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## **BRITTANY HUANG**

Brittany Huang is a 13-year-old eighth-grade girl with severe emotional disturbance attending Emerald Hills Middle School.

### **Family and Cultural Background**

Brittany and her 10-year-old sister live with their parents in a wealthy suburban area populated by business and medical professionals. Mr. and Mrs. Huang emigrated from southern China as children and grew up together in a mostly non-English-speaking immigrant Chinese neighborhood where day labor was the common employment. Their parents worked very hard to provide every educational opportunity for their children. As a result, both Mr. and Mrs. Huang are now successful physicians. Their practices are very demanding, however, so the girls are often home alone until 7:00 or 8:00 o'clock in the evening. The family lives in a very nice house and the parents enjoy providing their children with gifts, entertainment, and the latest fashions. The girls associate with school and neighborhood friends who enjoy the same advantages.

### **Prior School Experience**

Brittany seemed to be an average student through 5th-grade but during 6th-grade her interest in school declined. She became selective in her compliance with teacher requests—"moody" was the term her teacher used—and was increasingly defiant at home. She transformed from a friendly and likable child to a demanding and disagreeable girl who alienated most of the adults in her life as well as many of her friends. In April, her 6th-grade teacher met with the Huangs to discuss her concerns. Mr. and Mrs. Huang also noticed the changes, but thought Brittany was most likely in the throes of early adolescence. The teacher remarked that Brittany's behavior seemed different than other students she could remember, and she wondered aloud if there was more to the situation. Brittany's school achievement declined rapidly, but nothing further was accomplished before school ended in June.

One day in late July, Mrs. Huang received a disturbing phone call during which her younger daughter sobbed out a story about Brittany screaming and crying in her room. Brittany would not talk on the phone so Mrs. Huang drove home to investigate. With patient listening and gentle coaxing, Brittany revealed that she hates herself and everyone else, and she "just can't stand it anymore." She could not give a specific reason for her feelings, but her recent history and current emotional state convinced Mrs. Huang that Brittany needed professional help. Following three visits to a clinical psychologist, Brittany was diagnosed with severe anger and mood disorders. The psychologist recommended that the Huangs refer Brittany for special education so she could receive the help she needed at school. As a result, Brittany was classified with severe emotional disturbance in late November of 7th grade.

### **Current Schooling**

Emerald Hills Middle School serves 310 seventh graders and 325 eighth graders, of which 82% are Caucasian, 14% are Asian, and 4% are African American. The school uses a teaming system in which English, social studies, and science teachers share cohorts of students and meet in team meetings once each week. Expectations for success are high, and families and teachers anticipate that most students will go on to attend college and graduate school.

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### **Relevant Instructional and Behavioral Information**

Brittany is near grade level in basic academic achievement. She reads and comprehends at the 7.0 grade equivalent level, and her math reasoning skills are also at the 7.5 grade equivalent level. She does not work well independently, often yelling and exhibiting other defiant behavior when asked to complete work on her own; and she does not ask the teacher for assistance when she has difficulty with assignments. When given a variable-time delayed redirection to begin work, she pushes her desktop materials to the floor and puts her head down. She currently attends a resource study skills class for one period per day, during which the teacher works with Brittany to develop replacement behaviors to eliminate her outbursts and her refusal to work. The resource teacher reinforces the desired behaviors while co-teaching in Brittany's regular English and social studies classes.