

## **Disability Credit Canada Scholarship**

**Essay by Emily Comeau**

### **How did your disability shape your decision to study the program you chose?**

I remember sitting in class, heart pounding, as the teacher called on me to read aloud. The words blurred on the page, and I froze. That fear stayed with me for a long time, but so did a quiet determination. Growing up with a learning disability that affects my reading and writing has shaped not only my academic journey but also who I am as a resilient, resourceful, and deeply committed person who values justice and fairness.

My disability has impacted me in and outside the classroom. Early on, I realized I learned best by observing. Whether it was playing sports or tackling schoolwork, watching others helped me build the confidence to participate. While traditional learning methods didn't always work for me, I found alternatives like using text-to-speech programs, visual organizers, and breaking tasks into small, manageable parts. These strategies helped me keep pace with my peers and taught me to advocate for myself.

Those lessons weren't just academic. Living with a disability has shown me what it feels like to be misunderstood or underestimated, especially when people judge your abilities based on how you perform in conventional settings. It was in those moments of frustration and exclusion that I developed a deep sense of justice. I believe everyone deserves a fair chance, and I want to be someone who ensures that fairness exists, especially in places where it can be overlooked.

That's what led me to pursue a career in criminal justice, specifically in border security. I know that this path requires integrity, clear judgment, and the ability to enforce rules while treating people with dignity and respect. I am especially drawn to border services because it combines law enforcement with international awareness, and it requires not only strong decision-making but also cultural understanding and empathy. My experiences with overcoming adversity have made me patient, perceptive, and driven to help others navigate difficult systems.

My passion for justice also runs in my family. My great-grandfather served as a county sheriff, and my grandmother worked as a court stenographer. My father dedicated many years to departmental security for the Government of Canada. Their careers taught me that justice isn't just about laws, it is about people, safety, and responsibility. Following in their footsteps feels like more than a career choice, it feels like a calling.

My learning disability has taught me how to adapt and solve problems creatively, skills that are vital in a career like border security, where no two situations are the same. I have learned to assess challenges calmly, think quickly, and find solutions that others might overlook. I have also developed the empathy to listen carefully and respond to people's needs, even under pressure. These strengths will serve me well as I pursue my diploma in Justice Studies: Police Foundations.

Recalling some of my challenges, I once struggled to receive accommodations for an important exam, despite having official documentation. That experience of having to fight just to be seen reminded me how critical it is to have people in positions of authority who understand what it means to advocate for fairness. I want to be that kind of person.

From that nervous child avoiding eye contact in class to a future border services officer ready to protect and serve, I have come a long way. My learning disability didn't stop me, it shaped me. It gave me the persistence to keep going, the adaptability to solve problems, and the empathy to stand up for others. These are the qualities I will carry with me as I step into a career in criminal justice.

For as long as I can recall, my disability has been both a challenge and an opportunity to learn and grow. It pushed me to evolve in ways I never expected and pointed me toward a path where I can turn that growth into purpose. Believing that I can make a meaningful difference in border security is a path I was destined for, not despite my disability, but because of everything it has taught me.

### Transcript of Marks

**Miramichi Valley High School**

345 McKenna Avenue

Miramichi, NB

E1V 3S9

Principal: Shawn Wood

Telephone: 627-4083

Fax: 622-2977

Student's Legal Name: Emily Allia Comeau

NBEN: 1000792414

Date of Birth: 09/21/2006

Year	Code	Course	PLP	Result	CrHrs
22-23	SEBIA1120	Biology 112		51	0
22-23	MEFMM0101	Num Rel & Funct 10		93	4
23-24	TECAE120D	Coop Educ (4CrH) 120		99	4
23-24	WECUA1100	Culinary Tech 110		90	4
23-24	EELAAK1130	Eng Lang Arts Extended 113		60	4
23-24	EELAAC1120	Eng Lang Arts Info Text 112		56	0
23-24	EELAAB1120	Eng Lang Arts Lit Text 112		66	4
23-24	MEPWA1100	Fin & Work Math 110		93	4
23-24	SEBII1100	Human Physiology 110		73	4
23-24	LEWEA1100	Human Services 110		96	4
23-24	TECAAD1204	Intro to Teaching & Education 120		85	4
23-24	HEHIB1120	Modern History 112		75	4
23-24	HESOB1200	Sociology 120		83	4
24-25	SEOSG1200	Aquatic Sciences 120		74	4
24-25	WECUA1200	Culinary Tech 120		94	4
24-25	LEINB1100	Early Child Serv 110		90	4
24-25	EELAB1230	English Language Arts 123		89	4
24-25	IEDEK1100	Fashion Tech/Design 110		92	4
24-25	MEPWA1200	Fin & Work Math 120		84	4
24-25	EELAJ1200	Graph Novels 120		88	4
24-25	FEVID1100	Visual Arts 110		88	4
24-25	HEFNA1200	Wabanaki Studies 120		89	4
24-25	EELAG1100	Writing 110		82	4

Year	Code	Course	PLP	Result	CrHrs

\* = Preliminary marks only

ENR = Enrolled courses with no grades

INC = Incomplete

IP = In Progress

PASS = Successfully completed

A1, A1.1 or A1.2 = Current level of English on the CEFR

### Personalized Learning Plan (PLP)

The specific type of planning will be indicated by ADJ-Adjustment(s) or IND-Individualization(s). Achievement will be reported according to the expectations of the plan.

In Sept 2023, NB Schools switched to a credit hour system; 4 credit hours (CrHrs) = 90 hours of instruction. Students earn four, eight, or twelve credit hours for each approved course they complete with a minimum mark of 60%. Credit hours awarded under the Challenge for Credit guidelines may be awarded a "Pass" designation.

*All courses listed on the transcript may satisfy pathway requirements to graduation.*

English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA): Exempt

Total Credit Hours Obtained: 84

Graduation Granted:	Yes
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Date Graduated: 06/18/2025

Signature:

Principal or Designate

Date:

06/19/2025





October 09, 2024

Emily Comeau  
36 Carroll Street  
Miramichi New Brunswick E1V 6R2

ID: 5043318

Dear Emily:

Congratulations! You have been **conditionally** accepted to the Justice Studies: Police Foundations program offered at New Brunswick Community College (NBCC) Miramichi for the Fall 2025 term. This program location is at the Miramichi Campus for the Online/Classroom delivery.

**FINAL ACCEPTANCE:** Final acceptance will be complete when you meet the conditions and provide the documents listed below to the NBCC Admissions Team. Please visit the following link <https://nbcc.ca/admissions/forms-applications/admissions-document-portal> for information on submitting documents.

- **Official Transcript with proof of High School completion; or Adult High School Diploma; or GED completion; or CAEC completion.**

**NBCC must receive final documents by a predetermined date or your application will be withdrawn. ALL documents become the property of NBCC and will not be returned. Please refer to the following website <https://nbcc.ca/admissions/document-deadlines> for deadline dates.**

**CONFIRM ACCEPTANCE:** To confirm acceptance, the \$250 confirmation deposit (non-refundable) must be paid before the due date. **You will be withdrawn from your program if the confirmation fee is not paid by this due date.** Please refer to the attached Confirmation Deposit Notice for due date and how to confirm/pay your confirmation deposit.

**REGISTER ONLINE:** The confirmation deposit guarantees your seat **ONLY** until the mandatory online registration period. **If you fail to register online, you may lose your seat in the program.** You will receive an email 4 to 6 weeks prior to class start indicating it is time to register so it is important we have a current email address on file; set your email security setting to guarantee NBCC email delivery successfully to your inbox.

**LAST DATE TO COMMENCE CLASSES:** For college transition, make all effort to commence classes the first day of classes. Students cannot commence classes later than the first week and no extensions will be entertained. Students are responsible for all academic material missed during the first week.

**PROGRAM CHOICES:** When accepted to your first choice program, your second choice application will automatically cancel. If this program is your second choice option, your first choice application will remain active.

Thank you for choosing NBCC to pursue your post-secondary studies and we wish you much success in your program!

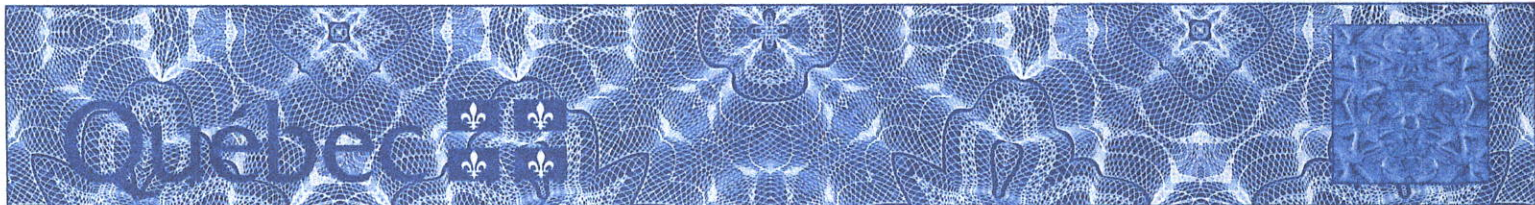
Sincerely,

NBCC Admissions Team

[Contact Us](#)

[St. Andrews](#) [Fredericton](#) [Saint John](#) [Miramichi](#) [Moncton](#) [Woodstock](#)





# Birth Certificate

Document N°  
D060709450 -02

Surname  
**Comeau**

Given name(s)  
**Emily  
Allia**

Sex  
**Female**

Place of birth  
**Gatineau**

Date of birth

Y	M	D	H	M
2006	09	21	02	13

Father  
**Comeau  
Marc André**

Mother  
**Gravestock  
Marcy Leah**

Registration N°  
**1200604258165**

Date of issue

Y	M	D
2006	11	22

**Certified**

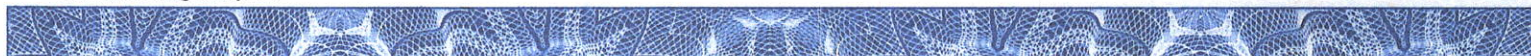
Registrar of Civil Status

Gabriel Pinard

The information contained in this document is consistent with that in the Register of Civil Status records.

**This certificate is not valid if modified or laminated.**

To ensure that this document is authentic, please check the security features on the back. An English version is provided on our Web site:  
[www.etatcivil.gouv.qc.ca](http://www.etatcivil.gouv.qc.ca)



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*Confidential and Without Prejudice*

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354 King St., Suite 50, Fredericton, NB, E3B 1E3

**Psychological Assessment Report**  
**Private and Confidential**

<b>CHILD NAME:</b>	Emily Comeau
<b>DOB:</b>	September 21, 2006
<b>DATES OF INTERVIEWS:</b>	December 11, 2023, February 13, 2024
<b>DATE OF ASSESSMENT:</b>	December 18, 2023, January 29, 2024
<b>AGE AT ASSESSMENT:</b>	17 years, 2 months – 17 years, 4 months
<b>DATE OF FEEDBACK:</b>	February 27, 2024
<b>DATE OF REPORT:</b>	February 25, 2024
<b>EXAMINER:</b>	Alison Kirkpatrick, Ph.D., Resident in Psychology
<b>SUPERVISING PSYCHOLOGIST:</b>	Hilary Cartwright, Ph.D., L. Psych

*Please note that this assessment is intended for current clinical use. The results of the assessment are based on information available at the time of evaluation, and future clinical information could impact the opinion offered within it.*

**REASON FOR REFERRAL**

Emily was referred to the clinic by her parents, Marc and Marcy Comeau, for the purposes of reassessment in the context of previously noted challenges with reading, writing, language, and memory. A psychological assessment was requested to provide clarification on Emily's development in cognitive, academic, social, and emotional functioning.

**SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

- Interview with Emily's mother (Marcy Comeau)
- Interview with Emily's grade eleven English teacher (Mr. Sullivan) at Miramichi Valley High School
- ADHD Rating Scale (ADHD-RS) Home Version and School Version: Adolescent
- Barkley Deficits in Executive Functioning Scale: Children and Adolescents (BDEFS-CA)
- Beery-Buktenica Developmental Test of Visual-Motor Integration – Sixth Edition (Beery VMI)
- Behavior Assessment System for Children, Third Edition (BASC-3)
- Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing, Second Edition (CTOPP-2)
- Test of Orthographic Competence (TOC)
- Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale, Fourth Edition: Canadian (WAIS-IV<sup>CDN</sup>)
- Wide Range Assessment of Memory and Learning, Third Edition (WRAML3)



- Woodcock-Johnson IV: Tests of Achievement Form A (WJ-IV ACH)
- Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales, Third Edition (Vineland-3)

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

### **Family History**

Emily lives at home with her parents and older brother. She was born in Aylmer, Quebec and the family moved to New Brunswick shortly before she turned six years old. Emily attended daycare and kindergarten in French but is most comfortable in English and it is the language spoken most frequently in the home.

Family medical history is positive for autism spectrum disorder, pervasive developmental disorder not otherwise specified, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, a genetic condition affecting cognitive and social functioning (MRX-23), and suspected depression and anxiety.

### **Developmental and Health History**

Emily was born at 36 weeks following an unremarkable pregnancy. Ms. Comeau's water broke spontaneously, though labour was induced after eight hours of no progress. No postnatal interventions were required, though Emily was observed in the NICU for a few hours, as her umbilical cord was wrapped around her foot and it was blue at birth. No concerns were noted with sleep or feeding during infancy.

Emily met all motor milestones on time and was described as a "very active" child. She met all language milestones on time, but concerns were raised in early childhood about language retention. She began seeing a Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP) at age three for issues with articulation, word blends, and recognizing letters of the alphabet. No issues were noted with language regression, echolalia, pronoun use, or non-verbal communication.

Emily is reportedly in good health. She was diagnosed with vesicoureteral reflux, grade II after her first birthday. She experienced many urinary tract infections and was treated with antibiotics for an entire year. She had corrective surgery in 2008 and was discharged from nephrology at age five. Emily had two dental surgeries to correct cavities due to significant challenges with enamel loss attributed to long-term antibiotic use. She hit her head on the playground at age five and six and on the ice at age fourteen. There was no loss of consciousness and medical follow-up ruled out concussions. Emily is mildly farsighted, has an astigmatism, and her vision is corrected by glasses. No history of seizures, hearing loss, or auditory processing problems was reported. Emily does not take any prescription medications. No current or historical difficulties were reported with sleeping, eating, or toileting.

Emily likes quieter spaces and is annoyed by others chewing loudly, but otherwise demonstrates no sensory sensitivities or sensory-seeking behaviour. No preference for order, repetition, or routine was reported. No challenges were reported with fine or gross motor control.

### **Social, Emotional, and Behavioural History**

Emily is reportedly an affectionate and expressive young girl. No concerns were noted with regulated eye contact, social referencing, or verbal or non-verbal social communication. Emily



has a great sense of humour and understands sarcasm. Early social behaviour was described as creative, imaginative, and cooperative. She desired social interaction and initiated play with peers. She appeared to be drawn to younger girls, but her parents noted this may have been because she was a year older than everyone else in her class. No current challenges were reported with social functioning and Emily has several close friendships.

Few challenges with emotionality were noted in childhood. Emily was not easily upset, and tantrums were infrequent, age-typical, and easily defused. However, Emily has experienced growing challenges with self-esteem, as she has started to think about her future and what she will be able to accomplish with the specific academic challenges she experiences. Some challenges have been noted with anxiety, especially around testing, novelty/uncertainty, and when she feels like she does not understand something. Ms. Comeau reported that in response to these situations, Emily can move into "flight mode" and push others away, become defensive and verbally aggressive, or get upset at others if they are not providing support in a manner she finds helpful. In testing situations, she is easily flustered when she sees others leaving, as it can cause worry that she will not have enough time, or that others may see her still working and have negative assumptions about her abilities. However, Ms. Comeau reported that Emily's anxiety is bound to these specific situations and is not severe or pervasive. No challenges were noted with mood.

### **Academics**

Emily attended kindergarten in French in Quebec. The family moved to New Brunswick and Emily was enrolled in grade one in an English school to support language and speech delays. However, she did not meet academic requirements and it was recommended she repeat kindergarten. Emily has continued to follow an English curriculum throughout her academic career.

Emily is currently enrolled in grade eleven at Miramichi Valley High School. She has been supported with a Personalized Learning Plan (PLP) since grade ten. Current accommodations reportedly include additional time and not penalizing her work for spelling errors. A copy of Emily's PLP was not provided for review. Extensive involvement with resource has been documented since early elementary, including small-group and individualized instruction for literacy and numeracy and steady involvement with an SLP. Documentation from her previous assessment suggests that while she made growth across interventions, it was limited.

Emily's academic performance is varied, with strengths noted in visual, hands-on courses that are connected to real life (e.g., culinary, human services, financial math). Difficulties were noted with math, science, and English. Ms. Comeau reported that Emily struggles with comprehension of material, retention of information, connecting ideas, and testing with time constraints (e.g., in-class assignments and tests/exams). Emily reportedly thrived with virtual schooling, as she appreciated opportunities to go back and review things and the greater reliance on visual information and assignments over tests and exams.

While challenges with inattention, distractibility, and verbal impulsivity have been raised by a few informants historically, Emily's parents and most of her teachers did not raise any concern with regard to attention, activity level, impulse control, or executive functioning across



development.

### ***School Consult***

A consultation was held with Emily's grade eleven English teacher, Mr. Sullivan, on February 13, 2024. Mr. Sullivan described Emily as a happy, kind, polite, conscientious, and hard-working student with a positive attitude to learning. She perseveres and puts her best effort forward, even when things are difficult. No concerns with inattention, energy level, impulsivity, executive functioning, emotionality, or behaviour. Emily is not shy to ask for help in front of her peers.

Mr. Sullivan reported that Emily needs to put in more time and effort than her peers to meet expectations. He noted challenges with inferential reading comprehension, figurative language, and the retention of material. He noted that while she works exceedingly hard, she often has a hard time making connections in her work. Her writing is often more simplistic, and she struggles with sentence organization (e.g., fragments and run-ons), spelling, and written conventions. Emily can often produce better quality work when given additional time, opportunities to process and review information, and access to assistive technology to revise her work.

### ***Report Cards***

Report cards were provided for the first term of grade three and the last term of grades four through eleven. Report cards from elementary school suggest an inconsistent pattern of performance, with most domains at or above grade level (i.e., ranging from "3" to "4") and grades indicating she was approaching grade level (i.e., "2") inconsistently present across domains and school years. Challenges with English were only noted in grade four (reading, writing), though she was noted to be at grade level with a weaker understanding of reading and writing in grade three (i.e., grade of "C"). Challenges with French were only noted in grade seven (writing). Challenges with math were only noted in grade six (shape and space, stats and probability) and seven (patterns and relations). Emily did not ever receive marks suggesting that she was working below learning goals (i.e., "1"). Teacher comments typically reflected on Emily's work ethic, conscientiousness, motivation, kind and cooperative nature, and enthusiasm for learning. Challenges with inattention and distractibility were only noted by her grade three math teacher. Her grade three teacher commented that she had difficulty getting her ideas down on paper and was "very slow" at completing writing assignments. Her grade six and seven teachers commented that she benefitted from examples, models, outlines, and prompting.

Report cards from high school indicate significant variability in performance across subjects, with grades ranging from 60 to 97 in grade nine, from 45 to 99 in grade ten, and from 64-98 in the first term of grade eleven. Emily received failing grades in Number Relations and Functioning (45) and Biology 112 (51) in grade ten. Grades for English Language Arts were largely in the mid to high 60s in grades ten and eleven. Emily failed her English Language Proficiency Assessment in grade nine.

### **Strengths and Interests**

Emily was described as a hard-working, giving, kind, inquisitive, caring, and nurturing young woman who has a good sense of humour. Emily's parents reported admiring her strength and resilience, noting that she perseveres, and is proud of all the things she has accomplished, even



when things are difficult. Emily is interested in travelling and investigative, action, and suspense shows (e.g., Border Security, Criminal Minds). Ms. Comeau reported that Emily would make a good Border Security agent because she is very ethical, sensible, and observant.

### **Previous Assessment and Interventions**

Emily was previously assessed by licensed psychologist Erica McGregor-Keenan in October 2014. The assessment noted intellectual functioning in the low average range (13<sup>th</sup> percentile), with challenges in verbal comprehension and working memory. Significant challenges were noted with retention of information (especially for verbal or abstract information), reading, writing, and mathematics. A diagnosis of a specific learning disability was deferred due to noted challenges with language processing. A diagnosis of ADHD was deferred due to inconsistencies in informant reports. Recommendations included continued support and assessment from an SLP, referral to an OT, the development of a PLP, and specific supports for memory retention, language challenges, and reading.

Emily was steadily involved with SLP services from the age of three until the end of grade eight. She transitioned from private services to school-based services upon moving to New Brunswick. No reports or documentation from an SLP were provided for review. However, her previous psychoeducational assessment indicated that an assessment was completed in October 2012 by SLP Lori Tucker. Results indicated average receptive and language content scores, but significantly below average expressive language and language structure scores. She was noted to have difficulty with word and sentence structure, as she used content words but omitted functional words or certain grammatical markers. She also was noted to have “difficulty with repeating sentences accurately, partially due to challenges with morphology and syntax.” Ms. Comeau reported that Emily has never been diagnosed with a language or communication disorder at any point in her involvement with SLP services.

## **BEHAVIOURAL OBSERVATIONS**

Emily attended three in-person assessment sessions. Emily’s second and third assessment sessions took place at different times on the same day. She was appropriately dressed for her age and the weather. While she was initially quiet and more reserved, she easily entered the testing room and warmed quickly to the examiner in conversation.

Emily was attentive to instructions, rarely asked for instructions to be repeated, and understood what was being asked of her the first time. She was able to remain seated and was not fidgety. Emily was hesitant to say that she did not know something, and the examiner had to suggest they move on a few times. She indicated that she found paper-and-pencil tasks to be easiest and tasks where she had to describe things verbally to be most difficult. On verbal tasks, she often took long pauses when thinking. She appeared to often get the gist of what was being asked of her but would not provide detailed enough descriptions to receive full points.

Notably, on tasks of auditory working memory, Emily would often correctly attend to most of the information (e.g., would get most of the numbers correct in a digit sequence, but would be off by a number or two).



## ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Test results may include reference to percentiles. Please note that percentiles do not represent the percentage of items correct on a test, but rather the percentage of children at that age who attain a score at or below that of the child being assessed. For example, a score at the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile would mean that the child scored as high or higher than 50% of children their age.

Qualitative Range	Extremely Low	Very Low	Low Average	Average	High Average	Very High	Extremely High
Percentile	2 <sup>nd</sup> and below	3 <sup>rd</sup> to 8 <sup>th</sup>	9 <sup>th</sup> to 24 <sup>th</sup>	25 <sup>th</sup> to 75 <sup>th</sup>	76 <sup>th</sup> to 91 <sup>st</sup>	92 <sup>nd</sup> to 97 <sup>th</sup>	98 <sup>th</sup> and above

### 1. Cognitive Functioning

The *Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale, Fourth Edition: Canadian (WAIS-IV<sup>CDN</sup>)* was used to obtain an estimate of Emily's global cognitive abilities. Emily's results on the WAIS-IV<sup>CDN</sup> are as follows, as compared to others in her age range:

Domain	WAIS-IV Percentile	Descriptor
<b>Verbal Comprehension</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> percentile</b>	<b>Very Low</b>
Similarities	5 <sup>th</sup> percentile	Very Low
Vocabulary	16 <sup>th</sup> percentile	Low Average
*Information	2 <sup>nd</sup> percentile	Extremely Low
*Comprehension	5 <sup>th</sup> percentile	Very Low
<b>Perceptual Reasoning</b>	<b>25<sup>th</sup> percentile</b>	<b>Average</b>
Block Design	5 <sup>th</sup> percentile	Very Low
Matrix Reasoning	37 <sup>th</sup> percentile	Average
Visual Puzzles	63 <sup>rd</sup> percentile	Average
<b>Working Memory</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> percentile</b>	<b>Extremely Low</b>
Digit Span	2 <sup>nd</sup> percentile	Extremely Low
Arithmetic	5 <sup>th</sup> percentile	Very Low
*Letter Number Sequencing	5 <sup>th</sup> percentile	Very Low
<b>Processing Speed</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup> percentile</b>	<b>Very Low</b>
Symbol Search	9 <sup>th</sup> percentile	Low Average
Coding	5 <sup>th</sup> percentile	Very Low
*Cancellation	9 <sup>th</sup> percentile	Low Average
<b>General Ability Index</b>	<b>7<sup>th</sup> percentile</b>	<b>Very Low</b>

\*Denotes supplemental subtests not included in computing index scores.

As the WAIS-IV's measure of working memory relies heavily on auditory working memory, an additional test of visual working memory from the *Wide Range Assessment of Memory and Learning, Third Edition (WRAML3)* was administered. Emily's results are as follows, as compared to others in her age range:

Composite/Subtest	WRAML3 Percentile	Descriptor
Visual Working Memory	63 <sup>rd</sup> percentile	Average



### ***Verbal Reasoning Skills***

Emily's performance on verbal reasoning tasks was significantly below what would be expected for individuals her age, suggesting weaknesses in her ability to understand, explain, and connect verbal concepts using the English language. She demonstrated a slightly below-average ability to provide definitions of words. Her ability to explain how two concepts are related, fund of general knowledge, and understanding of practical knowledge and ability to verbalize meaningful concepts were significantly underdeveloped for children her age.

### ***Non-Verbal Reasoning***

Emily's performance on tasks of perceptual reasoning was typical of individuals her age, suggesting a good ability to accurately interpret, organize, and think with visual information. She had a good ability to recognize and identify patterns to solve problems and to mentally combine pieces to complete a figure, but a below-average ability to manually replicate visual designs with blocks. Notably, on the Block Design task, Emily did not attempt more difficult tasks in a systematic way and struggled to incorporate half-coloured blocks, attempting to build many of the designs using whole-coloured blocks.

### ***Information Processing***

Emily's performance on tasks of working memory was significantly below what would be expected for individuals her age, suggesting weaknesses in short-term memory long enough to perform necessary manipulations. She struggled to recall and reorganize strings of orally presented digits and digits and numbers and to respond to orally presented mathematical word problems without the use of a pencil. As all tasks on the WAIS-IV assessed auditory working memory, exploration of visual working memory from a subtest of the WRAML3 revealed average visual working memory. Challenges with working memory may be specific to orally presented information and reflect Emily's documented challenges with language processing.

Emily's performance on tasks of processing speed was also significantly below what would be expected for individuals her age, suggesting weaknesses in her ability to process simple information with ease, efficiency, and automaticity. She found it difficult to visually scan and identify target symbols, copy symbols from a key, and visually scan and identify images from a target category under time constraints. Emily seldom made mistakes but responded to fewer items than other individuals her age, which contributed to her lower score. Emily will benefit from extra time to complete tasks.

## **2. Visual-Motor Integration**

To assess aspects of her visual-motor skills, Emily was administered the *Beery-Buktenica Developmental Test of Visual-Motor Integration – Sixth Edition (Beery VMI)*. Emily's results are as follows, as compared to others in her age range:

Domain	Beery VMI Percentile	Descriptor
Beery VMI	37 <sup>th</sup> percentile	Average
Beery Visual Perception	4 <sup>th</sup> percentile	Very Low
Beery Motor Coordination	32 <sup>nd</sup> percentile	Average



Emily demonstrated typical visual-motor integration and motor coordination abilities but significantly below-average visual perception abilities. All of Emily's visual perception errors were on the last page of images where designs were smaller in size. She most often neglected to take in small differences in size or the absence of small components in the image.

### **3. Memory**

The *Wide Range Assessment of Memory and Learning, Third Edition (WRAML3)* was used to obtain an estimate of Emily's memory functioning. Emily's results are as follows, as compared to others in her age range:

<b>WRAML3</b>		
<b>Composite/Subtest</b>	<b>Percentile</b>	<b>Descriptor</b>
<b>Verbal Immediate Memory Index</b>	<b>16<sup>th</sup> percentile</b>	<b>Low Average</b>
Story Memory	25 <sup>th</sup> percentile	Average
Verbal Learning	16 <sup>th</sup> percentile	Low Average
<b>Verbal Delayed Index</b>	<b>21<sup>st</sup> percentile</b>	<b>Low Average</b>
Story Memory Delayed	25 <sup>th</sup> percentile	Average
Verbal Learning Delayed	25 <sup>th</sup> percentile	Average
<b>Verbal Recognition</b>	<b>27<sup>th</sup> percentile</b>	<b>Average</b>
Story Memory Recognition	9 <sup>th</sup> percentile	Low Average
Verbal Learning Recognition	63 <sup>rd</sup> percentile	Average
<b>Visual Immediate Memory Index</b>	<b>21<sup>st</sup> percentile</b>	<b>Low Average</b>
Picture Memory	9 <sup>th</sup> percentile	Low Average
Design Learning	50 <sup>th</sup> percentile	Average
<b>Visual Delayed Memory</b>	<b>79<sup>th</sup> percentile</b>	<b>High Average</b>
Picture Memory Delayed	50 <sup>th</sup> percentile	Average
Design Learning Delayed	91 <sup>st</sup> percentile	High Average
<b>Visual Recognition</b>	<b>77<sup>th</sup> percentile</b>	<b>High Average</b>
Picture Memory Recognition	75 <sup>th</sup> percentile	Average
Design Learning Recognition	75 <sup>th</sup> percentile	Average
<b>Attention/Concentration</b>	<b>10<sup>th</sup> percentile</b>	<b>Low Average</b>
Finger Windows	63 <sup>rd</sup> percentile	Average
Number Letter	1 <sup>st</sup> percentile	Extremely Low
<b>General Immediate Memory</b>	<b>10<sup>th</sup> percentile</b>	<b>Low Average</b>
<b>General Delayed Memory</b>	<b>50<sup>th</sup> percentile</b>	<b>Average</b>
<b>General Recognition</b>	<b>55<sup>th</sup> percentile</b>	<b>Average</b>

Emily's short-term recall and recognition of verbally and visually presented information were assessed under various conditions, which revealed different patterns of strengths and needs. Emily's immediate recall was slightly below what would be expected for individuals her age, whereas her delayed recall and recognition were typical of children her age. This suggests that Emily benefits from time to process and consolidate information. Overall, she demonstrated better delayed recall and recognition for visual than verbal information. Across verbal and visual content, Emily benefited from tasks that involved opportunities for repetition of material.



Emily's attention and concentration abilities were also assessed, which revealed a below-average capacity to learn and recall attentionally demanding, relatively rote, and sequential information. Challenges were noted for a task involving the recall of auditory symbolic information, but not for a task involving the recall of visual-spatial information.

#### **4. Academic Functioning**

The *Woodcock-Johnson IV: Tests of Achievement Form A (WJ-IV ACH)* was used to obtain an estimate of Emily's academic skills in the domains of reading, writing, and mathematics. Emily's results are as follows, as compared to others in grade eleven:

WJ-IV ACH				
Cluster/Subtest	Percentile	Descriptor	Age Equivalent (Year-Month)	Grade Equivalent
<b>READING TASKS</b>				
<i>Clusters</i>				
Broad Reading	1	Extremely Low	9-3	3.8
Basic Reading	3	Very Low	8-9	3.4
Reading Fluency	2	Extremely Low	9-4	3.9
Reading Comprehension Ext	5	Very Low	9-6	4.1
<i>Individual Subtests</i>				
Letter-Word Identification	4	Very Low	9-5	4
Passage Comprehension	2	Extremely Low	8-7	3.1
Sentence Reading Fluency	3	Very Low	9-5	4
Word Attack	3	Very Low	7-11	2.5
Oral Reading	4	Very Low	9-2	3.7
Reading Recall	30	Average	11-5	6
Reading Vocabulary	7	Very Low	9-10	4.4
<b>MATHEMATICS TASKS</b>				
<i>Clusters</i>				
Broad Mathematics	11	Low Average	11-1	5.7
Math Calculation Skills	6	Very Low	10-5	5
<i>Individual Subtests</i>				
Applied Problems	40	Average	14-11	9.5
Calculation	5	Very Low	9-9	4.4
Math Facts Fluency	11	Low Average	11-1	5.7
<b>WRITING TASKS</b>				
<i>Clusters</i>				
Broad Written Language	7	Very Low	10-6	5.0
<i>Individual Subtests</i>				
Spelling	3	Very Low	9-6	4.1
Writing Samples	45	Average	15-0	9.6
Sentence Writing Fluency	5	Very Low	9-7	4.1

To further assess aspects of her reading, Emily completed the *Comprehensive Test of*



*Phonological Processing, Second Edition (CTOPP-2)*. Emily's results are as follows, as compared to others her age:

CTOPP-2				
Subtest	Percentile	Descriptor	Age Equivalent (Year-Month)	Grade Equivalent
<b>Phonological Awareness</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>Low Average</b>		
Elision	9	Low Average	8-0	3.0
Blending Words	25	Extremely Low	7-6	2.4
Phoneme Isolation	9	Low Average	6-9	1.7

To further assess aspects of her writing, Emily completed the *Test of Orthographic Competence (TOC)*. Emily's results are as follows, as compared to others her age:

TOC		
Subtest	Percentile	Descriptor
<b>Conventions</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> percentile</b>	<b>Extremely Low</b>
Punctuation	9 <sup>th</sup> percentile	Low Average
Abbreviations	1 <sup>st</sup> percentile	Extremely Low
<b>Spelling Speed</b>	<b>32<sup>nd</sup> percentile</b>	<b>Average</b>
Letter Choice	37 <sup>th</sup> percentile	Average
Word Scramble	37 <sup>th</sup> percentile	Average
<b>Spelling Accuracy</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> percentile</b>	<b>Extremely Low</b>
Sight Spelling	2 <sup>nd</sup> percentile	Extremely Low
Homophone Choice	5 <sup>th</sup> percentile	Very Low
<b>Orthographic Ability</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup> percentile</b>	<b>Very Low</b>

### **Reading**

Emily's overall reading skills were significantly underdeveloped, largely consistent with performance in grade three. While she demonstrated a good ability to recall written passages she had read, she demonstrated significantly below-average sight reading, decoding, oral reading, reading comprehension, and reading fluency. Her reading vocabulary was significantly underdeveloped for girls in grade eleven. She demonstrated significant challenges with phonological processing, especially for tasks that involved omitting or isolating sounds from words. When reading aloud, she read with a quiet, slow tone and often substituted similar-looking words (e.g., and read as are, complex read as complicated). On phonological tasks, she pulled out the wrong sound in sequence, had difficulty identifying /long i/ and /long o/ sounds and discriminating between /j/ and /d/ sounds, and struggled with fully breaking down sounds into the smallest phonetic units (e.g., when required to take out /p/ in split said sit, identified "ps" as a sound rather than further breaking it down into /p/ and /s/). When required to blend words, she seemed to be guessing at times (e.g., when required to blend stamp said snap).

### **Mathematics**

Emily's mathematical abilities were somewhat underdeveloped, consistent with a grade five skill set. She demonstrated grade-typical mathematical reasoning abilities but below-average



calculation and mathematical fluency. Emily was observed to be slow to respond to mathematical reasoning questions, to count on her hands, and to seldom use paper and pencil to solve problems despite it being provided. When calculating, she often displayed a good knowledge of the order of operations, addition, subtraction, and multiplication processes (e.g., accurately borrowed or carried over), and other necessary formulae (e.g., Pythagorean theorem), but would make errors in one step of the calculation that affected her final answer. Emily did not attempt any long division questions that involved multiple steps and had difficulty with concepts involving fractions (e.g., adding, subtracting, not simplifying fully), percentage discounts, time, and exponents (e.g., for  $7^3$  did  $7 \times 3$ ).

### ***Writing***

Emily's writing abilities were also underdeveloped, largely consistent with the performance of a child in grade five. She demonstrated a grade-typical ability to express ideas through writing, but significantly below average spelling, written fluency, and orthographic abilities. Her written compositions were legible and indicated few challenges with spacing or writing conventions. However, she often composed run-on sentences and had challenges with spelling. She occasionally reversed letter order (e.g., jiuice for juice) and missed important letter sounds (e.g., vacain for vacation), and spelled phonetically (e.g., tuff for tough). At times, her spelling did not follow identifiable phonetic principles (e.g., cailm for comb). Exploration of her orthographic skills revealed challenges with more nuanced aspects of written conventions (e.g., not capitalizing pronouns, not adding punctuation outside of periods).

## **5. Attention and Executive Functioning**

### ***Attention and Hyperactivity/Impulsivity***

To assess Emily's attentional functioning, Emily's mother completed the ***ADHD Rating Scale (ADHD-RS) Home Version: Adolescent***, whereas her grade eleven teachers (Mr. Sullivan and Ms. MacDonald) each completed the ***ADHD Rating Scale (ADHD-RS) School Version: Adolescent***.

On home ratings, Ms. Comeau did not endorse concerns for either inattention (10-25<sup>th</sup> percentile) or hyperactivity-impulsivity (50<sup>th</sup> percentile).

On school ratings, Ms. McDonald endorsed concerns in the **At-Risk** range for inattention (80<sup>th</sup> percentile), but no concerns for hyperactivity-impulsivity (1<sup>st</sup> percentile). Mr. Sullivan did not endorse concerns for either inattention or hyperactivity-impulsivity (both 50-75<sup>th</sup> percentile).

### ***Executive Functioning***

To assess Emily's executive functioning abilities, Emily's father completed the ***Barkley Deficits in Executive Functioning Scale: Children and Adolescents (BDEFS-CA)***. Teacher reports are not available for this measure.

Mr. Comeau reported no concerns for executive functioning (60-69<sup>th</sup> percentile); however, he did report some concerns, in the **At-Risk** range for self-organization (92<sup>nd</sup> percentile) more specifically.



## **6. Social, Emotional, and Behavioural Functioning**

To assess Emily's socio-emotional and behavioural functioning, Emily, her mother, and her grade eleven teachers completed the *Behavior Assessment System for Children, Third Edition (BASC-3)*. Emily completed the *Self-Report of Personality Adolescent Form (SRP-A)*, her mother completed the *Parent Rating Scale Adolescent Form (PRS-A)*, and her grade eleven teachers completed the *Teacher Rating Scale Adolescent Form (TRS-A)*.

On both Ms. Comeau's and Emily's ratings, no clinically significant or at-risk concerns emerged.

On teacher ratings, Ms. MacDonald endorsed items suggesting concerns in the **At-Risk** range for somatization (oversensitivity to or frequent complaints about physical problems and discomforts). Mr. Sullivan endorsed items suggesting concerns in the **At-Risk** range for learning problems and leadership.

## **7. Adaptive Functioning**

To assess Emily's functional skills necessary for independent daily living, Emily's mother completed the *Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales, Third Edition (Vineland-3) Comprehensive Forms*. It is important to note that this measure reflects typical behaviour observed in an environment and is not an assessment of a child's capabilities. Emily's results are as follows, as compared to others her age:

Domain	Vineland-3 Percentile	Descriptor
<b>Communication</b>	<b>16<sup>th</sup> percentile</b>	<b>Moderately Low</b>
Receptive	-	Adequate
Expressive	-	Adequate
Writing	-	Moderately Low
<b>Daily Living Skills</b>	<b>82<sup>nd</sup> percentile</b>	<b>Adequate</b>
Personal	-	Adequate
Domestic	-	Moderately High
Community	-	Moderately High
<b>Socialization</b>	<b>79<sup>th</sup> percentile</b>	<b>Adequate</b>
Interpersonal Relationships	-	Adequate
Play and Leisure	-	Moderately High
Coping Skills	-	Adequate
<b>Adaptive Behaviour Composite</b>	<b>61<sup>st</sup> percentile</b>	<b>Average</b>

Emily's mother's ratings suggest Emily does not require individualized support to complete most tasks of daily living. She reported that Emily has strengths in her domestic, community, and play and leisure skills, and weaknesses in her receptive, expressive, and writing skills.

## **CLINICAL IMPRESSIONS AND SUMMARY**

Emily is a 17-year-old young woman who was referred for a psychological reassessment by her parents in the context of previously noted challenges with language processing and memory and attention challenges. The present assessment was completed to obtain an update on Emily's



cognitive, academic, attentional, and socio-emotional functioning.

Reports from cognitive testing suggest that Emily's cognitive functioning is in the Very Low range (7<sup>th</sup> percentile). Exploration of her cognitive profile across different measures reveals average perceptual reasoning and visual and visual-spatial working memory, but significantly below average verbal comprehension, auditory working memory, and processing speed. Results from measures of adaptive functioning suggest that Emily does not require individualized support to complete tasks of daily living (61<sup>st</sup> percentile). **At this time and in the absence of corresponding challenges with adaptive functioning, we believe that cognitive difficulties are attributable to underlying challenges with language processing rather than to global challenges with cognitive functioning typical of an intellectual disability.**

Reports from memory testing suggest slightly below-average immediate recall, but age-typical delayed recall and recognition. Challenges with language processing and auditory working memory were again evident, as Emily demonstrated better recall and recognition for visual information than for verbal information. Overall, results suggest that Emily benefits from time to process and consolidate information, opportunities that allow for the repetition of material, and when verbal information is paired with visual cues.

Reports from academic testing reveal challenges in reading and writing. Specifically, she had difficulties with sight reading, decoding, reading comprehension, oral reading, spelling, orthographic abilities, and reading and writing fluency. She had an underdeveloped reading vocabulary compared to her same-grade peers. Difficulties with phonological processing underlie challenges in both reading and writing. Difficulties with reading and writing have been present since school entry and Emily has received significant opportunities for individualized intervention. The production of grade-level quality work often requires considerable time, focus, and energy on Emily's part. While Emily's challenges are strongly tied to her challenges with language processing more generally, longstanding intervention and assessment by SLPs across her development have not indicated the presence of a possible language or communication disorder. Consequently, Emily would be best supported by a diagnosis of a **Specific Learning Disorder with Impairment in Reading (DSM-5-TR F81.0)** and a **Specific Learning Disorder in Written Expression (DSM-5-TR F81.81)**.

Some challenges were noted in math, specific to mathematical calculation and mathematical fluency and revealed gaps in specific areas of her knowledge (multiple-digit division, fractions, time concepts, working with percentages, and correctly handling exponents). While Emily is noted to possess intact mathematical reasoning abilities and to understand many operational processes involved in solving mathematical problems, she often makes small errors in calculation that would be well supported by the provision of a calculator.

Behavioural reports suggest no challenges with attention, hyperactivity-impulsivity, behavioural/emotional regulation, or executive functioning at home or school. Results from objective testing, although not comprehensive, suggest slightly below-average attention and concentration abilities. However, they continue to highlight challenges with language processing, as her capacity to learn and recall attentionally demanding, relatively rote, and sequential visual-spatial information (vs. auditory symbolic information) was intact.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the current assessment results, the following recommendations are made:

1. **Sharing Assessment Findings** – Emily is encouraged to share the findings of this assessment with professionals involved in her care, including school staff at Miramichi Valley High School. A school team meeting is strongly encouraged where an updated PLP could be developed to reflect this most recent psychological assessment.

As Emily expressed interest in post-secondary education, she may be interested in sharing this report with accessibility services at the school she intends to attend. Given her diagnoses, she will be entitled to accommodations. In addition to accommodations for an SLD in reading and in writing, she may additionally benefit from the support of an academic advisor and from priority registration to help her manage all the challenges associated with navigating a post-secondary education with identified learning needs.

2. **Academic Supports that Address All Areas** – Emily may benefit from various classroom supports to help with her documented difficulties with reading, writing, mathematics, auditory working memory, verbal reasoning, and slow processing speed. These recommendations should be in addition to any accommodations already in place.
  - Access to resource support to help manage her academic challenges.
  - Additional time (i.e., 200%) to complete in-class assignments, tests, and exams.
  - Access to a quiet, distraction-free space to complete tests and exams.
  - Breaking assignments and projects down into simpler, smaller tasks with more frequent deadlines.
  - Providing clear and concrete expectations for graded work, such as providing grading rubrics for assignments.
  - When introducing new concepts, Emily will benefit from multimodal instruction (e.g., auditory information should be paired with visual cues) that seeks to place the information in context (e.g., using examples pulled from her real life, connecting new concepts to existing knowledge).
  - Having access to class notes in advance and/or being permitted to record lectures for later review will be helpful.
3. **Academic Supports for Reading and Writing** – Emily may benefit from various classroom supports to help with documented difficulties with reading and written expression. These recommendations should be in addition to any accommodations already in place.
  - Access to assistive technology, such as the use of a laptop that includes software to evaluate her spelling and grammar (e.g., Grammarly) and provides speech-to-text (e.g., Dragon NaturallySpeaking) and text-to-speech capabilities (e.g., Speechify).
  - When assistive technology is unavailable, the provision of a scribe, the opportunity to provide answers orally, a reader, or additional time to account for her slower rate of reading and written output on in-class assignments, quizzes,

tests, or exams will be helpful.

- Activate her prior knowledge about a topic to help orient her to what is to be read. This could include asking Emily questions about the topic, sharing personal experiences related to the topic, discussing all that she knows about the topic, and asking her to identify what she still needs to learn about the topic. Reviewing key vocabulary words and concepts before reading may also be helpful.
- Encourage review of any comprehension questions associated with a text before reading to highlight areas of focus for Emily while she is reading.
- Encourage the use of active strategies to organize information gleaned from a text (e.g., note-taking, underlining or highlighting important information in-text). This could involve the use of visual devices (e.g., mind maps). While schools have access to many helpful graphic organizers, many can be found online ([eduplace.com/graphicorganizer/](http://eduplace.com/graphicorganizer/), [teachervision.com/lesson-planning/graphic-organizer](http://teachervision.com/lesson-planning/graphic-organizer), [enchantedlearning.com/graphicorganizers/](http://enchantedlearning.com/graphicorganizers/)).
- Help her to recognize that texts are usually written in a specific style that gives clues to their organization. For example, academic textbooks are made up of chapters divided into sections and each section discusses a topic which is summarized by the heading. Narrative texts typically contain a setting, characters, a problem or set of problems, resolution(s) of the problem(s), and an ending.
- Provide opportunities for Emily to write about topics she finds interesting or can relate to.
- Grade her work holistically and offer feedback rather than penalizing for issues with written conventions, sentence structure, and spelling, unless specifically assessing orthographic abilities.
- Offer multiple opportunities to create rough drafts of written work to encourage editing and allow her to make use of targeted feedback.
- If possible, provide models, examples, or writing samples, as these have been noted as successful by teachers in the past.

4. **Academic Supports for Mathematics** – Although a diagnosis of a specific learning disorder in mathematics was deferred, Emily may benefit from various classroom supports to help with documented difficulties with mathematical reasoning and calculation.

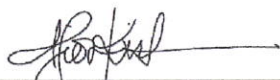
- Access to a calculator.
- Encourage Emily to slow down, be attentive to her responses, and review her work to catch errors. This may require additional time to complete in-class assignments, tests, and exams.
- Supportive strategies and tools that allow her to visualize a problem more concretely, such as opportunities to use visual aids or manipulatives.
- Given noted challenges with reading comprehension, teaching key mathematical vocabulary words and terms seen in word problems that signal the use of a particular operation can be helpful. Strategies that help her to sort out relevant from irrelevant information will also be helpful, such as highlighting important information and crossing out irrelevant information.
- Encourage the use of a systematic procedure for solving math problems that can be readily applied to most contexts. An example is the PIES mnemonic: **P** =



picture (draw a simple sketch based on the situation described by the word problem), **I** = information (circle keywords in the problem and write them next to the picture), **E** = equation (find an equation that fits the information), and **S** = solve (solve the equation to produce an answer and double check it).

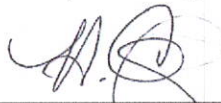
5. **Supports for Memory** – As Emily was noted to struggle with some aspects of recall and recognition, especially for verbal information, she may benefit from the following strategies:
- Offering information in smaller, more manageable chunks.
  - Link new information to what she has already learned (e.g., relating concepts to her day-to-day experiences or interests).
  - Scheduling brief and frequent review sessions that allow for repetition not consolidate materials. Overlearning commonly used facts can be helpful.
  - Assistance in learning memory strategies that will support retention (e.g., mnemonics, acronyms, visual pictures of processes, charts). Emily may wish to draw pictures of concepts or visualize them in her mind. She may also wish to use motor techniques to help her remember sequences (e.g., clapping hands, tapping out information).
  - Assistance in learning organizational strategies that will help support retention, such as chunking information where larger amounts of information are reorganized into smaller, more meaningful groups (e.g., a large shopping list can be split into the categories “fruits and vegetables”, “dairy”, “bakery”, and “meat”).
  - Given noted challenges with verbal recall and weaknesses in auditory working memory, she will benefit from pairing verbally presented information with visual cues. Hands-on strategies like demonstrations or modelling may also be especially helpful.
  - Giving frequent tests or quizzes instead of testing too much material at once. She may benefit from a variety of test formats (e.g., open book, matching, multiple choice, word banks) or having keywords provided on short and long-answer test questions to trigger memory.
6. **Community Resources** – As Emily expressed interest in a post-secondary education, she may be interested in connecting with the Learning Disability Association of New Brunswick ([ldanb-taanb.ca/](http://ldanb-taanb.ca/)). In addition to great resources, they offer scholarships!

Emily is a wonderful young woman with the potential for success when provided appropriate support. I wish her well in whatever she decides to do next. It was my pleasure to get to work with her throughout this assessment. If there are any questions or concerns about this report or recommendations, please do not hesitate myself or Dr. Hilary Cartwright at (506) 206-6200.



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