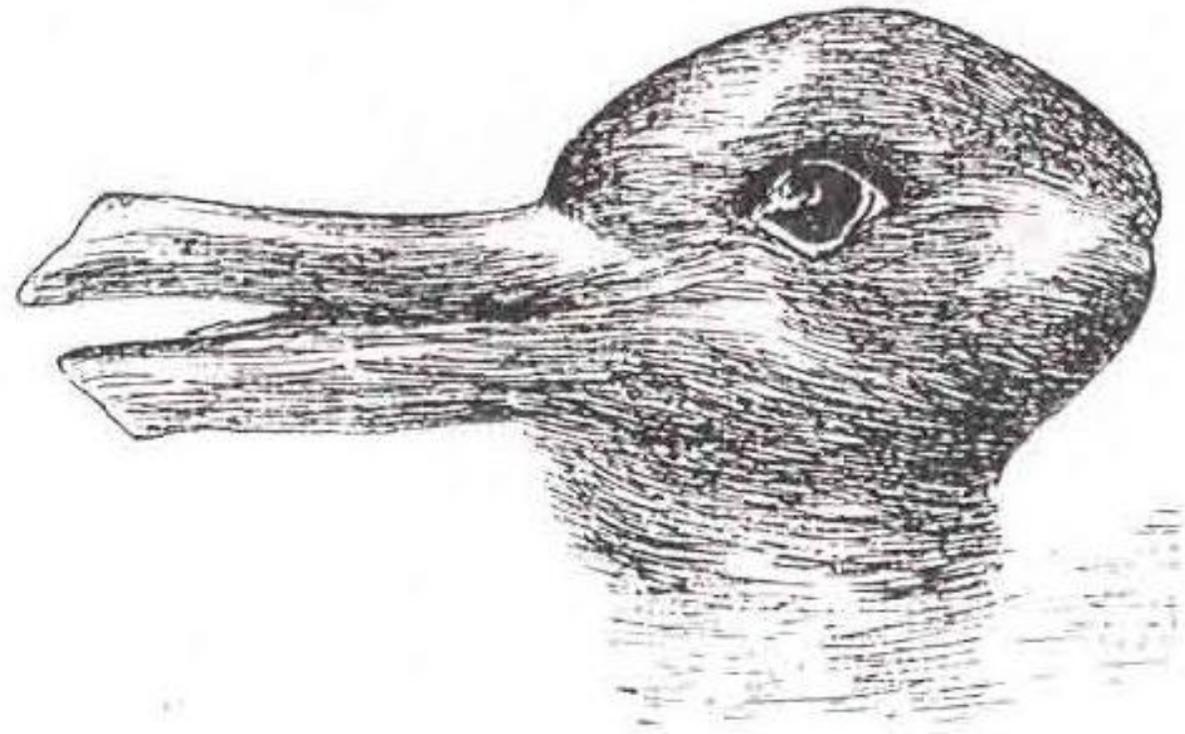
Today

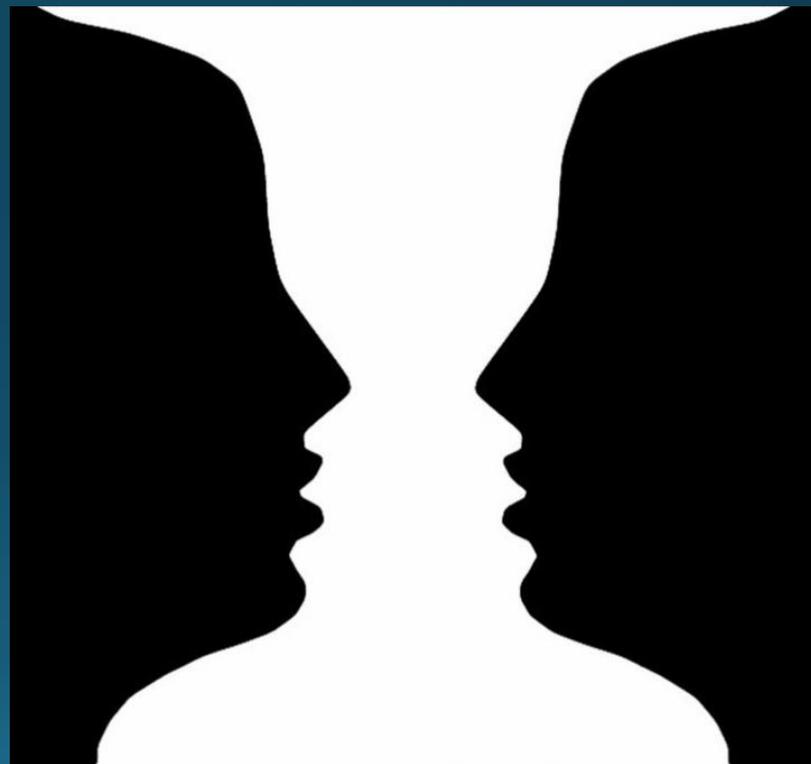
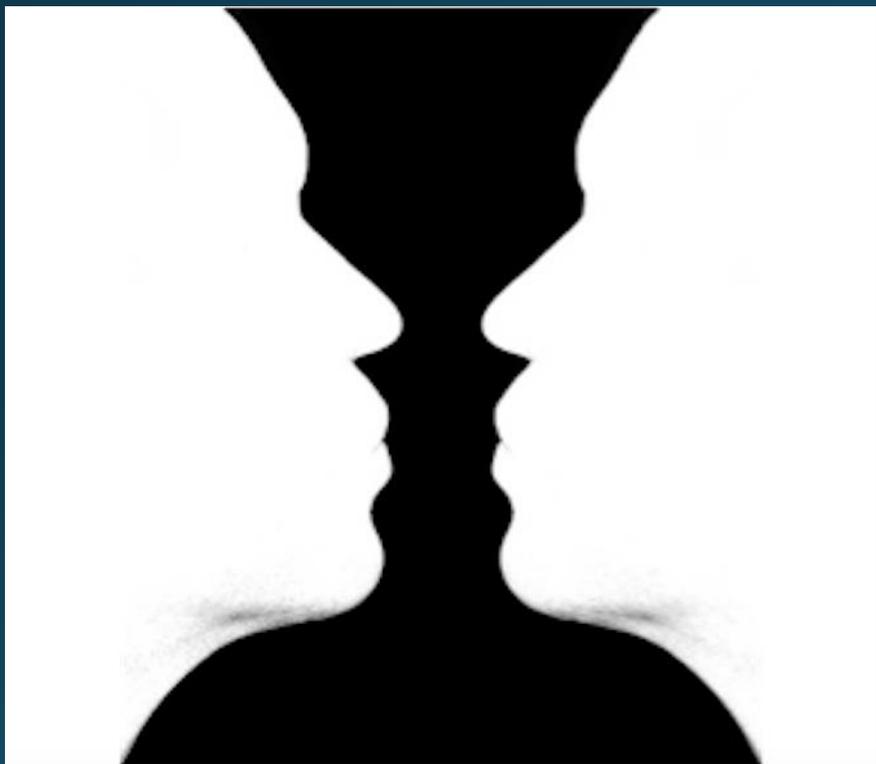
- Explain what is meant by a strengths-based approach to educating children with disability and how this approach builds upon, but is different, than more traditional approaches
- Relevance of a strengths-based model to the assessment and planning of supports

Remember Perceptual Ambiguity? The Boring Figure.



- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7f1G6Nx5VDw>





It is not a perfect metaphor for understanding children with disabilities but

.....

- Do you see strengths to build upon and the possibility of a bright future?

Or

- ???



It is not a perfect metaphor for understanding people with disabilities but

- Do you see strengths to build upon and the possibility of a bright future?

Or

- Weaknesses to Fix and limited contributions to make in the future?



What do you see First? What do you focus your attention on?

- Barriers, obstacles, and reasons why this this young man cannot do things he dreams about doing?

or

- ???????????



What do you see First? What do you focus your attention on?

- Barriers, obstacles, and reasons why this young man cannot do things he dreams about doing?

or

- Modifications & Adaptations and other supports that could empower this young man to pursue a dignified and meaningful life.



What do you see First? What do you focus your attention on?

- A student who is different from most other students in the class because of his mental abilities and learning potential.

or

- ??????????????



What do you see First? What do you focus your attention on?

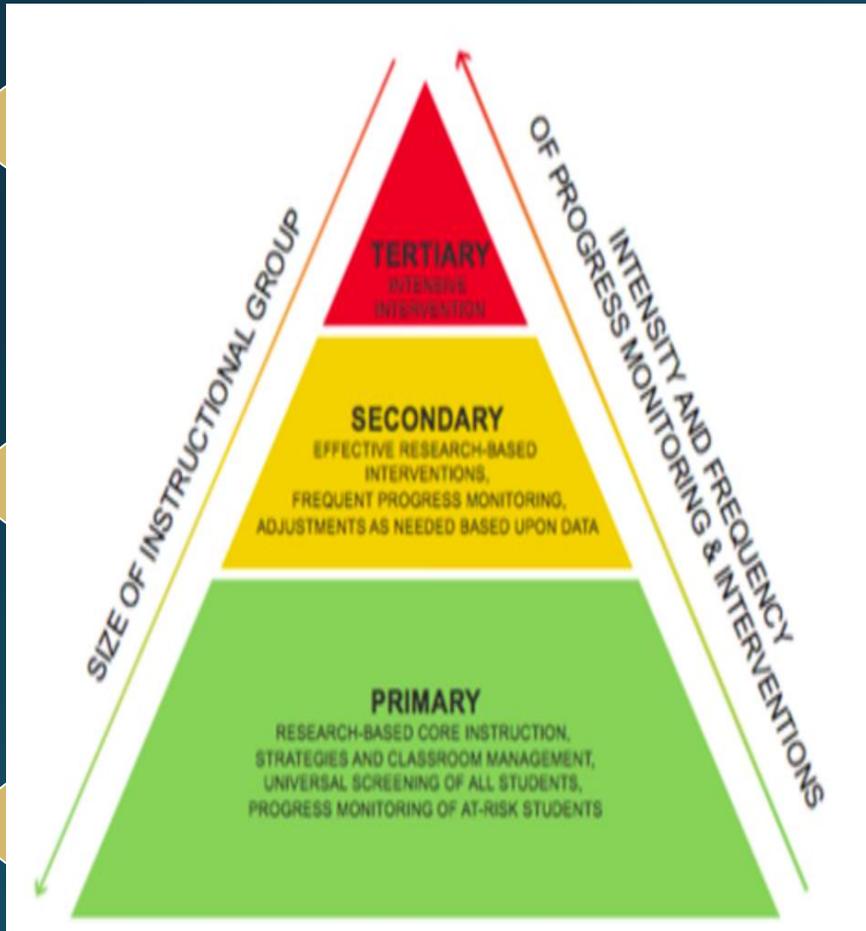
- A student who is different from most other students in the class because of his mental abilities and learning potential.

or

- A student who is much like the other students, but needs more support (both qualitatively and quantitatively) than most other students in order to learn.



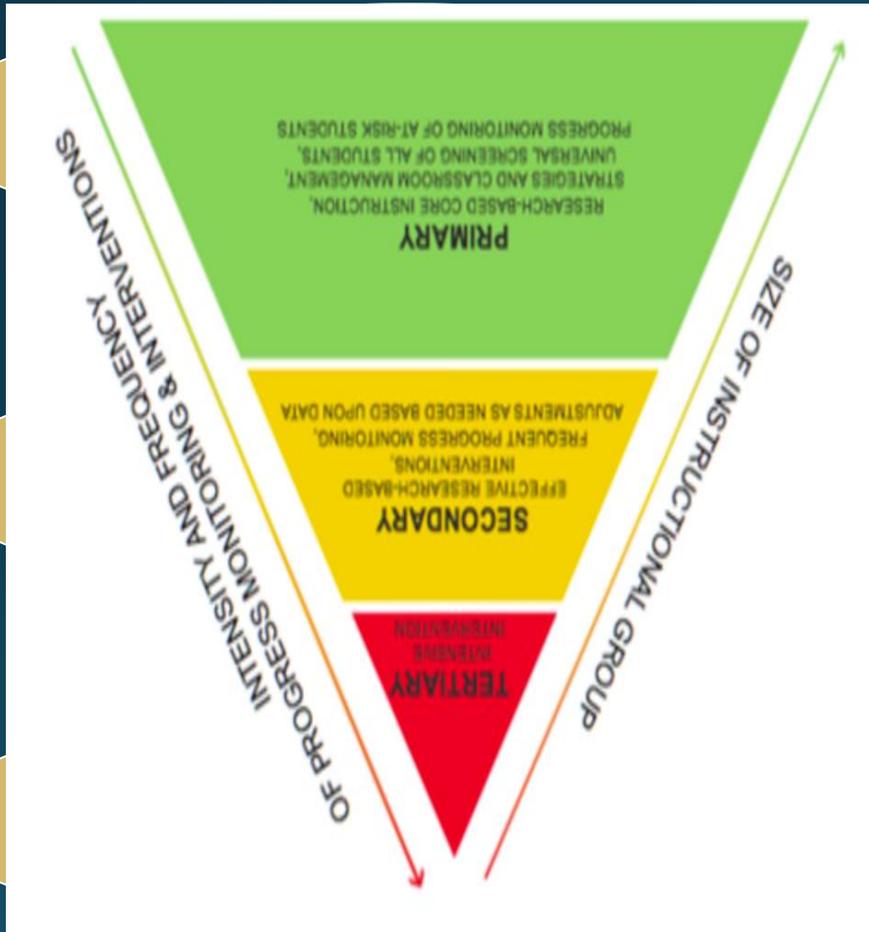
Traditional Ways of Understanding Students with Disabilities



Traditional conceptualizations of disability have focused on deficits in relation to what is considered typical or “normal” – this is called the “medical model” or “deficit model”

Evidence of Disability

Traditional Ways of Understanding Students with Disabilities



Traditional conceptualizations of disability have focused on deficits in relation to what is considered typical or “normal” – this is called the “medical model” or “deficit model”

Evidence of Disability

Acknowledging that some children experience learning challenges that other children do not experience is not necessarily a problem – it only becomes a problem when it is considered singularly

A strengths-based approach does not mean burying one's head in the sand and pretending that children don't experience limitations, challenges, learning problems, etc.



A strengths-based approach means that relative limitations and relative strengths are considered in the context of the environments (setting, set of circumstances) in which children function. Supports should be developed with the child's relative strengths and relative limitations in mind, and the outcome is greater participation, engagement, and learning in schools and communities.



A Contextual Understanding of Disability

Demands of the Environment

Person-
Environment
Mismatch

Personal Competence



A social-ecological conceptualization of disability focuses on personal competence in relation to demands of the environment in which a learner is operating.

Evidence of Disability

The population of students with disabilities does not necessarily change, but the way the students are understood changes

Jim cannot see very well compared to others



- A deficit-based approach calls for efforts to fix my eyes
 - If my eyes can be fixed easily, then that works out pretty well
 - If my eyes can't be fixed, then the medical model, deficit-based approach is not very useful

Jim cannot see very well compared to others



A strengths-based, support-based approach calls for understanding what it is I can and can't see; what activities are limited because of what I can and can't see, and & what supports I need in order to do the things I want and need to do in my environment

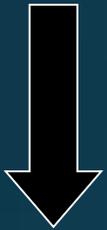




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Changing the Locus of Disability – A Social-Ecological Understanding

Disability



**Personal
Competence
Deficits**



Notice that a Social-Ecological Conceptualization of Disability :

- Does not deny that some children have limitations or deficits in relationship to other children
- Does call for considering a child's competency holistically in relation to environmental demands
- Success is evidenced by greater participation in culturally valued environments

Demands of the Environment

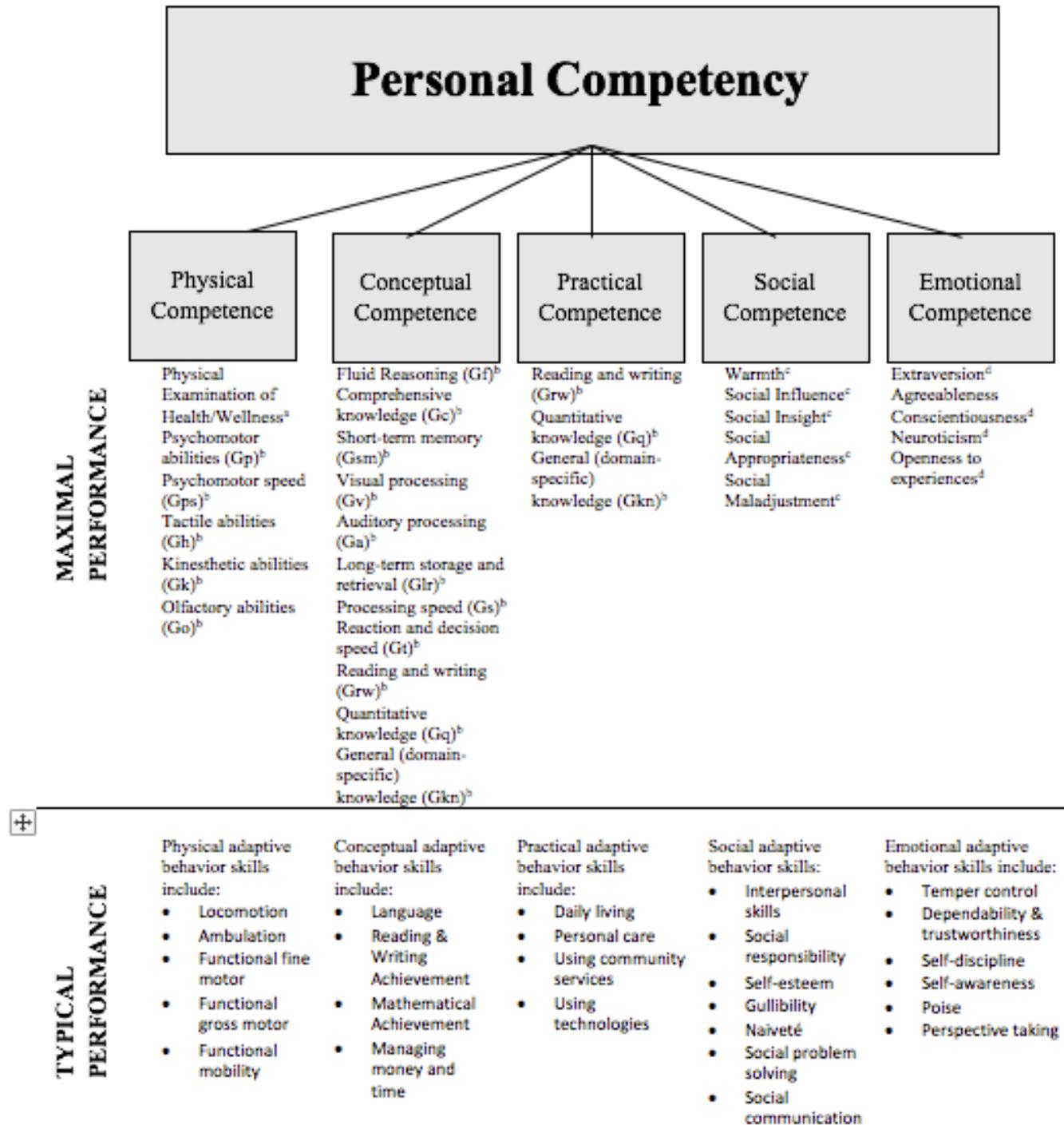
Individualized
Supports
Close the GAP

Environmental
Modifications
Close the GAP

Personal Competence

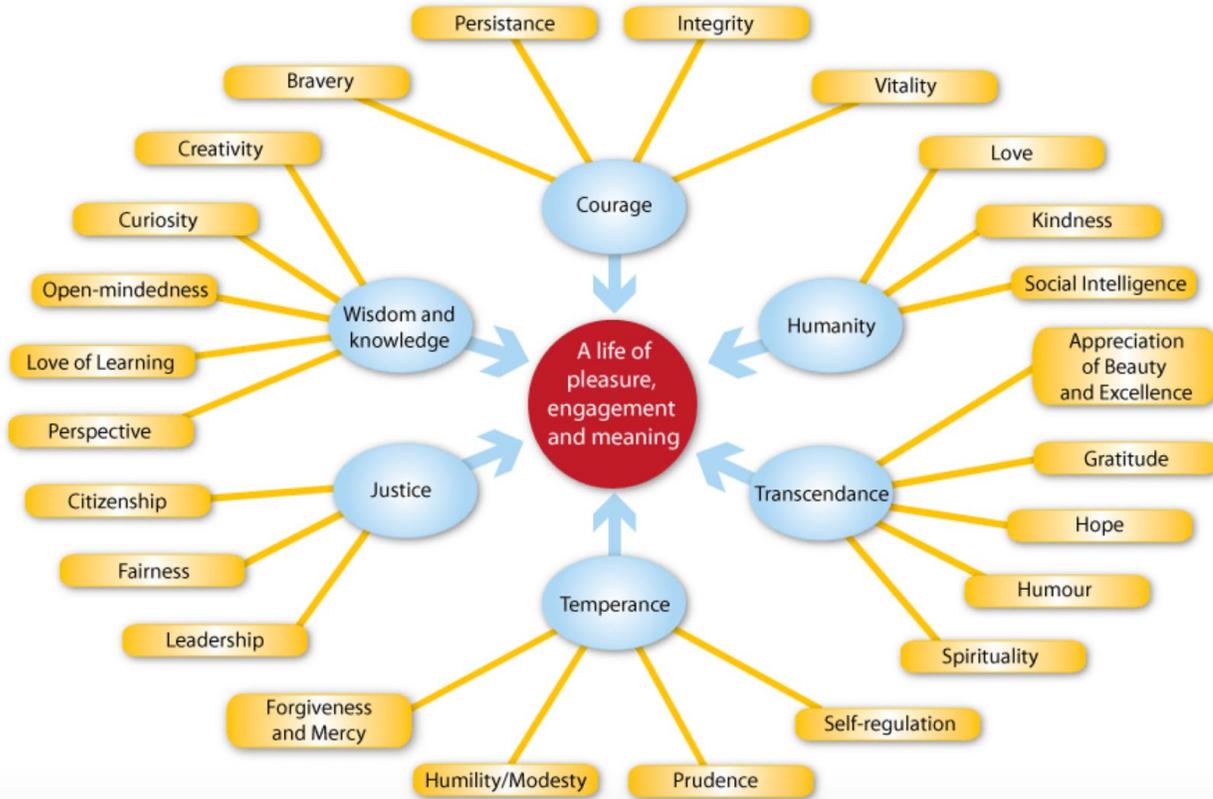
- The “GAP” between personal competence and environmental demands is addressed through supports.
- Supports function to increase competence and/or modify the environment to make it more welcoming
- First, let’s look at what is meant by a more holistic view of personal competence, and then how such “thinking” might be applied to a real person living a real life.

A More Holistic View of Personal Competency (Cattell-Horn-Carroll or CHC theory)



Assessment of Strengths – Self-Report & Teacher reports

VIA Character Strengths & Virtues
(Peterson and Seligman, 2004)

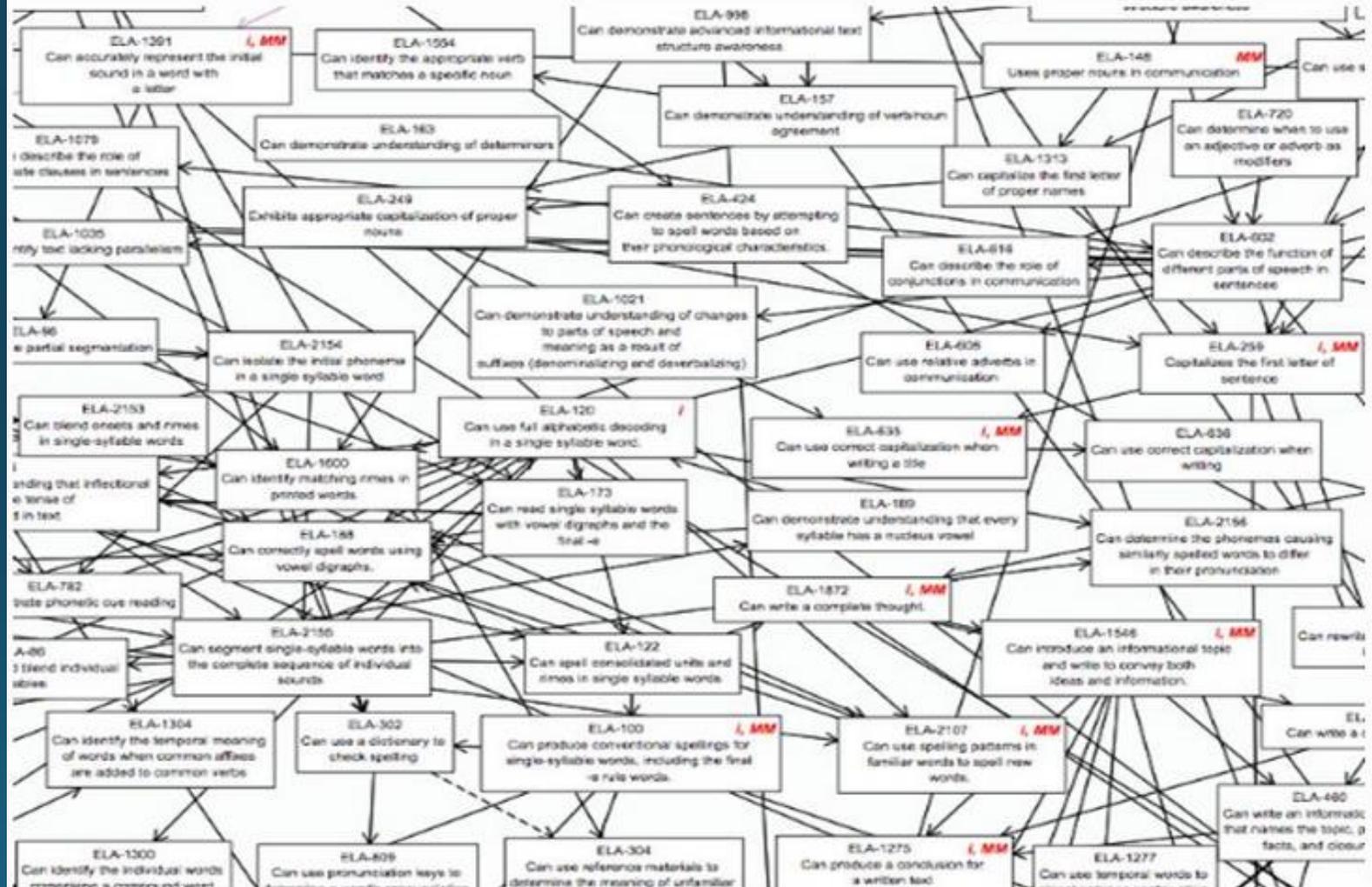


Myers-Briggs →

<p>ISTJ</p> <p>Responsible, sincere, analytical, reserved, realistic, systematic. Hardworking and trustworthy with sound practical judgment.</p>	<p>ISFJ</p> <p>Warm, considerate, gentle, responsible, pragmatic, thorough. Devoted caretakers who enjoy being helpful to others.</p>	<p>INFJ</p> <p>Idealistic, organized, insightful, dependable, compassionate, gentle. Seek harmony and cooperation, enjoy intellectual stimulation.</p>	<p>INTJ</p> <p>Innovative, independent, strategic, logical, reserved, insightful. Driven by their own original ideas to achieve improvements.</p>
<p>ISTP</p> <p>Action-oriented, logical, analytical, spontaneous, reserved, independent. Enjoy adventure, skilled at understanding how mechanical things work.</p>	<p>ISFP</p> <p>Gentle, sensitive, nurturing, helpful, flexible, realistic. Seek to create a personal environment that is both beautiful and practical.</p>	<p>INFP</p> <p>Sensitive, creative, idealistic, perceptive, caring, loyal. Value inner harmony and personal growth, focus on dreams and possibilities.</p>	<p>INTP</p> <p>Intellectual, logical, precise, reserved, flexible, imaginative. Original thinkers who enjoy speculation and creative problem solving.</p>
<p>ESTP</p> <p>Outgoing, realistic, action-oriented, curious, versatile, spontaneous. Pragmatic problem solvers and skillful negotiators.</p>	<p>ESFP</p> <p>Playful, enthusiastic, friendly, spontaneous, tactful, flexible. Have strong common sense, enjoy helping people in tangible ways.</p>	<p>ENFP</p> <p>Enthusiastic, creative, spontaneous, optimistic, supportive, playful. Value inspiration, enjoy starting new projects, see potential in others.</p>	<p>ENTP</p> <p>Inventive, enthusiastic, strategic, enterprising, inquisitive, versatile. Enjoy new ideas and challenges, value inspiration.</p>
<p>ESTJ</p> <p>Efficient, outgoing, analytical, systematic, dependable, realistic. Like to run the show and get things done in an orderly fashion.</p>	<p>ESFJ</p> <p>Friendly, outgoing, reliable, conscientious, organized, practical. Seek to be helpful and please others, enjoy being active and productive.</p>	<p>ENFJ</p> <p>Caring, enthusiastic, idealistic, organized, diplomatic, responsible. Skilled communicators who value connection with people.</p>	<p>ENTJ</p> <p>Strategic, logical, efficient, outgoing, ambitious, independent. Effective organizers of people and long-range planners.</p>

A strengths-based approach to large scale achievement assessment

A Portion of the ELA Map



What does a Social-ecological, strengths-based, supports perspective actually mean for developing plans in schools?

When understanding students by their support needs, we are more inclined to (a) **look for strengths (potentials, contributions to make) that supports can build on**



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When understanding students by their support needs, we are more inclined to (a) look for strengths (potentials, contributions to make) that supports can build on, (b) **perceive successful participation in a classroom as being the consequence of the classroom's capacity to meet a wide range of student needs,**



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When understanding students by their support needs, we are more inclined to (a) look for strengths (potentials, contributions to make) that supports can build on, (b) perceive successful participation in a classroom as being the consequence of the classroom's capacity to meet a wide range of student needs, and (c) understand that the primary charge of educators involves problem solving to identify and arrange supports (instruction is a support strategy).



Beyond School Achievement. Should we hire Eric?

The Job

- Opening at an Insurance Company for an office worker
- The pay and benefits make it an attractive job for many
 - Sorting and delivering postal mail
 - Running an array of office machines
 - Need to help out others in the office whose projects are in a “pinch”



The strengths

- Is capable of mastering job duties; once he learns something, he learns it well
- Is willing to follow directions
- Is very pleasant; does not complain, gossip, or waste people’s time
- Is flexible and does not get stressed when asked to do something different and pulled away from regular tasks
- Is cheerful, and has a rare ability to bring out the best in others

Beyond School Achievement.

Should we hire Eric?

The Deficits

- Takes longer to learn job tasks than most others
- Requires more supervision on a job than most others
- Not particularly strong at conversational skills other than making small talk
- Would struggle to learn skills needed in a more demanding job



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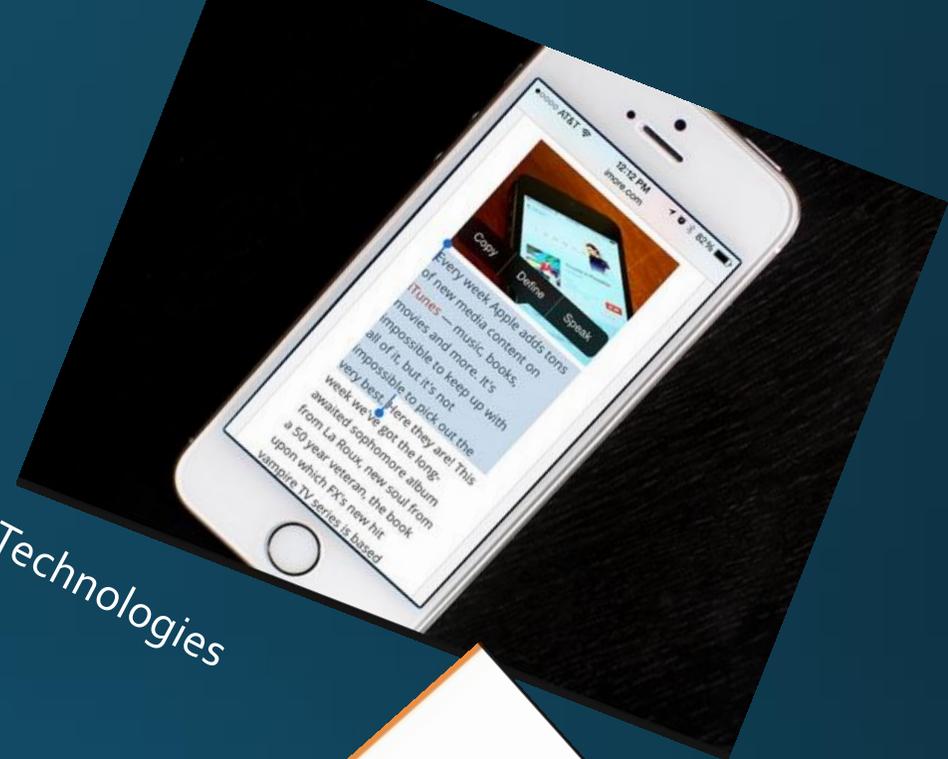
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Need for supports

- Some coaching on the job to make sure it is done correctly
- Technology to provide reminders about what to do next or quality control
- Assistance from coworkers with conversations
- Rearrangement of job duties so that (a) when someone needs help, they know to ask him & (b) he is not asked to interact too much with strangers



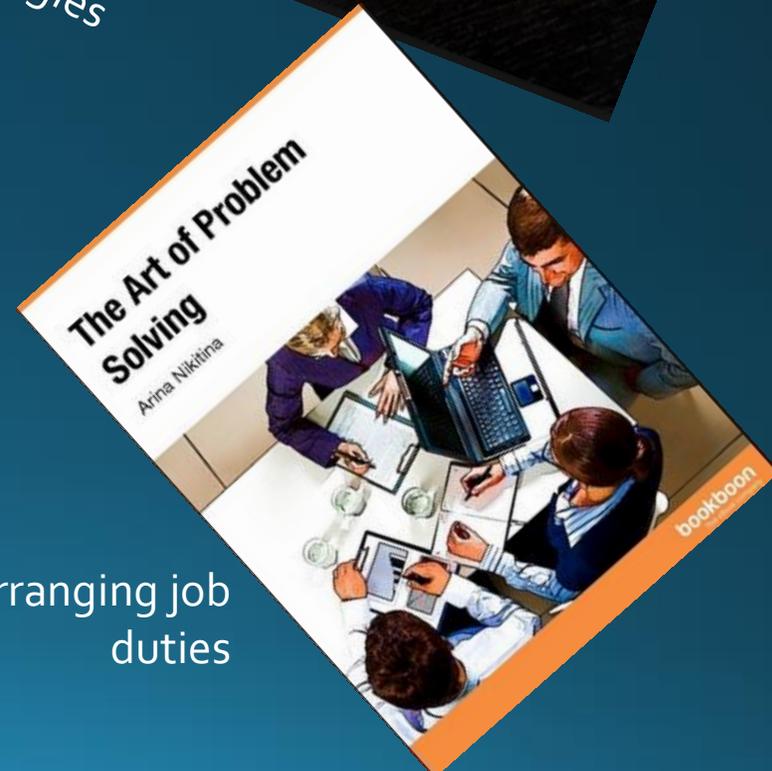
Co-workers



Technologies



Job Coach



Rearranging job duties

The take away!

- Understanding student personal competencies holistically means understanding student strengths and limitations in the context of where they are and what they want to be doing!
- Arranging a system of supports that takes advantage of their strengths and compensates for their limitations will result in more successful participation in school and society.
- The SIS-C is an assessment tool that can inform this type of problem solving.



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