A VISION FOR A BETTER EDUCATION

Reducing Bias in Special Education Assessment for American Indian and African American Students

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF
Children, Families & Learning

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Robert J. Wedl, *Commissioner*
Minnesota Department of Children, Families & Learning

Kate Foate Trewick, *Assistant Commissioner*
Office of Teaching and Learning

Wayne Erickson, *Director*
Division of Special Education

Project Staff

Nancy W. Larson, Ph.D., Division of Special Education

Kathy Manley, Division of Monitoring and Compliance

Sam Richardson, Division of Special Education (retired)

Sue Ristau, Division of Monitoring and Compliance

Charlotte Ryan, Ph.D., Division of Special Education

Elizabeth Watkins, Division of Special Education (project coordinator)

Levi Young, Division of Special Education

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The following committee and subcommittee members contributed generously of their time and expertise:

Project Development Committee

Dr. Ron Allen, School Psychologist, *Red Wing Public Schools*
Katie Batiste, Special Education Associate, *Robbinsdale Area Schools*
Neil Buckanaga, Special Education Teacher, *Minneapolis Public Schools*
Jacqueline Fraedrich, Lead Associate for Student Services, *Robbinsdale Area Schools*
Mary Garrison, Speech/Language Resource Placement, *St. Paul Public Schools*
Bill Hemming, Commissioner of Education, *Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe*
Jackie Lay, Speech/Language Resource, *St. Paul Public Schools*
Preston McMillan, Speech/Language Pathologist, *St. Paul Public Schools*
Dr. Joel Ortega, District Compliance Specialist, *Minneapolis Public Schools*
Cynthia Peyton, Speech/Language Pathologist, *Minneapolis Public Schools*
Mimi Rice, Indian Home-School Liaison, *Robbinsdale Area Schools*
Deborah Shipp, School Social Worker, *St. Paul Public Schools*

Minnesota School Psychology Association Subcommittee

Dr. Ron Allen, Red Wing Public Schools
Audrey Anderson, Minneapolis Public Schools
Sally Baas, Anoka-Hennepin Public Schools
Dr. Andrea Canter, Minneapolis Public Schools
Marilyn Leifgren, Anoka-Hennepin Public Schools
Chuck LeTendre, Roseville Area Schools
Dr. Olivia Melroe, Moorhead State University
David Olson, Cannon Valley Education District
Aline Petzold, St. Paul Public Schools
Dr. Don Stovall, University of Wisconsin-River Falls

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Minnesota Department of Children, Families & Learning

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Chapter One

Introduction

American Indian and African American students are disproportionately represented in special education programs in Minnesota as well as in many other states. This has been an issue in Minnesota for many years and is reflected in a 1992 report by the Minnesota Department of Education that studied placement rates of American Indian and African American students in selected districts in the categorical program areas of Mild-Moderate Impairment (MMI), Emotional/Behavioral Disorders (E/BD), and Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD). Shown in Table 1.1, data from this report indicate students in these two minority groups were consistently found to be identified at higher percentages relative to the total number of students enrolled in such programs. More recent data contained in the Unduplicated Child Count report by the Minnesota Department of Children, Families & Learning indicates that this same general placement pattern continues to exist in these categorical areas. These data, along with the placement rates for all other categorical areas, can be seen in Table 1.2 .

Table 1.1: Student Placement Rates in Selected Districts* (1989-90)

	African American	American Indian	All Groups
MMH	1.8%	1.3%	1.0%
E/BD	4.4%	4.5%	2.8%
SLD	12.3%	9.8%	6.9%

**Numbers in table reflect percent of student population in disability category.*

Concern for disproportional placement at the national level is expressed in the Congressional Findings in the 1997 reauthorization of P.L. 105-17, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) which states:

> 1. Greater efforts are needed to prevent the intensification of problems connected with mislabeling and high dropout rates among minority children with disabilities.

Note: Changes in student placement rates between 1989-90, shown in Table 1.1 with the 1997 rates indicated in Table 1.2, are due, in part, to changes in eligibility criteria and data collection procedures initiated in the intervening years.

Table 1.2: Current Statewide Student Placement Rates* (1997)

	African American	American Indian	All Groups
Speech Language	2.09%	2.62%	2.11%
Mentally Impaired; Mild Moderate	1.63%	1.46%	0.83%
Mentally Impaired; Moderate Severe	0.30%	0.36%	0.29%
Physically Impaired	0.16%	0.20%	0.16%
Deaf-Hard of Hearing	0.18%	0.17%	0.21%
Visually Impaired	0.04%	0.06%	0.04%
Specific Learning Disabilities	7.38%	7.43%	4.24%
Emotional/Behavioral Disorders	3.57%	5.02%	1.89%
Deaf-Blindness	0.00%	0.00%	0.003%
Other Health Impaired	0.42%	0.42%	0.55%
Autistic	0.18%	0.09%	0.14%
Early Childhood Special Education	1.47%	1.60%	0.95%
Traumatic Brain Injury Disabled	0.03%	0.06%	0.03%
Totals	**17.46%**	**19.48%**	**11.45%**

**Numbers in table reflect percent of student population in disability category.*

2. More minority children continue to be served in special education than would be expected from the percentage of minority students in the general school population.

3. Poor African American children are 2.3 times more likely to be identified by their teacher as having mental retardation than their white counterparts.

4. Although African Americans represent 16 percent of elementary and secondary enrollments, they constitute 21 percent of the total enrollment in special education. *IDEA Sec. 601 (c)(8)*

Causes of Disproportional Representation

Special education identification and placement rest upon a complex system of referral, individualized assessment, and identification practices that are based on statewide eligibility criteria. This takes place within the context of the public education system, which is staffed by individuals who are trained in institutions of higher education. In 1995-96, the Division of Special Education held focus groups with professionals serving American Indian, African American, and Latino students in special education. These focus groups confirmed that many issues are related to disproportional special education placement rates. These include:

- Broad social issues (poverty, racism, family stability).
- General education system issues (the capacity of schools to provide effective instruction to a changing and challenging student body).
- Higher education issues (teacher recruitment and preparation for working with a changing student population).
- Special education system issues (assessment, eligibility criteria, instructional practices).

Impact of Special Education Identification and Placement

The meaning of disproportionality statistics is derived from an examination of the impact of special education placement on the education system and, most importantly, the impact on diverse students.

Special education confers many benefits on students and thus can be seen as having a positive impact on students and families. Among these benefits are:

- Access to specialized services.
- Specially designed, individualized and small group instruction.
- Individualized curriculum.
- Specialized instruction in coping strategies and social skills.
- Improved rates of learning and improved self-esteem.
- Preparation for adult life, including instruction geared toward employment, independent living and self-advocacy.
- Greater family input on educational goals through the IEP process.

These benefits of special education were supported in *Phase II: Disproportionate Representation of Minorities in Special Education, Parent Groups* (Minnesota Department of Children, Families & Learning, 1997) based on feedback obtained from focus groups of African American, American In-

dian and Latino parents of children with disabilities. Parents were also aware of some of the negative consequences of special education identification and placement associated with having a disability. Among these are:

- Lowered expectations on the part of teachers and family members.
- Restricted access to the general K-12 education program.
- Restricted access to higher education and post-high school employment.

For students who have disabilities, the benefits of special education outweigh the negative impact. For other students, who perhaps are not academically successful but who do not have a disability, special education may be a short-term solution with long-term negative consequences. Special education placement has an impact upon individual American Indian and African American students and their families. Disproportional placement has a net impact upon the educational system as a whole as indicated by the following:

- Rising child count and case loads.
- Rising costs and shifting costs in special education.
- Need for recruitment of professionals from diverse cultures.
- Need for preservice and inservice staff development to better equip staff to work with diverse students.
- Need for improved assessment tools and instructional practices.
- Vulnerability to legal challenges through due process procedures and through the Office for Civil Rights.

The impact of disproportional representation is an issue which has received much attention by the federal Office for Civil Rights (OCR). The OCR is the office within the U.S. Department of Education that has responsibility for enforcing education laws prohibiting discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, or disability. OCR regards disproportionate placement of children of particular racial backgrounds in special education as potentially discriminatory.

The OCR has concluded that inappropriate placement or misclassification can have significant consequences which raise the following civil rights concerns (Peelen, 1993):

- Students may be denied access to the core curriculum, limiting access to higher education and employment.

- Students may experience stigma, lowered self-esteem, lowered expectations from others.
- Disproportionate placement may result in racial segregation.

Special Education's Role in Responding to Disproportionality

The subtitle of these guidelines, *A Vision for a Better Education*, is deliberately aspirational. Disproportional representation has causes and effects that stretch beyond the walls of individual classrooms or schools. The role of special educators in working toward a better, more equitable educational system is twofold:

- To make good decisions about assessment and eligibility for individual students.
- To advocate for an improved education system that meets the needs of all students.

Assessment and eligibility are key areas for special education's response to disproportionality. Assessment is the collection and interpretation of information that forms the basis of good decisions for individuals. When special educators follow best professional practices and carry out fair, nonbiased assessment leading to good decisions for individuals, they also encourage others to work to improve the well-being and success of students. In this way, special educators can be advocates for a better education system.

Legal Requirements

There are legal requirements for reducing bias in assessment practices in federal and state laws and rules.

Federal and state rules require special educators to take precautions to avoid discrimination in assessment. Minnesota Rules state that assessments:

> H. must be performed in accordance with recognized professional standards which include recognition or accommodation for persons whose differences or conditions cause standardized, norm-referenced instruments to be invalid and otherwise in accordance with the requirements of nondiscrimination;
>
> I. must be conducted with procedures that ensure that, in accordance with recognized professional standards, testing and evaluation materials and procedures used for the purposes of identification, assessment, classification, educational program plan development, educational placement, including special education services, program implementation, review, evaluation, notice, and hearing are selected and

> administered so as not to be discriminatory, including cultural discrimination. The procedures and materials shall take into account the special limitations of persons with disabilities and the racial or cultural differences presented by persons and must be justified on the basis of their usefulness in making educational program decisions that serve the individual pupil.
>
> *MR 3525.2750 (1)*

This language in Minnesota Rule is confirmed and reinforced in the 1997 reauthorization of Public Law 105-17, the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Specific criteria found in Minnesota Rule also require assessment teams to rule out "exclusionary factors" such as differences in culture, language or environmental background as the primary cause of the problems a student encounters in school.

In addition to these requirements, IDEA requires states to report their annual special education child count by race and by disability beginning with the 1998-99 school year.

Project History and Related Activities

Disproportional placement of American Indian and African American students has been a concern to Minnesota's Division of Special Education for many years, reaching back to 1980 when the Indian Home-School Liaison (Social Worker Aides) program was initiated. Guidelines for assessing and serving Limited English Proficient (LEP) students were published in 1987 and 1991. In 1992, the Division published *Minority Representation in Special Education in Minnesota School Districts, 1989-90*. In 1995, the Division formed a Minority and Cultural Issues (MCI) work group to address the problems of disproportionality in a systematic manner. As noted previously, MCI began by conducting focus group interviews with educators and with parents of African American, American Indian, and Latino students with disabilities. As a result of these efforts, MCI has directed its work toward three aspects of the education system that most impact disproportionality:

- Prereferral interventions and practices.
- Staff development (preservice and inservice).
- Assessment practices for American Indian and African American students.

Because guidelines for the assessment of the Limited English Proficient have been in existence for several years, the guidelines in this manual focus on those students who have racial and/or cultural differences but who are not considered LEP.

Project Goal

A team of educators representing diverse communities and school districts was formed to develop guidelines for special education assessment of American Indian and African American students. This group framed issues; identified the needs of students, parents and teachers; and assisted in drafting the guidelines. The project development committee adopted the following mission statement:

> We will bring knowledge of culture, language and learning styles into the comprehensive assessment process for all students, to help school staff be more aware and knowledgeable of differences to make better decisions for all students.

These guidelines can help educators to operationalize state and federal rules regarding nondiscriminatory assessment by:

- Providing information on different types of diversity and how they impact special education.
- Providing tools to gather information about diversity factors.

- Suggesting adaptations to assessment procedures to account for diversity.
- Providing a framework to document that the team considered diversity issues and ruled out exclusionary factors when determining eligibility.
- Providing a framework for assessment procedures that can, in the future, be expanded to address the needs of other diverse student populations.

Chapter Two

Basic Diversity Concepts

Introduction

Diversity has a major impact on the special education process. In terms of referral and assessment, the aspects of diversity of most concern to special educators are race and culture, communication, and socioeconomics which are described in this chapter.

All education professionals in Minnesota have had diversity training as part of their licensure requirements. However, special educators have a professional responsibility to continue to increase their knowledge on how race and culture, communication, and socioeconomic diversity affects special education assessment. While this manual has a specific focus on American Indian and African American students, many aspects of the following material on race and culture may be applied to a larger discussion of race and cultural identity.

Staff Development

As indicated by professionals and parents who participated in focus groups conducted by the Minority and Cultural Issues (MCI) work group, increased efforts are needed in the planning and implementation of staff development and preservice training strategies aimed at helping teachers and other professionals gain a better understanding of the norms and unique characteristics of persons who represent racial and cultural, socioeconomic and communication diversity. In an attempt to outline factors that are important to the education of minority youth, Ford (1992) asserts that specialized training must be provided to help special educators provide service from a multicultural framework. Suggesting that "many educators have not given a high priority to the positive recognition of individual differences relating to cultural backgrounds and attitudes, worldviews, values and beliefs, interests, culturally conditioned learning styles, personality, verbal and nonverbal language patterns, and behavior response mechanisms," she proposes that multicultural staff development for special educators include the following experiences:

- Engaging educators in self-awareness activities to explore their attitudes and perceptions concerning their own cultural group(s) and beliefs as well as exploring the effects of their attitudes in terms of their own self-concepts, academic abilities, and educational experiences.
- Exposing educators to accurate information about various cultural or ethnic groups (e.g., historical and contemporary contributions;

lifestyles and value systems; interpersonal communication patterns; learning styles; parental attitudes about education and disabilities).

- Helping educators to explore the diversity that exists between, as well as within, cultural ethnic groups.

Practitioner Self-Assessment

After reading this section of the manual, all practitioners should take the *Practitioner Diversity Awareness Scale* (Chapter 3) to determine their level of competence in diversity issues. The scale represents professional growth activities that reflect best practices and are intended to provide training suggestions for those in special education who work with populations of students from diverse racial, cultural, communication, and socioeconomic backgrounds. The items contained in the scale were adapted from recommendations of the American Psychological Association. A first step for practitioners with identified needs is to review Chapters 9, 10, and 11 to obtain information on the history and culture of American Indians and African Americans as well as information on the impact of poverty.

Racial and Cultural Diversity

Race and culture are the terms most often identified when discussing diversity. However, race and culture are hardly discrete, and it is nearly impossible to separate the notion of race from that of culture. These two terms are interrelated, but they are not synonymous. At its most basic level, the term "race" is used in the United States to refer to skin color and possibly to country of origin, often appearing as a category that must be checked on a form. For many people, the available choices do not begin to correspond to their own complex, multi-racial identity.

An individual's race and their culture may or may not correspond. Culture refers to a more complex web of values and behaviors and is described in greater length below. Culture includes the shared history or the stories people hear that shape their attitudes, beliefs and outlook toward the world. Culture is closely related to other aspects of diversity, communication, and socioeconomic status. For education in general and special education assessment in particular, culture is a more relevant concept than race.

It is helpful to remember that some aspects of culture are easily observable and some are not:

Easily Observable	Not Easily Observable

- Food
- Dress
- Language
- Customs for greetings
- Holidays
- Religious practices
- Celebrations
- Spiritual beliefs
- Values
- Authority
- Gender roles
- Attitudes toward education
- Recognition of disabilities
- Attitudes toward people with disabilities

Assessors should not make assumptions about a student's cultural identity based only on aspects of culture that are easily observable. Culture is a complex pattern of the following:

assumptions	customs
obligations	sanctions
behaviors	traditions
beliefs	time orientation
activity level	sentiments
attitudes	values

While many American Indian and African American students have some characteristics that are common to their respective racial and cultural backgrounds, they will naturally vary according to their personal characteristics, environments, and personal experiences.

For the purposes of these guidelines, it is necessary to be mindful that students as well as teachers are unique individuals who are also members of groups. Individual racial and cultural identity is a combination of personal characteristics and characteristics adopted as a result of group affiliation. These include:

Personal Characteristics and History*:* Physical appearance and attributes, spiritual, emotional, and intellectual attributes, personal history, and environmental experiences.

Group Affiliations and History: Family role and membership, affiliation with groups that share spiritual beliefs, experiences, history, interests, and environment.

Process of Acculturation

Sattler (1998) defines acculturation as the "process of cultural change that occurs in individuals when two cultures meet; it leads individuals to adopt

elements of another culture, such as values and social behaviors." Culture is not static. It naturally changes over time and distance.

It is not necessary to move to a new country to experience cultural change. Students moving from suburban to urban neighborhoods may experience cultural change. Likewise, students moving from urban to rural settings may also experience cultural change. Students who are experiencing this change may:

- Adopt the behavioral norms and values of the dominant culture while rejecting the old.
- Adopt some aspects of a new culture while retaining some aspects of the old, resulting in a new blend.

Sattler (1998) describes the stages of acculturation as a continuum that includes the following stages:

Mainstream	Individual has adapted to and identifies with mainstream or dominant culture.
Bicultural	Individual understands both dominant and minority culture; comfortable operating within the values framework and communication style of both.
Culturally Different	Individual understands and identifies with a minority culture; has some knowledge of the dominant culture and attempts to act according to dominant culture framework when necessary.
Culturally Marginal	Individual understands and identifies with a minority culture; person either chooses not to interact with the dominant framework or is unable to do so.

A student may fluctuate from one stage to another depending on the situation. Members of a family or community may also be at different points in the process of cultural change and adaptation due to generational differences or differences in life experiences. This cultural dissonance often creates conflict and stress within families. To understand the perspective of a student or family that is experiencing cultural change, it is important to know whether the change came about voluntarily or

involuntarily. Involuntary loss of a traditional way of life, religion, or language may cause strong emotional responses lasting several generations.

Cultural stress and conflict can be an underlying cause of academic and/or behavioral problems in school. Schools can support the acculturation process through implementing cross-cultural curricula and promoting culturally based activities.

Effects of Acculturation

According to Collier (1985), cultural factors can often impact how disabilities are perceived. She states that:

> The normal side effects of acculturation may look very much like traditional indications of a disability. Research has shown that single cultural responses to acculturation can result in an increase in dysfunctional and self-abusive behaviors. Other concerns educators may have about a culturally diverse student may actually be attributed to delayed posttraumatic responses, generation gaps, and survivor guilt.

Collier (1985) further suggests that a student's reactions to the process of acculturation may include:

- Heightened anxiety
- Withdrawal
- Response fatigue
- Distractibility
- Disorientation
- Confusion in locus of control
- Silence or unresponsiveness
- Code-switching
- Resistance to change
- Related behaviors

If the student is not successful in school, teachers may be uncertain as to whether the student's lack of success is related to a cultural difference or difficulty with acculturation. Special education assessment procedures need to determine whether a student's difficulty with performance is related to cultural or language differences, or if it is indicative of a disability.

Socioeconomic Diversity

Socioeconomic status is another aspect of diversity. Students enrolled in public schools in Minnesota come from homes that represent the upper and middle classes, the working poor, and families in multi-generational poverty.

Demographic information indicates that many members of cultural and racial minority groups in Minnesota are poor. Their socioeconomic status overlaps with other cultural characteristics and can compound the challenges these students face in school. Educators should be aware of the possibility of confusing socioeconomic issues with racial and cultural differences. In summary:

- Socioeconomic differences overlap and interact with cultural and racial differences.
- Socioeconomic differences also shape group affiliations and individual identities.
- Socioeconomic classes can be thought of as "cultures" in and of themselves.

Poverty

Poverty affects children in many other ways. Students growing up in poverty may not have the range of experience and knowledge that is expected in order for them to do well in school and on standardized tests. Students faced with serious economic problems may also experience a great deal of stress and anxiety. It is difficult for students to focus on lessons and learning when they are homeless or lack food and clothing. The struggle some families face in trying to provide for their children's basic needs may result in very limited verbal communication among family members and limited language development in children. Poverty is also associated with inadequate housing and environmental risks such as lead or asbestos exposure–both associated with increased risk of disabilities (Kotulak, 1996).

While it is important for those involved in the education system to respect a family's privacy and dignity, gathering enough information about the child's economic situation is important to the prereferral and assessment process. Poverty is a factor that may influence a child's experiential learning opportunities which may ultimately affect language and/or conceptual development. Children living in extreme poverty may not be able to demonstrate adequate academic skill development, and as a consequence, may not score as well as same age peers on standardized tests. In some situations, economic influences are the primary cause of a child's underachievement and rule out eligibility for special education. For

example, poverty would serve as an exclusionary factor for a child who learns at a normal rate but hasn't had a wide range of experiences and has missed school frequently because of homelessness. On the other hand, poverty increases the risk of some disabilities and may be seen as a causative factor rather than an exclusionary factor. Lead exposure, which is an environmental factor linked to poverty, would not rule out eligibility for mental impairment.

Communication Diversity

Communication differences are not typically evaluated when assessing American Indian and African American students whose native language is English. Even subtle differences in communication among English-speaking students may have a pronounced effect on test scores and classroom performance. For example, an African American student may only have communication skills in African American English, affecting the pronunciation of some words. A student who is raised on an American Indian reservation may have receptive understanding of Ojibwe and speak a dialect of English that is influenced by Ojibwe. Communication diversity includes language, nonverbal communication, and mode of communication.

Language

There are degrees of differences in language that are characterized by variation in:

- Vocabulary
- Pronunciation
- Syntax

To further complicate these communication differences, what is commonly thought of as "standard English" has many different forms. Written English has a standard form, and formal, academic spoken English also has a standard form. Casual, conversational English changes frequently and its form is fluid. Four factors contribute to language variation or diversity:

Geographic Region	There are regional variations in English pronunciations, syntax and vocabulary.
Influence of Other Languages	Sometimes two or more languages will blend forming a new language known as creole or pidgin. Less obvious influences from other languages will

	result in dialects or regional variants.
Group Affiliation	Use of variants of English is associated with group affiliation as well as with geographic region. For example, some white teenagers adopt terms used in African American English as a marker of group affiliation.
Socioeconomic Status	Researchers have linked some language characteristics to poverty, including limited vocabulary, limited use of abstract language, and limited exposure to oral and written formal language.

There has been a great deal of public debate in recent years concerning language diversity among African Americans. Some linguists feel that Ebonics, or African American English, is a separate language while others feel it is a regional or social dialect. Regardless of the term that is applied, the language that is used by many, though not all, African Americans has a unique history and definite characteristics. There are also English language differences among American Indian students, though these are less familiar to many special educators. Additional information concerning communication diversity may be found in Chapters 9 and 10 as well as in the recommendations for assessing the Communication Domain (Chapter 7).

Nonverbal Communication

It is important when considering communication diversity factors to include nonverbal communication since more than two-thirds of all messages are nonverbal in nature. Nonverbal communication includes such elements as body language, gestures, proximics, vocal tone, volume, and recognition or acknowledgment of conversational partners. Teachers may perceive a student's nonverbal communication as showing lack of cooperation, defiance, or symptoms of a behavioral disorder. Also, behavior problems may arise as a consequence of breakdowns in communication resulting in frustration with the inability to communicate effectively.

Nonverbal communication may be divided into two general categories: (1) Body language, and (2) voice. Facial expressions, posture, gestures, mannerisms, motor behavior, and behavior that indicates a student is straining to use the senses (looking too closely, straining to hear, etc.), may be culturally determined. For example, for many educators, direct eye

contact means that a student is ready for interpersonal communication, is attentive and honest. However, in traditional American Indian cultures, direct eye contact is considered rude and intrusive. In these cultures, looking away, not direct eye contact, is a sign of respect. Sattler (1998) warns that the following nonverbal behaviors may not have the same interpretation across cultural groups:

- staring
- tight lips
- shaking head from side to side
- slouching in chair
- turning away from speaker
- trembling
- fidgety hands
- whispering
- silence, nonresponse

Nonverbal vocal behaviors such as coughing, screeching, sniffling, whistling and others may also be culturally determined. Qualities such as vocal tone, pitch, pace, and intensity of speech also may have different cultural interpretations.

The *Sociocultural Checklist* (Chapter 5) lists factors that may affect students in the special education referral and assessment process, including differences in nonverbal communication. More detailed information concerning communication differences among American Indian and African American students may be found in Chapters 9 and 10.

Mode of Communication

It is only recently that there has been a recognition on the part of educators that "mode of communication" is a diversity issue. While this manual has as its focus American Indian and African American students, it is safe to generalize that diversity in communication mode further complicates other issues of diversity. Differences in mode of communication are usually discussed within the context of the Deaf/Hard of Hearing or the Blind/Visually Impaired communities. There may be differences in both expressive and receptive modes of communication. Also modes of communication vary from place to place and often reflect the origin of the training or the philosophies of the individuals delivering the services.

There is no greater impact on learning than an impairment in vision or hearing, according to Eric Kloos, Deaf/Blind Consultant with the Division of Special Education. These impairments have far more impact on learning than other diversity issues. The limitations on learning caused by these impairments affect nearly every assessment domain. For example, the first task for deaf/blind students is to develop a sense of identity. This must occur before a communication mode of any sort can be used with the student, along with an assessment procedure or instrument. Most students with diverse communication modes will be included in special education from birth or from the age of onset of the disability.

This sort of diversity in communication mode requires the use of accommodations in the assessment process. Accommodations in test selection, response format, use of alternative tests, Braille, oral directions, audiotapes, and other changes in protocol must be implemented as appropriate during the assessment process and noted in the Assessment Summary Report (ASR). There are assessment instruments specifically designed for use with students with diverse modes of communication. For example, the Stanford Reading Achievement Test (SAT-HI) is used most frequently to determine the reading skill level of students who are deaf or hard of hearing. In other cases, someone very knowledgeable about the student's communication mode will need to perform the assessment in the appropriate mode of communication.

Following is a list of communication modes most commonly used in Minnesota communities (Minnesota Legislative Report, 1995):

- American Sign Language (ASL)
- Cued Speech
- Manually Coded English
- Tactile–Sign Language (Deaf/Blind)
- Oral Communication
- Pidgin Signed English
- Seeing Essential English
- Speechreading
- Signing Exact English
- Braille
- Large Print
- Audiotapes
- Other Technology

Educators who are working with American Indian or African American students who also have vision and hearing impairments are recommended to consult assessment guidelines for the Deaf/Hard of Hearing and the Blind/Visually Impaired in addition to the suggestions included in this manual.

Chapter Three

Education System Issues

The school system as a whole has a responsibility to assure the appropriate placement of American Indian and African American students in special education programs. This is true at all levels: state, regional, and local. Educators who wish to implement the assessment guidelines in this manual are thus advised to examine system-wide issues. The initiative for beginning these steps may come from a building assessment team, a school improvement committee, special education director or other administrator. In addition to following the recommended steps outlined below, educators should link their work with other school change or school reform efforts.

Schools are recommended to follow the following steps in order to assure that they have a system that supports a non-biased referral and assessment process:

Steps to Support Non–Biased Assessment Practices

Step 1	**Identify cultural representatives and/or diversity contact person**
Step 2	**Complete building or district self-study using the *School Environment Survey***
Step 3	**Complete staff self-study**
Step 4	**Gather data on referral and placement rates**
Step 5	**Evaluate current assessment practices**
Step 6	**Develop and implement building-level interventions**
Step 7	**Evaluate results of building-level interventions**

Step 1: Identify Cultural Representatives

Schools are recommended to identify persons who can serve as cultural representatives for American Indian and African American students during the prereferral, referral, and assessment process.

Persons who are identified may be full or part-time district employees. If volunteers or employees of other agencies are involved as cultural representatives, they should be trained in school privacy laws. A cultural representative is a person who has all or some of the following characteristics:

- is a member of the same racial or sociocultural group as the referred student and has knowledge of and connections with that group,
- has good cross-cultural communication skills,
- is trusted by community members and school personnel and demonstrates cultural competence, and
- is knowledgeable of the education system in general and of the special education referral and assessment process.

Legal requirements for a cultural representative…

IDEA is permissive with regard to cultural representatives. It allows IEP teams to include "at the discretion of the parent or the agency, other individuals who have knowledge or special expertise regarding the child. . .

Sec. 6 14 (d) (1) (b) (vi)

With regard to IEP team membership, Minnesota Rules are more specific than IDEA. Districts are directed to establish IEP teams that include:

(7) other individuals at the discretion of the parent or district;

(8) when a regulated procedure is being considered, one person on the team who is knowledgeable about ethnic and cultural issues relevant to the pupil's behavior and education; and (9) if appropriate, someone who is a member of the same minority or cultural background or who is knowledgeable concerning the racial, cultural, or disabling differences of the pupil

M.R. 3525.2900 Subp. 1a. A.

Many districts with large enrollments of American Indian students already employ an Indian Home-School Liaison (previously called "social worker aide") who serves as a cultural representative in the special education process. Other position titles that are used are "Student Advocate," "Community Outreach Worker," etc. The Division of Special Education uses the terms "Home-School Liaison" or "Cultural Representative." The Department is currently exploring options to expand special education reimbursement for home-school liaisons to include African American liaisons. (See Appendix C for a description of the roles and responsibilities of a home-school liaison).

Some schools in Minnesota have very few diverse students or teachers. For these districts, another option is to designate one or more special education staff as diversity contacts. While these staff may not be members of the American Indian or African American community, they should have the other characteristics described above. These staff should

take part in relevant training and stay abreast of assessment issues through professional associations and other professional development activities. When African American or American Indian students are being considered for the assessment process, building teams may contact this person for assistance in implementing these guidelines.

The involvement of a cultural representative is embedded in the entire assessment process presented in these guidelines. Some specific parts of the process where cultural representatives may be directly involved include the following:

- Helping to implement the building self-study and other steps to address system issues.
- Helping other staff to learn about cultural groups.
- Helping to carry out family interviews.
- Gathering prereferral information using the *Sociocultural Factors Checklist* and other forms.
- Taking part in the team meeting to determine whether sociocultural factors are causing the student's difficulties or whether a comprehensive special education assessment needs to be conducted.
- Giving input regarding assessment accommodations based upon the results of the *Sociocultural Factors Checklist* and the *Home and Family Interview*.
- Giving input to the team about the impact of sociocultural factors on assessment results.

- Taking part in the team meeting to determine eligibility.

In some situations, a student's parents may feel knowledgeable and comfortable to serve as the cultural representative with regard to the assessment and IEP planning for their child. They may also prefer to have a family member or friend serve in this capacity.

Legal requirements for self-study and data collection…

1. In general, each State that receives assistance under this part, and the Secretary of the Interior, shall provide for the collection and examination of data to determine if significant disproportionality based on race is occurring in the State with respect to:

A. the identification of children as children with disabilities. . .

B. the placement in particular educational settings of such children.

2. In the case of a determination of significant disproportionality…the state…shall provide for the review and if appropriate, revision of the policies, procedures, and practices used in such identification or placement…

IDEA Sec. 618(c) Disproportionality

Step 2: Complete Building or District Self-Study

A special education assessment system that reduces bias grows out of a school system that fosters success and promotes equity for all students. Schools are recommended to conduct a district-wide or building self-study to examine how well their education system as a whole supports the education of diverse students. The *School Environment Survey*, which can be seen at the end of this section, was designed for this purpose. It may be completed by staff (licensed and nonlicensed), parents, or students and the results can be compiled and reviewed by building and district teams. Districts that are concerned with disproportionate placement and who wish to conduct a more extensive self-study are recommended to consult *Ethnicity in Special Education: A Self-Study Guide* which was prepared for the Iowa Department of Education (Jeschke, 1996; Reschly, 1996).

Step 3: Complete Staff Self-Study

Because society is diverse, school personnel have a responsibility to learn about the racial, cultural, socioeconomic, and communication diversity of their student body. The *Practitioner Diversity Awareness Scale,* which appears at the end of this section, contains items that assess the knowledge and skills necessary for working with diverse students. The *Practitioner Diversity Awareness Scale* represents professional growth activities that reflect best practices and are intended to provide training suggestions to special educators who work with ethnic, linguistic, and culturally diverse student populations. It is recognized, however, that the development of cultural competence is a lifelong process.

Step 4: Gather Data on Referral and Placement Rates

Schools that are in the process of implementing these assessment guidelines are recommended to review data to determine whether disproportionality exists with regard to special education placement of American Indian and African American students in their districts or buildings. As noted above, IDEA now requires that the annual "December 1" special education child count be reported by race beginning with the 1998-99 school year. In Minnesota, this is accomplished through the Minnesota Automated Reporting Student System (MARSS) which includes data elements pertaining to the race and disability status of individual students. The results of each district's or special education unit's child count are sent to special education directors for verification. Statewide data is aggregated and forwarded to the federal Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). Child count data is also used as part of periodic federal special education monitoring requirements.

In addition to reviewing placement data, schools are recommended to gather data concerning referrals to special education. A format for gathering this data was piloted in the 1996-97 school year by several districts around the state. The result of this effort was the development of the *Referral Data Form*, a form that contains data elements which have been incorporated into MARSS. This form, which can be used by schools to collect data on referrals of diverse student populations, is placed at the end of this section.

Overrepresentation vs. Underrepresentation…

Schools that are concerned with over-representation in special education programs should be wary of pendulum swings to under-representation. Creating systems to gather and review data on referral and placement rates can help districts avoid these trends toward "all or nothing" practices.

Step 5: Evaluate Current Assessment Practices

Another important step is to review current assessment practices and compare them with the procedures recommended in these guidelines. Assessment procedures that affect all disciplines of special education may be reviewed by cross-disciplinary assessment teams:

■ Operating Principles	Chapter 4
■ Prereferral and Referral Review	Chapter 5
■ Planning the Assessment	Chapter 6
■ Eligibility Criteria	Chapter 8

The specific recommendations for domains of assessment found in Chapter 7 may be reviewed by appropriately licensed staff. This review should identify changes that are needed in assessment procedures as well as staff development needs.

A related activity that may be carried out as part of Step 5 is a local review of assessment instruments utilizing the *Test Selection Checklist*. Once appropriate instruments have been identified for the district's unique populations, test review and selection may be repeated periodically as needed as new tests and procedures are developed. A review of assessment procedures is best conducted on a regular cycle, i.e., every three or five years.

Step 6: Develop and Implement Building Level Interventions

Based upon the results of the *School Environment Survey*, the *Practitioner Diversity Awareness Scale* and student referral placement data, schools are recommended to design and implement building-level interventions that support appropriate instruction and referral of American Indian and African American students. As noted previously, the factors listed on the *School Environment Survey* have been identified through research as those which contribute to the success of diverse students in school and help to increase the accuracy of special education placements. Similarly, absence of these characteristics may contribute to students' lack of success and increase the amount of inappropriate referrals and special education placements.

A list of possible interventions can be seen in *Ideas for Building-Level Interventions* which is shown on the following page. These ideas can be used by district and building teams to design and develop activities that will promote increased awareness about diversity issues among those who work with students from diverse student populations.

Ideas for Building-Level Interventions

- Plan activities to raise awareness and acceptance of diversity among staff, students and parents.
- Have a plan for greeting all parents when they enter the school building, posting visual directions that are not language dependent.
- Designate cultural representatives or a diversity contact.
- Gather information regarding school performance of diverse students. Involve parents, students, and community members in identifying factors that contribute to student retention.
- Make efforts to recruit diverse teachers whenever possible. Assist persons of diverse backgrounds who hold non-licensed positions but are interested in becoming licensed teachers by helping them locate teacher training programs.
- Arrange for teachers who have limited experience teaching diverse students to visit other schools or classrooms.
- Help teachers identify and practice a variety of instructional styles. Use funds for summer curricula writing or school-year workshops to develop resource materials that support various learning styles.
- Have teachers take turns observing each other to determine if they have unconscious patterns in how they respond to diverse students.
- Work with diverse students to develop positive communication and conflict resolution skills.
- Reduce class size or teacher-student ratio. This may seem expensive and economically unfeasible, but when students are being referred to special education programs because in part, classroom teachers are overwhelmed by large class sizes, costs are being shifted from one part of the system to another. School teams should study organizational patterns to find creative solutions that will help teachers to share work loads or make adaptations to instruction which can be used by others.
- Work with local business and community groups to identify ways to increase the involvement and participation of persons from diverse backgrounds within the schools.
- Be proactive in purchasing new curricula and library materials that reflect current demographics of community and the country.
- Encourage home visits by teachers and cultural representatives.
- Adapt building or district referral forms to incorporate diversity factors (see Chapter 5).
- Take advantage and learn from opportunities to be in the minority. Hold school meetings at cultural community centers; observe meetings of tribal councils and other community groups; attend cultural events held outside of the school.
- Based upon the number of diverse students enrolled and staffing patterns, schools may wish to identify teams of personnel who will be responsible for assessing American Indian and African American students and provide training to those teams.

The *School Environment Survey* and *Practitioner Diversity Awareness Scale* are intended to be conducted on a periodic basis for the purpose of assessing school improvement initiatives as a result of implementing interventions and professional development activities. Teams may also find the results pertinent in their efforts to identify referral trends. For example, teams may be able to link a particular pattern of referrals to a need for training in a specific building. In this situation, teams have a responsibility to diplomatically recommend building-level interventions that will result in increasing the accuracy of appropriate referrals to special education. Finally, the *School Environment Survey* may be applied to assess the environment for an individual student, where team members can review items to examine such variables as the instructional styles of teachers, involvement of role models, and extent of support of school activities and curriculum which support diversity.

The process of developing expertise in assessing students who are culturally different from the examiner is a mixture of skill-based training and knowledge built upon personal experience working with diverse students. In schools with large enrollments of American Indian or African American students, special education staff would be expected to have the knowledge and skills necessary to appropriately assess students. However, in schools with small populations where special education assessments are rare occurrences, school staff are advised to designate teams that will specialize in assessing diverse students. Members of this team can pursue training and, over time, build the experience necessary to meet the assessment needs of diverse students. Several school districts around Minnesota have implemented such teams at different times; all found them to be very beneficial in building their system for appropriate assessments.

Step 7: Evaluate Results of Building-Level Interventions

Efforts to improve education systems must include periodic analysis and evaluation of results by following the sequence of activities outlined below:

- Conduct performance appraisal of cultural representatives incorporating feedback from parents and students as well as other staff.
- Repeat the *School Environment Survey* on a periodic basis, keeping note of changes in responses.
- Repeat the *Practitioner Diversity Awareness Scale* on a periodic basis to review training priorities.

- Review placement data on a regular basis, asking whether changes in referral and/or placement rates are related to changes in the school environment.
- Gather feedback on staff development events and other building-level interventions.
- Incorporate knowledge and skills related to diversity into staff performance appraisals, including parent and student feedback.

Introduction to the *School Environment Survey*…

The *School Environment Survey* can be used by educators to help determine whether school issues are related to the student's success. Teams should also consider the results from the survey when planning interventions for individual students. For example, the *School Environment Survey* might indicate that there are racial tensions among students or that teachers have little experience in working with African American or American Indian students. If this survey has not been conducted, teams are advised to at least review the questions to identify school environment issues that may negatively affect the schooling experience of students.

School Environment Survey

Name (optional)	Comments .....
Date ..... Position	.....
Agency/School	.....

Instructions for Use: The purpose of this scale is to help you assess your current training needs with regard to the development of knowledge and skills pertinent to the provision of quality services to diverse student populations. Please rate your training needs and professional growth objectives based on the following three criteria:

1) *Very Descriptive*–Checking this category indicates the statement describes the norms and general school environment very well. You generally feel that efforts on behalf of the school to address issues in this area have been successful and you expect that progress will continue in the future.
2) *Somewhat Descriptive*–Checking this category indicates that this is an area in which you feel that school personnel have recognized a problem exists and either a plan has been developed or efforts are currently underway to address the problem through the training of staff or the instruction of students. You might consider this as "a work in progress" in which you feel a positive outcome is considered likely.
3) *Not Descriptive At All*–Checking this category indicates that you feel that a problem exists in this area and you feel that (a) other school personnel may not be aware of it, or (b) others have recognized a problem exists but little or nothing has been done to address it. You generally see this as a priority area in which staff and/or student instructional development efforts are needed in the future.

Indicate how well each of the following describe your school…	Very Descriptive	Somewhat Descriptive	Not Descriptive At All
1 The student population in this building is diverse, but student activities and norms are not dominated by any one race, culture, or socioeconomic group.	☐	☐	☐
2 Staff and students in this school make conscious efforts to welcome people of all backgrounds and abilities.	☐	☐	☐
3 Students who are culturally and linguistically different graduate from high school at the same rate as majority group members.	☐	☐	☐
4 The teaming and professional staff in this building/ district reflects the diversity of the student population.	☐	☐	☐
5 Diverse parents and/or community role models are involved in the school.	☐	☐	☐
6 The school and curriculum support a multicultural environment.	☐	☐	☐
7 Teachers in this school are experienced and equitable in working with students of diverse sociocultural backgrounds.	☐	☐	☐
8 The teachers in this school use a variety of instructional styles to accommodate students with a range of learning styles.	☐	☐	☐
9 Teachers and diverse students interact positively in academic and nonacademic settings.	☐	☐	☐
10 Class size is such that teachers can individualize instruction or try alternative methods of instruction for students experiencing problems.	☐	☐	☐
11 Students of different backgrounds have positive attitudes toward one another and positive relationships with each other.	☐	☐	☐
12 Students of different backgrounds are proportionately represented in special education, gifted education and other school programs.	☐	☐	☐

Introduction to the *Practitioner Diversity Awareness Scale*…

The *Practitioner Diversity Awareness Scale*, which appears on the following page, contains items that assess knowledge and skills for working with diverse students. *The Practitioner Diversity Awareness Scale* represents general principles of professional growth activities that represent best practices and are intended to provide suggestions to special educators in working with students from diverse racial, cultural, communication, and socioeconomic backgrounds. The items included on this scale were adapted from guidelines recommended by the American Psychological Association.

Practitioner Diversity Awareness Scale

Name (optional)	Comments .....
Date ..... Position	.....
Agency/School	.....

Instructions for Use: The purpose of this scale is to help you assess your current training needs with regard to the development of knowledge and skills pertinent to the provision of quality services to diverse student populations. Please rate your training needs and professional growth objectives based on the following three criteria:

1) *High Training Need*–Checking this category indicates that you recognize your knowledge and skills are limited in this area, but you tend to see this as essential to your professional growth. You would suggest that this area should be a priority staff development.
2) *Moderate Training Need*–Checking this category indicates that this is an area in which you have some knowledge of and may have received some training, but feel that additional staff development or experiential opportunities would help supplement the skills you already have. You would *not,* however, consider this to be a high priority training need for yourself.
3) *Low Training Need*–Checking this category indicates that you are generally satisfied with your knowledge and skills in a particular area. This would suggest that you–either on your own or through formal training–have obtained the necessary knowledge and skills which you have been able to apply in your professional practice.

Indicate your training needs by rating the following areas....	High Training Need	Moderate Training Need	Low Training Need
1 Awareness of research about how one's own cultural background can often impact professional practice.	☐	☐	☐
2 The racial, cultural, socioeconomic, and linguistic background of the students that I serve.	☐	☐	☐
3 The manner in which ethnicity, culture, and communication impact learning and behavior.	☐	☐	☐
4 The structure and roles of family members in the student's culture.	☐	☐	☐
5 The indigenous beliefs and practices of the cultures of the wider community of my school.	☐	☐	☐
6 The process of culture change and adaptation in general.	☐	☐	☐
7 How individual students are experiencing cultural change (such as knowledge of the traditional culture, involvement with the traditional culture, and degree of acculturation or assimilation).	☐	☐	☐
8 The language(s) preferred by the student and his/her family.	☐	☐	☐
9 Ways of enhancing communication with diverse students and families.	☐	☐	☐
10 The impact of race and culture, socioeconomic status, and communication differences on school success.	☐	☐	☐
11 The impact of race and culture, socioeconomic status, and communication background on the special education referral and assessment process.	☐	☐	☐
12 Ways of incorporating consideration of student's race and culture, socioeconomic status, and communication background into special education assessment and eligibility determination.	☐	☐	☐

Scale items were adapted from APA's *Guidelines for Providers of Psychological Services to Ethnic Linguistic, and Culturally Diverse Populations* (1993).

Introduction to the *Referral Data Form*…

Documentation by the Office for Civil Rights, as well as focus groups conducted in Minnesota by the Division of Special Education, confirm that referral rates must be studied to help understand and resolve issues of disproportional placements. A proactive examination of referral rates can point to the need for staff development and other system changes to help American Indian and African American students be more successful in school. To achieve this objective, the Division of Special Education has developed the *Referral Data Form*, a form which can be used by schools to report referral information and disposition of referrals of American Indian and African American students. The data elements on this form have been incorporated into the MARSS data system and will be used in the future to study referrals on a statewide basis.

Referral Data Form

Student Information

Name .....

School ..... Grade .....

MARSS# ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Person Completing Form

Name .....

Date ..... Position .....

Agency/School .....

Length of time in district: ☐Less than one year ☐ 1-3 years ☐ 4+ years

Referral Information

1. Origin of Referral (check all that apply):

a. ☐ Parent
b. ☐ Teacher–Subject .....
c. ☐ Counselor
d. ☐ Administrator
e. ☐ Physician
f. ☐ Non-Public
g. ☐ Out-of-District
h. ☐ Out-of-State
i. ☐ Outside Agency
j ☐ Other (specify) .....

2. Reason for Referral (check all that apply):

a. ☐ Developmental Delays (Early Childhood, 3-5)
b. ☐ Intellectual/Cognitive Functioning
c. ☐ Motor Skills
d. ☐ Functional/Self-Help Skills
e. ☐ Academic Performance
f. ☐ Sensory Status (Vision/Hearing)
g. ☐ Emotional, Social and Behavioral Development
h. ☐ Communication
i. ☐ Health/Physical/Medical
j. ☐ Attendance

k. ☐ Other reason for referral: .....

3. If you selected *Academic Performance* from the above, indicate area (check all that apply):

a. ☐ Readiness
b. ☐ Reading
c. ☐ Math
d. ☐ Spelling
e. ☐ Written Language
f. ☐ Test Taking Skills
g. ☐ Organizational Skills
h. ☐ Task Completion

i. ☐ Other Academic Performance reasons: .....

4. If you selected *Emotional, Social, and Behavioral Development* from the above, indicate area (check all that apply):

a. ☐ Mental Health Diagnosis
b. ☐ Non-Compliance
c. ☐ Aggressiveness
d. ☐ Withdrawn
e. ☐ Activity Level
f. ☐ Attention
g. ☐ Peer Relationships

h. ☐ Other emotional and behavioral reasons: .....

5. If you selected *Communication* from the above, indicate area (check all that apply):

a. ☐ Articulation
b. ☐ Voice
c. ☐ Fluency
d. ☐ Oral Expression
e. ☐ Receptive Language
f. ☐ Non-Standard English
g. ☐ Limited English Proficiency
h. ☐ Non English Speaking

i. ☐ Other communication and language reasons: .....

6. If you selected *Attendance* from the above, indicate area (check all that apply):

a. ☐ Tardiness
b. ☐ Frequent Absences
c. ☐ Truancy
d. ☐ Gaps in Enrollment
e. ☐ Erratic Class Attendance

f. ☐ Other attendance related reasons: .....

Results of Referral

7. Indicate results of referral:
a. ☐ Assessed
b. ☐ Not assessed
c. ☐ Assessment in progress
d. ☐ No longer served by district

8. Special Education Placement:
a. ☐Yes b. ☐ No

9. Indicate race of student:
a. ☐ American Indian or Alaskan Native
b. ☐ Asian or Pacific Islander
c. ☐ Hispanic
d. ☐ Black, not of Hispanic origin
e. ☐ White, not of Hispanic origin
f. ☐ Other .....

10. Indicate gender of student:
a. ☐ Male b. ☐ Female

Chapter Four

Operating Principles

The following operating principles are the foundation of these assessment guidelines:

1 Many factors contribute to disproportionate identification and placement in special education. Some factors are related to students and their home environment. Other factors, such as teacher recruitment and preparation, curriculum, instructional styles, lack of emphasis on prereferral interventions, and school climate are related to the general education system.

2 Special education assessment procedures can contribute to disproportionate placement in special education. Traditional assessment processes contribute when they minimize the prereferral process, rely too heavily on scores from standardized tests, do not take a holistic view of the individual student, focus on student weaknesses to the exclusion of strengths, and do not consider other variables that may cause the presenting problem. Standardized tests may have content bias and technical limitations because of their norming samples.

3 It is, however, too simplistic to say that traditional assessment processes including standardized tests are biased and/or unreliable for all students of a given race:

   a. In determining whether a standardized test is appropriate for a given student, we need to consider whether a particular student's life experiences are represented in the content of the instrument and whether he/she is similar to students included in the norming samples.

   b. Standardized tests may have greater validity for students who are more acculturated to the norms of the dominant culture and whose experiences are reflected in the content and norming samples of a given test.

c. Standardized tests may have less validity for students who are members of a racial and cultural minority group and/or who have not been exposed to a wide range of information and life experiences because of economic disadvantage. Such tests may also be less valid for those living in a home where another language or dialect is spoken or whose use of English is influenced by the cross-generational use of another language. Finally, test validity is an issue when students have a known impairment such as deaf/hard of hearing or a diagnosed medical condition

4 When standardized tests have limited validity for American Indian or African American students, educators should use a variety of strategies to reduce bias in the overall assessment process and to ensure that students are accurately identified as having a disability and appropriately placed in special education services.

5 A comprehensive system that is designed to reduce bias in special education assessment begins with an examination of the school system to determine whether it fosters success for diverse students.

6 Prereferral processes including data collection and the implementation of interventions designed to meet academic and sociocultural needs is the starting point for a comprehensive, non-biased assessment.

7 One of the goals of special education assessment should be to gather information that will lead to improved instruction and improved outcomes for the individual student. This includes an examination of the student's strengths.

Chapter Five

Prereferral and Referral Review

The prereferral process gives schools, students and families an opportunity to gather information, develop preventative strategies, and find solutions that will lead to success in the general education program. Prior to making a referral for special education assessment, teams must determine whether there is sufficient evidence of a disability to support a referral or whether it is more likely that the student's difficulties are the result of racial and cultural, communication, socioeconomic or other factors. In determining whether to proceed with a formal referral, the team also needs to consider school-related factors. For example, there may be a mismatch between the student's background knowledge and classroom expectations. The steps and tools outlined below will help teams to gather and consider information about the student as well as about the instructional environment. This can help teams to plan and carry out legally required interventions as part of the prereferral process and help to determine whether a referral for formal assessment is warranted.

While there are differences among school buildings and districts, these guidelines assume that the following practices are part of all prereferral processes:

- Schools engage in collaborative problem solving through Student Support Teams (SST), Teacher Assistance Teams (TAT) or similar groups.

Steps for Conducting Prereferral and Referral Review

Step 1	**Define the problem**
Step 2	**Conduct record review**
Step 3	**Collect relevant background information**
Step 4	**Plan the prereferral interventions**
Step 5	**Implement the interventions**
Step 6	**Evaluate the results of the interventions and make a referral decision**

- Teams contact parents or caretakers to discuss their concerns before making a formal referral for special education assessment.
- Teams gather initial data regarding the student's background and sociocultural factors and implement prereferral interventions prior to making a formal referral.
- Teams verify the nature of the reported concerns through teacher interviews, classroom observations, and screening procedures.
- Teams involve a trained cultural representative to consider the impact of the student's background on performance with the knowledge and agreement of the parents.

Information that is gathered through the prereferral process can be considered as part of the assessment data in the event the student is referred for assessment.

Prereferral Steps

Step 1: Define the Problem

The person who has concerns for the student will define the presenting problem as specifically and objectively as possible.

Step 2: Conduct Record Review

Use the district's prereferral or referral form to review information that is available in existing records such as the cumulative file. Also, refer to other parts of this chapter to review additional items that should be included in prereferral and referral forms to accommodate culturally diverse students.

Step 3: Collect Relevant Background Information

Gather additional background information using the tools described in Table 5.1. The *School Environment Survey* was introduced in Chapter 3, while the other tools are shown at the conclusion of this chapter.

Table 5.1: Prereferral Information Collection Tools

Tool	Purpose
School Environment Survey	To help determine whether school issues are related to the student's success.
Home and Family Interview	To gather information from the family.
Sociocultural Checklist	To summarize information about racial and cultural, communication, socioeconomic and other factors that impact the student.

Sociocultural Guide	To learn about the impact of sociocultural differences and about possible interventions and assessment considerations.

Teams may proceed with planning and implementation of interventions (Steps 3 and 4) while continuing to collect data. As noted in Step 4, teams may begin interventions based upon available information and then make adaptations as new information is gathered.

Step 4: Plan the Prereferral Interventions

Begin to plan and implement interventions based upon information gathered. Interventions should address cultural, academic, and behavioral concerns as well as issues identified in the *Home and Family Interview* and *Sociocultural Checklist*.

Step 5: Implement the Interventions

As interventions are implemented, the team or teacher should observe and record the results. After 2-3 weeks, interventions should be reviewed and revised based on the evaluation and upon any additional information that has been gathered. For most students, a 6-8 week period of prereferral interventions is appropriate. If the student is in a crisis or emergency situation, the team may shorten the intervention period. In cases of acute crisis where the student or others are at risk, or when the parent requests the assessment, prereferral interventions may be waived.

Step 6: Evaluate the Results of the Interventions

Meet with your building support team, including a cultural representative, to determine if the presenting problem has been resolved through the interventions. If the problem continues to exist, complete the referral form and begin the assessment planning process.

Additional Recommendations

Recommendations for Prereferral Forms

Most schools in Minnesota have developed forms for use in the prereferral and referral process. In addition to demographic, health, and academic information that is typically included, prereferral forms should include the following types of information to address the needs of diverse students:

- The student's race and/or cultural background.
- Home language.
- Results of other assessments (large group assessments, classroom assessments, etc.).

- Number of schools previously attended and curriculum or instructional methods at schools previously attended.
- Attendance patterns.
- Previous retentions and reasons for the retentions.
- Previous referrals or placements in supplemental services or special education.

Additional Prereferral Resources

Teams may also wish to use the following tools developed by Dr. Catherine Collier for use with diverse students and available through CrossCultural Developmental Education Services (6869 Northwest Drive, Ferndale, WA 98248-9425). These tools include:

- *Acculturation Quick Screen*
- *Classroom Language Interaction Checklist*
- *Prereferral Review for Diverse Students*

Recommendations for Conducting Family Interviews

Depending on local practices and the individual situation, the *Home and Family Interview* can be used in a variety of ways:

- Conduct the entire interview as part of the prereferral process.
- Conduct some parts of the interview during prereferral and complete the interview as part of the assessment if/when the student is referred.
- Use the interview form as a guide to the types of questions that should be addressed at an initial meeting to discuss concerns.

If the interview is conducted at the prereferral stage, the information may be brought forward and also used as part of the assessment. When possible, it is preferable to meet with the family and conduct the interview in person. The interview should be done by someone who has a relationship with the family or who has the skills to establish a relationship. Conducting interviews or assisting with interviews is an appropriate activity for home-school liaisons or cultural representatives.

The interview can be held in the family's home, at school, or in a neutral location such as a coffee shop or community center. Meeting in a neutral location may help the family feel more comfortable and facilitate communication. If parents are coming to the school, be sure they are welcomed appropriately when they enter the building and are given directions to the interview location. When face-to-face contact is difficult or not possible, conduct the interview via telephone. If the interview form is

mailed to the family, someone who knows the family should contact them first to explain the purpose of the interview and the type of questions that are included. Additional information about working with families can be found in Chapters 9 and 10.

Recommendations about Privacy Issues

Some of the questions on the *Home and Family Interview* and the *Sociocultural Checklist* touch on sensitive areas and may raise privacy concerns. Practitioners should keep in mind that students are referred for special education assessment because they are experiencing severe difficulties. In such situations, concerns over privacy must be balanced with the need for information gathered in a respectful manner. Families and practitioners should also keep in mind that specific details are not needed. The following examples are statements that might be included in an interview or an Assessment Summary Report (ASR).

N. recently moved to the district from X. As an American Indian, N. might feel isolated in our district. Teachers have observed lots of teasing and name-calling.

The student and family have experienced a lot of turmoil over the past 6 months. This has affected N.'s ability to complete homework assignments and to concentrate in class.

N. has been very upset for the past 3 months because of a change in his/her living situation. He/she reports frequent stomachaches and problems sleeping. N. is seeing a private counselor.

N. feels very angry about the family's living situation, which he/she feels is due to racial problems in the community.

Recommendations about Families in Crisis

People of all backgrounds and socioeconomic status can experience crisis. As noted elsewhere, however, American Indian and African American families in Minnesota are disproportionately impacted by poverty and related problems. Problems that children experience in school often mirror the family's situation. "Wrap-around" services and other types of interagency collaboration are important steps in the overall systems change that is needed to support learning for minority students.

About student files…

Some of the information included in the *Home and Family Interview* and *Sociocultural Checklist* is sensitive. As such, it should be placed in files that have limited access, such as the student's special education file, the school social worker's files or the counselor's files rather than in the cumulative file.

If a family is in a severe crisis situation, the team may need to halt the pre-

referral process until the family has achieved some stability with support from community agencies. Proceeding too quickly with a special education referral may exacerbate the situation. In addition, an assessment that is conducted under such circumstances is not likely to yield reliable results.

Introduction to the *Home and Family Interview*…

Schools are strongly recommended to contact families at the prereferral stage to discuss their concerns and to help problem-solve. Schools are required to include parents in assessment/IEP teams and to include parent information in Assessment Summary Reports. The *Home and Family Interview* was developed by the Minnesota Department of Children, Families & Learning for use in assessing students suspected of having a specific learning disability. Because it is very comprehensive of diversity factors as well as academic issues, it is recommended for use when working with American Indian or African American parents whose children have a variety of known or potential disabilities.

Home and Family Interview

Dear Family Member,

Please complete the *Home and Family Interview* so we can learn more about your child. Because this information will be used as part of the assessment process, your ideas and concerns are important in helping to obtain assessment information that accurately reflects your child's skills and abilities.

I. General Information

1. Information about your child…

Name .....

Date of Birth ..... Age .Grade ...

School .....

Parent(s) .....

2. Information about you…

Name .....

Relationship to child .....

Date when completed .....

3. Child currently lives with (check one)…

☐ Parent ☐ Relatives ☐ Foster Parent ☐ Independent/Self

☐ Peers/Friends ☐ Other (describe): .....

4. List all members of the child's family

Name	Age	Relation-ship to Child	Primary Language and Dialect	Currently living with child?
			☐ English ☐ Other	☐ Yes ☐ No
			☐ English ☐ Other	☐ Yes ☐ No
			☐ English ☐ Other	☐ Yes ☐ No
			☐ English ☐ Other	☐ Yes ☐ No
			☐ English ☐ Other	☐ Yes ☐ No
			☐ English ☐ Other	☐ Yes ☐ No
			☐ English ☐ Other	☐ Yes ☐ No
			☐ English ☐ Other	☐ Yes ☐ No
			☐ English ☐ Other	☐ Yes ☐ No

Is anyone else living in the home? If so, please indicate:.....

School Use Only Provide details of the interview below:

Name of Interviewer ..... Interview format (check): ☐ In-home ☐ Telephone

II. Health and Early Development

5. Does your child have any medical, physical, or psychological conditions which can impact learning? If so, please check all that apply.

A. ☐ Vision
B. ☐ Attention deficit
C. ☐ Allergies
D. ☐ Cerebral Palsy
E. ☐ Hearing/hearing loss
F. ☐ Head injury
G. ☐ Diabetes
H. ☐ Sleep disorder
J. ☐ Asthma
K. ☐ Depression
L. ☐ Other
I. ☐ History of ear infections

If you checked any of the categories listed above, including "other," provide a brief explanation about the present status of the condition(s):

6. Does anyone in your family have a history of medical or physical problems? ☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, explain:

7. What was the birth weight of your child ___ lb. oz. Were there any unusual complications during pregnancy and birth? If so, please describe below:

8. Were the developmental stages such as speaking, walking, sitting, etc. for this child within the normal ranges? Yes ☐ No ☐ If no, explain:

III. School and Learning

9. Please rate how you see your child on various learning and behavior characteristics listed below. Place a check in the box that best describes your child, ranging from *Very Much Like My Child* to *Not Like My Child At All*. If you are not sure about an item, just use your best judgement–the purpose of this activity is to help us determine what areas you see as a problem.

My child…	Very much like my child	Somewhat like my child	Not very much like my child	Not like my child at all
A. Thinks that school is im-	☐	☐	☐	☐
B. Spends enough time on	☐	☐	☐	☐
C. Needs help with homework	☐	☐	☐	☐
D. Has difficulty completing	☐	☐	☐	☐
E. Has trouble making and	☐	☐	☐	☐
F. Is someone who willingly	☐	☐	☐	☐
G. Is often hurtful to others	☐	☐	☐	☐
H. Is often hurtful to self	☐	☐	☐	☐
I. Respects the property of oth-	☐	☐	☐	☐
J. Is moody and uncooperative	☐	☐	☐	☐

K. Gets in trouble in the neigh-	☐	☐	☐	☐
L. Is liked by other adults living	☐	☐	☐	☐
M. Cares about doing well in	☐	☐	☐	☐

10. Sometimes, learning problems are temporary and brought on by changes in the life of a child and the family. From the list below, indicate which school related events that may impact learning.

A. ☐ Change of school
B. ☐ Attendance problems
C. ☐ Repeating a grade
D. ☐ School suspension
E. ☐ Negative peer influence
F. ☐ Drug/alcohol abuse
G. ☐ Safety issues at school
H. ☐ Other (explain below)

If you checked one or more items indicated above or "other," please explain:

11. Has anyone in your immediate or extended family had academic or educational problems? If yes, explain:

12. Has your child had any previous placements in a special education program? If yes, explain:

13. Please describe what you have done to help your child with problems at school:

14. Describe some of your child's strengths and weaknesses which school staff should know about that could impact learning within the classroom:

15. Please rate how you see your child on various learning style characteristics listed below. Place a check in the box that best describes your child, ranging from *Good* to *Poor*. If you are not sure about an item, just use your best judgement–the purpose of this activity is to help us determine what areas, if any, you see as a problem.

My child's…	**Good**	**Adequate**	**Poor**	**Not Applicable**
A. Ability to follow two three step directions (S)	☐	☐	☐	☐
B. Remembers (S)	☐	☐	☐	☐
C. Organizational skills (O)	☐	☐	☐	☐
D. Planning skills (O)	☐	☐	☐	☐
E. Understands what he/she reads (A)	☐	☐	☐	☐
F. Understands what he/she sees (A)	☐	☐	☐	☐
G. Understands what he/she hears (A)	☐	☐	☐	☐
H. Learns a new game (A)	☐	☐	☐	☐
I. Recalls events from the school day (R)	☐	☐	☐	☐
J. Recalls details from a special event (R)	☐	☐	☐	☐
K. Reads aloud (R)	☐	☐	☐	☐
L. Carries on a conversation (E)	☐	☐	☐	☐

M. Handwrites well(E)	☐	☐	☐	☐
N. Problem solves (M)	☐	☐	☐	☐
O. Explains something he/she has learned (M)	☐	☐	☐	☐
P. Assembles or repairs things (M)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Q. Artistic ability (M)	☐	☐	☐	☐
R. Knows basic math facts (R)	☐	☐	☐	☐

S = Storage, O = Organization, A = Acquisition, R = Retrieval, E = Expression, M = Manipulation of Information

IV. Family and Cultural Issues

16. Quite often, childhood learning problems are temporary, brought on by changes in the life of a child and the family. From the list below, indicate which events have occurred in your family.

Family related events…

A. ☐ Divorce/separation
E. ☐ Death in family
I. ☐ Job loss/layoff
M. ☐ Drugs/alcohol abuse
Q. ☐ Family member in treatment

B. ☐ Parent started working
F. ☐ New person in family
J. ☐ Neighborhood concerns
N. ☐ Law/legal problems
R. ☐ Child trauma/abuse

C. ☐ Sibling leaving home
G. ☐ Illness in family
K. ☐ Housing concerns
O. ☐ Foster home placement
S. ☐ Catastrophic event in family (e.g., fire, flood)

D. ☐ Sibling getting married
H. ☐ Clothing concerns
L. ☐ Homelessness
P. ☐ Residential placement
T. ☐ Other (explain below)

If you checked one or more items indicated above or "other," please explain:

17. As you think about your family's cultural background and heritage (language, traditions), what would you like school staff to know about your child that might make a difference in the assessment of learning and/or behavior? Explain below:

18. Do you feel your child's school problem(s) could be the result of a cultural or racial misunderstanding. If so, please explain:

19. Do you feel that your child's problem(s) in school could be related to language barriers? If so, explain below:

20. What sort of disciplinary strategies do you use with your child?

21. Describe how your family gets along and completes tasks.

22. Describe family routines when your child has to do homework. Specifically address how long your child spends on homework and who provides help and support whenever it is needed.

Thank you very much for completing this survey. Please return it to the person and address below:

Return to: ..... Return by Date: .....

Introduction to the *Sociocultural Checklist* and *Guide*…

The *Sociocultural Checklist* is designed to summarize information that is known about diversity factors including race and culture, communication, socioeconomic, and other factors, such as life experiences and family issues. The checklist can be completed utilizing information that is gathered through a prereferral form, the *Home and Family Interview*, record review and other sources. The checklist itself is not meant to be used as a family interview device.

In Minnesota, many American Indian and African American families are also affected by socioeconomic problems and language differences. Although many families and students living in difficult circumstances survive and thrive, research has shown that socioeconomic factors can contribute to a lack of success in school. When students are experiencing problems in school, these factors should be investigated and the information used in planning prereferral interventions. The checklist is also designed to assist schools in documenting that they systematically gathered information and ruled out race and culture, communication, socioeconomic and other diversity factors as the primary cause of a student's academic difficulties. *The Sociocultural Checklist* is accompanied by the *Sociocultural Guide*. The guide discusses how diversity factors affect children in school and can be used as a resource in planning interventions. The *Sociocultural Guide* also suggests assessment accommodations and thus also serves as a tool in the assessment process as well.

Sociocultural Checklist

1. Student Informatio n	2. Respondent Information
Name (optional)	Name .....
Date of Birth ..... Age ..Grade	Date ..... Position .....
School	Agency/School .....

Instructions for Use: Using your knowledge of this student obtained through observations, record review and parent contacts, complete the Sociocultural Checklist by placing a check by **all statements that apply.** When completed, refer to the *Sociocultural Guide* to review pertinent information and/or research with regard to each statement checked.

A. Racial/Cultural Factors

- ☐ 1 The student is racially different from the majority of peers and staff in this school.
- ☐ 2 The student's family participates regularly in events or social groups within their race/cultural group and/or the family is an enrolled member of a recognized American Indian tribe.
- ☐ 3 The student seldom interacts with peers or staff of other racial/cultural backgrounds or has poor relations with peers and staff of other racial/cultural backgrounds.
- ☐ 4 The student's culture values support of family or group over individual effort.
- ☐ 5 The student recently moved from another town, city, or state.
- ☐ 6 The student and his/her family recently moved from another area but retains behavior or survival strategies that are not adapted to the current environment.

B. Communication Factors

- ☐ 7 There is a language, dialect, or communication style other than standard English spoken by family members in the student's home.
- ☐ 8 The student has a language, dialect or communication style other than standard English.

C. Socioeconomic Factors

- ☐ 9 The student is currently homeless or lacks adequate clothing, housing, and/or nutrition
- ☐ 10 The student's parents or caregivers do not have a high school diploma or GED.

D. Resiliency Factors

- ☐ 11 The student has special strengths, talents, or interests. Describe: .....
- ☐ 12 The student is involved in school and/or community activities. Describe: .....
- ☐ 13 The student has a mentor or a positive adult role model.
- ☐ 14 The family has a support network. Describe: .....

E. Other Factors

- ☐ 15 The student's family is very mobile (has moved more than once during the current school year or has a pattern of moving at least once a year over several years).

- ☐ 16 The student's previous education has been sporadic, limited, or very different from the current school.
- ☐ 17 The student's parents or caregivers demonstrate a negative history or attitude toward school.
- ☐ 18 The student's primary caregiver has changed within the last year.
- ☐ 19 The student has recently experienced a crisis or trauma.
- ☐ 20 The student expresses or displays a sense of stress, anxiety, isolation, or alienation.

Sociocultural Guide

A. Race/Cultural Factors

1. The student is racially different from the majority of peers and staff in this school.

Research in other states suggests that there is a correlation between minority status and academic success, special referral and placement. Minority students enrolled in schools where students and staff are predominantly white are more likely to be referred to special education than are students enrolled in schools with diverse populations. A student in this situation may feel a great deal of stress and isolation that affects their classroom performance as well as their performance on special education assessments.

2. The student's family participates regularly in events or social groups within their race/cultural group and/or the family is an enrolled member of a recognized American Indian tribe.

Tribal enrollment and participation in community cultural events are indicators of how closely the family identifies with their cultural or racial group. Among American Indians, families who participate in traditional spiritual practices, pow-wows or other events are more likely to have values or characteristics that are traditional to American Indian people. Student and family orientation to traditional beliefs should be considered when determining whether published norms are adequate and when interpreting assessment results. The student's and family's participation in cultural events may also demonstrate their access to a support system. This information can also be useful in planning instruction and interventions.

3. The student seldom interacts with peers or staff of other racial/cultural backgrounds or has poor relations with peers and staff or other racial/cultural backgrounds.

The team should investigate the reason for the lack of interaction when interviewing the student and family to determine whether there are racial issues that are affecting the student's behavior or academic performance. Also, if the student prefers to interact with members of his/her own cultural group and/or is antagonistic toward others, assessors of different races may need to make extra efforts to establish the rapport needed to carry out a comprehensive assessment.

4. The student's culture values support of family or group over individual effort.

Students from some cultural backgrounds are uncomfortable when expected to perform individually in class or to compete with classmates. One-on-one assessments may also be uncomfortable for students whose families hold traditional values that encourage group cohesion and discourage individual performance or displays of skills. Classroom teachers

should provide a mix of small group opportunities if they are concerned that some children are reluctant to compete individually. In an assessment, staff should explain the purpose of the individual assessment and take time to get to know the student and develop rapport (perhaps assess over more than one session if the student appears very uncomfortable). In addition, assessors should plan ways to gather pertinent information by observing the student in a group setting with peers of a similar racial/cultural background as well as individually.

5. The student recently moved from another town, city or state (specify where).

The academic and behavioral problems the student is encountering may be the by-product of adjusting to a new environment. Check to see how long the student has been enrolled and whether assistance was provided to help the student adapt. When interviewing the parents and the student, try to learn as much as possible about the academic and behavioral norms in the previous schools and to determine if the student experienced similar difficulties. Also ask about the reason for the move and whether the student came voluntarily or involuntarily.

6. The student and his/her family recently moved from another area but retain behavior or survival strategies that are not adapted to the current environment.

Families who have moved from stressful environments may also have developed survival strategies that are no longer needed in their current situation. Families may not be aware of the behavioral norms of their current situation or of how others perceive their actions. Their prior experiences may impact their child-rearing or discipline strategies in ways that negatively impact their child's ability to succeed in school. For example, a family who previously lived in a dangerous neighborhood may not allow their children to play outside even after they move to a small town that is generally safe. This can cause problems if teachers expect students to gather wild plants for a science project, interview neighbors for social studies, or similar activities. The mismatch between the parent's expectations and the schools can also create emotional stress and confusion for the child. When interviewing the family, the team should ask about their previous experiences.

Students who have moved from stressful environments may also have developed survival strategies that are no longer needed in their current situation. Students may exhibit behavior problems in school that are rooted in their prior experiences (examples, hoarding food or school supplies, startling at loud noises, hypervigilence, unwillingness to take turns). Students may not be aware of the behavioral norms of their current situation or of how others perceive their actions. As a first step, all students and staff should be aware of how behavior and social interactions differ in different environments. Students in this situation are in need of intervention

to explain the written and unwritten rules of behavior and social interaction in order to help them adjust. The ability to learn and to adapt to new environments is an attribute of intelligence and good mental health. Failure to adapt despite appropriate interventions is a possible indicator of a disability. Assessors should work with the family to determine whether the student's behavior can be attributed to the past environment and whether the student has responded to efforts to help adjust to the new environment.

B. Communication Factors

7. There is language, dialect or communication style other than Standard English spoken by family members in the student's home.

Even though the student appears to be English-speaking, the use of another language by caretakers can affect the student's development of English. Further information about language use and influences in the home should be gathered using the communications section of the family interview if not already done. The family's use of another language or dialect may also inhibit their ability to provide support for the student's education through reading, homework help, and so forth.

8. The student has a language, dialect or communication style other than Standard English.

The student's use of another language, dialect or communication style may also inhibit academic success. In some situations, communication differences may lead to actual or perceived behavior problems. For example, both American Indian and African American educators have reported that the misinterpretation of nonverbal communication style sometimes causes students to be labeled as having behavior problems. Most educators of all races agree that Standard English is needed for success in school and that students may need formal, discrete instruction in language. Speech/language clinicians or other team members should review the information on linguistic diversity to determine whether verbal and nonverbal communication patterns exhibited by the student are typical of nonstandard English users. Team members may need to accept alternate (dialectic) responses to verbal tasks or to emphasize nonverbal tasks.

C. Socioeconomic Factors

9. The student is currently homeless or lacks adequate clothing, housing and/or nutrition.

When reviewing information and interpreting test results, the team must consider whether the student's difficulties are attributable to lack of basic necessities. For example, a student who is homeless or living in extremely crowded conditions may not complete homework or may lose textbooks and materials. Lack of adequate housing may also be indicative of other social/emotional, physical health, and nutritional problems. A person who is concerned with basic survival needs may not be able to develop at

other levels and may not have the ability or motivation to master academic tasks. The team should also consider whether the student's lack of basic necessities is a long-term or a short-term situation and if it is an indicator of long-term, generational poverty. There must be clear evidence of the existence of a disability and the need for special education services in order to rule this out as an exclusionary factor.

10. The student's parents or caregivers do not have a high school diploma or GED.

Parents who have not finished high school or obtained a GED are more likely to live in poverty. They also may not be able to provide the types of support for education that is expected by the school, thus minimizing the student's chances of success in the school environment. They may not have been able to provide assistance with homework or other types of help that the classroom teacher expects. In interpreting the student's academic performance, team members should consider whether the parent's limited education has impacted the child.

D. Resiliency Factors

Items 11–14 combined: The student has special strengths, talents, or interests; the student is involved in school and/or community activities; the student has a mentor or a positive adult role model; the family has a support network.

Items 11-14 pertain to student strengths or resiliency factors. Knowledge of strengths, talents, involvement in the community activities can be the key in identifying interventions of interest to the student or starting a pattern of success. Likewise, an adult mentor may be the key person in resolving the student's difficulties in school. The family's support network can also be involved in helping the school and the child. In assessments, information about these areas of strengths can be compared with performance on assessment instruments to compile a balanced picture of the student's abilities. Knowledge of special interests can also help examiners establish rapport and enhance assessment performance. Adult mentors may have information to contribute to the assessment process and may even be included in the IEP team with parent consent.

E. Other Factors

15. The student's family is very mobile (has moved more than once during the current school year or has a pattern of moving at least once a year over several years).

Frequent moves may be indicative of a family that is experiencing poverty and stress. Frequent moves also interrupt schooling. The student's difficulties may be the by-product of an inconsistent education, rather than evidence of a disability. Assessors should look for inconsistent patterns of knowledge and achievement when evaluating students. Family interventions may be needed in order to encourage more stability in the child's

education.

16. The student's previous education has been sporadic, limited or very different from the current school.

See item 15 also. The student's current difficulties may be the result of lack of exposure or exposure to vastly different curriculum or instructional methods. Diagnostic teaching as well as interviews with parents and the student can help to determine the exact nature of previous education and to identify gaps in instruction. In an assessment, staff should use testing of limits procedures as well as "test/teach/test" processes to better ascertain the student's ability to learn given consistent instruction.

17. The student's parents or caregivers demonstrate a negative history or attitude toward school.

If parents have had negative experiences during their own schooling, their attitudes may carry over and affect their children. Their children may feel that they have no chance of success or that they cannot have positive relationships with teacher or peers. This information should be considered when analyzing classroom performance and interpreting assessment results. Parents' past experiences with school may also affect how they interact with special education staff and may even limit the information they provide as part of an assessment. Schools need to make every effort to establish trust and to obtain complete and accurate information from parents.

18. The student's primary caregiver has changed within the last year.

A change in a student's family situation will create stress. The team should consider whether this is related to the presenting problems and whether interventions outside of special education (such as counseling) would be appropriate. For actual assessments, the current caretaker may not know the student well enough to provide significant information to the team. Staff may need to gather information from other sources who know the child such as other relatives, older siblings, previous caregivers, etc.

19. The student has recently experienced a crisis or trauma.

Staff should consider whether the crisis or trauma is related to the presenting problem and whether interventions outside of special education would be appropriate. The nature and duration of the crisis and the student's response should also be considered (is the student experiencing a short-term adjustment or long-term, chronic adjustment problems). The severity of the crisis may also inhibit the student's performance on special education assessment procedures, limiting the validity of results.

20. The student expresses or displays a sense of stress, anxiety, isolation, or alienation.

The team should consider whether the student's stress, anxiety, isolation

and alienation are related to race and cultural issues, poverty or language differences or by the process of adapting to a new culture. Staff should determine whether these feelings persist across all settings in school or only in certain settings or subjects. It is also important to gather information from the student and the home to determine whether the lack of confidence impacts the student outside of school.

Chapter Six

Planning the Assessment

Introduction

The domains of intellectual functioning, social/emotional functioning, achievement, communication, and adaptive behavior are the focus of this section. It is believed that performance in these areas is more variable and more readily influenced by racial and cultural, linguistic and/or socio-economic factors than are such domains as vision, hearing, or motor skills.

In all assessments, examiners have a professional responsibility to follow the highest level of practice for their professions. Following recommended best practices is a major step toward assuring fair and equitable assessments of American Indian and African American students. Examiners may notice that some of the specific recommendations contained in these guidelines do not differ markedly from professional best practice guidelines. Assessments should be planned, conducted, and the results interpreted by licensed, trained, and skilled professionals with assistance, when appropriate, from a cultural representative.

Because of the fundamental importance of communication skills in all areas of assessment, the team is recommended to review pertinent information regarding communication diversity contained in these guidelines even when the student has not been referred for a speech/language evaluation. Subtle differences in language and communication style may impact the student's performance when assessed in other domains. If pre-referral information indicates that the student is impacted by language differences, the team is recommended to carry out at least Elements 1 and 2 of the Communication Domain (see Chapter 7).

Tools for Planning the Assessment

The tools and strategies listed below can be used for planning the assessment:

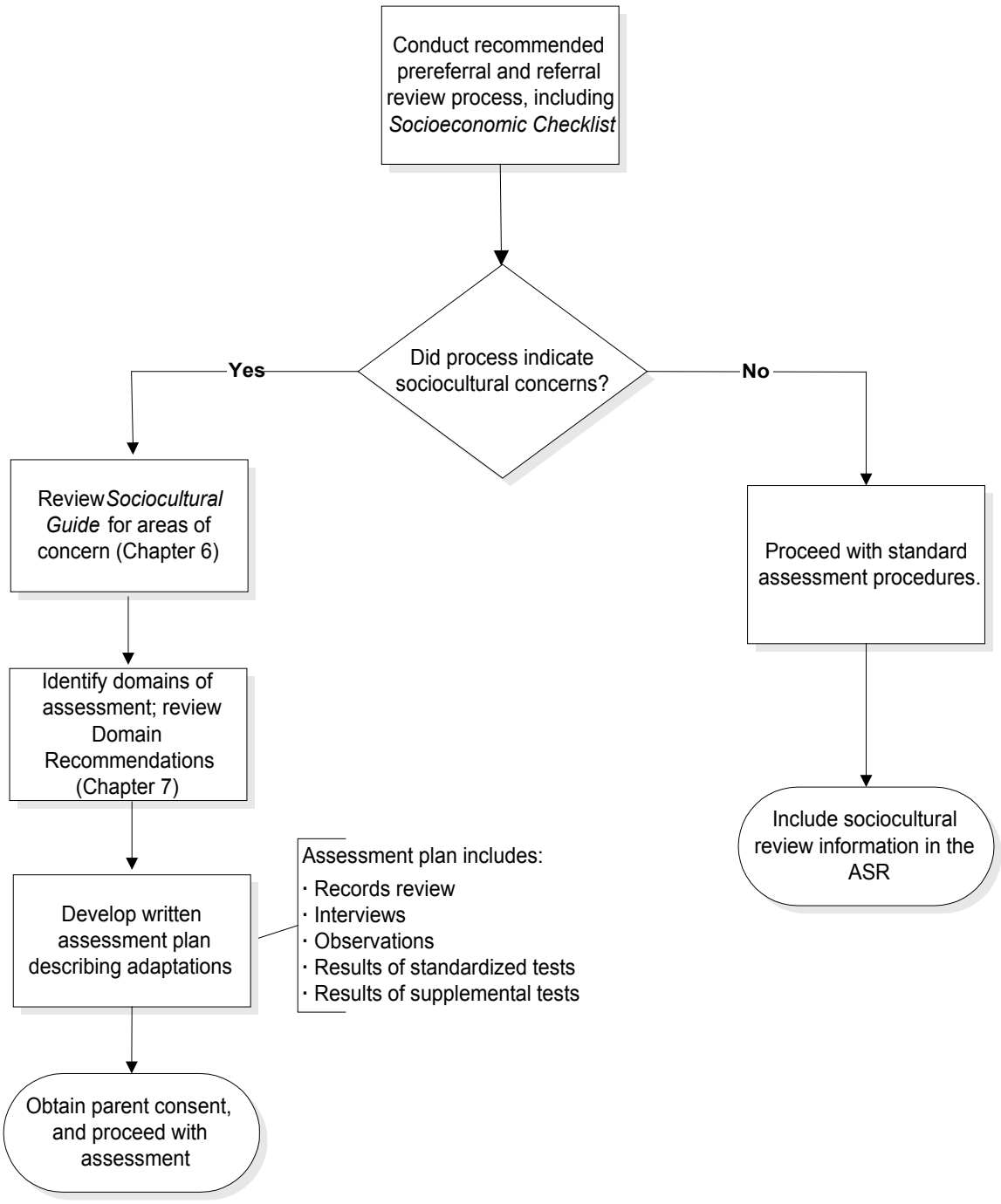
■ *Sociocultural Checklist* and *Sociocultural Guide*	Chapter 5
■ *Test Selection Checklist*	Chapter 6
■ Observation Guidelines	Chapter 6
■ Recommendations outlined in Domains of Assessment	Chapter 7

■ Testing-of-Limits Procedure	Appendix B

Assessment Planning Flowchart

Once the decision has been made to assess, the team needs to determine if the student's background and life experiences are such that standard assessment practices may be followed, or if assessment practices need to be adapted and/or supplemented.

Figure 6.1: Assessment Planning Flowchart



As shown in Figure 6.1, the Assessment Planning Flowchart on the previous page, the team may proceed with standard assessment procedures for students who are not affected by diversity factors as identified in the *Sociocultural Checklist*. If the student is impacted by diversity factors, the team should proceed with assessment planning as outlined below.

Assessment Planning

1. Contact parents and invite them to attend the assessment planning meeting.

2. Highlight items on the *Sociocultural Checklist* that may relate to the presenting problem and indicate where additional information is needed.

3. Review the *Sociocultural Guide* for items marked. Make notes of recommended assessment adaptations related to diversity factors.

4. Identify domains of assessment based upon referral information, the results of prereferral interventions, and the student's presenting problem.

5. Review recommendations for the Domains of Assessment.

6. Plan the assessment for each domain, incorporating recommended assessment adaptations from the *Sociocultural Guide*.

7. Review the overall plan to be certain that the following elements are included and that information will be gathered from multiple sources, including parents, teachers, a cultural representative, family members, and others as the situation warrants:

   - Review of student background information
   - Interviews
   - Observations
   - Standardized tests
   - Supplemental procedures

8. Complete the written assessment plan, marking the correct box on the form to indicate that the student is affected by racial and cultural, communication, socioeconomic, or other factors and describe any adaptations that will be made to traditional assessment procedures.

9. Obtain consent from the parents for the assessment. Provide an

explanation of test adaptations if needed.

A basic review of existing records containing background information should already have been completed as part of the prereferral process. As new staff becomes involved in the assessment, they should review this information to become familiar with the student. Specific lists of items to check in records are included in the domain-specific recommendations in Chapter 7. If important information is missing from existing records, it should be gathered as part of the assessment planning process. Prior to conducting a formal assessment, the team should review its inventory of tests and measures to determine its fitness for the diverse populations of students being served. For example, team members will want to be sure that they are using standardized tests in which the normative population is clearly stated and which describes performance across racial and cultural, communication, or socioeconomic groups. The *Test Selection Checklist*, which appears at the end of this section, was designed to identify suitable assessment instruments that can be used with diverse student groups. The checklist can evaluate the status of current instruments being used as well as those which are being considered for use in the future.

As noted previously, an in-depth parent interview should be completed if not already done so as part of the prereferral process. Depending on the family structure and the nature of the student's presenting problem, it may also be appropriate to interview extended family or community members. In addition, the referring teacher and other teachers should also be interviewed as part of the formal assessment. Further recommendations regarding interviews are included in Chapters 5, 9, and 10.

Observation Guidelines

Educators should review the following guidelines as part of their observation activities:

- When appropriate, observations should be done by the cultural representative as well as by other team members.
- Observe in more than one setting, both academic and nonacademic.
- Use formal structured observation instruments.
- Compare the student with peers of the same race and culture, as well as with the whole group.
- Compare the student with other students identified by teacher as typical and successful.
- Observe classroom expectations for behavior and task management.

- Observe how the student responds to classroom expectations.
- Observe how the teacher responds to the student in question and to other students exhibiting the same behavior(s).
- Observe minimal performance levels for class.
- Observe the communication and academic demands of the classroom relative to the student's prior experiences and skills.
- Observe for functional skills.
- Observe for other items identified as concerns in the *Sociocultural Checklist*.

Interview Guidelines

The following recommendations for conducting effective interviews with students and families are drawn from *Clinical and Forensic Interviewing of Children and Families* by Jerome M. Sattler (1998), a resource which provides more detailed suggestions for each of these steps.

- Learn about the interviewees' culture.
- Learn about the interviewees' language.
- Establish rapport; address family members by their proper names.
- Identify stereotypes (held by interviewer).
- Promote clear communication; avoid terms with double meanings or ambiguous terms.
- Identify family needs.
- Identify family's attitudes toward health, illness and disabilities.
- Recognize the family's degree of acculturation.
- Accept the interviewee's perspective.

Sattler also warns of the following pitfalls of cross-cultural interviews:

- Don't display patronizing attitudes or fail to give value to the interviewee's culture.
- On the other hand, don't be obsessed with the interviewee's culture.
- Don't be in too much of a hurry to get to the point; this may be viewed as rude.
- Don't view indirect communication as evasion.
- Don't assume that interviewer who is a member of one minority cultural group will have automatic rapport with members of other minority groups.
- Interviewers who are members of the same group as the interviewee may have the best ability to establish rapport and

obtain valid information. On the other hand, they need to "walk a fine line between over-identification and objectivity."

- Preoccupation with ethnic differences may lead interviewees to give guarded or distorted responses.
- Preoccupation with ethnic differences may lead interviewers to feel guarded, defensive, and reluctant to probe responses.

Sattler concludes "Interviewers usually will be effective when they are tolerant and accepting of interviewees, despite value differences. Your goal is to establish a professional relationship characterized by trust and acceptance."

Introduction to the *Test Selection Checklist*…

The *Test Selection Checklist* can be used to gauge the appropriateness of standardized instruments for individual students. If there are questions regarding the appropriateness of items for diverse students, consult with a cultural representative. In districts with large numbers of diverse students, practitioners are recommended to utilize this checklist on a periodic basis to review all instruments in current use, thus generating a list of recommended instruments for American Indian and African American students in the district. Practitioners are also recommended to utilize this checklist when selecting new instruments for purchase.

Minnesota Department of Education

Test Selection Checklist

Name	Instrument .....
Date ..... Position	Publication Date .....
Agency/School	Agency/School .....

Instructions for Use: The following checklist should be used to gauge the appropriateness of standardized instruments for individual students. If there are questions regarding the appropriateness of items for diverse students, consult with a cultural representative. In districts with large numbers of diverse students, practitioners are recommended to utilize this checklist on a periodic basis to review all instruments in current use, thus generating a list of recommended instruments for American Indian and African American students in the district. Practitioners are also recommended to utilize this checklist when selecting new instruments for purchase.

Indicate the status of this instrument based on the following items...	Characteristic of this Instrument	Not a Characteristic of this Instrument	Need More Information
1 The specific purposes of this instrument are clearly defined.	☐	☐	☐
2 The instrument has been validated for the purposes for which it was designed.	☐	☐	☐
3 The limitations of the instrument are described in the manual.	☐	☐	☐
4 This instrument is the most current edition which includes the most recent normative sample.	☐	☐	☐
5 The test manual describes differences in test performance across, racial, cultural, linguistic, or socioeconomic groups.	☐	☐	☐
6 An item-by-item analysis has been made of the instrument from the framework of cultural and communication characteristics of diverse cultural groups.	☐	☐	☐
7 The instrument does not rely on vocabulary or visual materials that are culturally-specific, regional, colloquial, or archaic.	☐	☐	☐
8 The instrument does not rely on receptive and expressive standard English to measure nonlanguage abilities.	☐	☐	☐
9 An equivalent form of this test is available in another language.	☐	☐	☐
10 The instrument does not penalize students with physical or sensory disabilities.	☐	☐	☐
11 The norms for this instrument were developed within the last ten years.	☐	☐	☐
12 The normative sample characteristics reflect the general characteristics of students who will be administered this instrument	☐	☐	☐
13 The instrument takes differences in cultural values and adaptive behaviors into account.	☐	☐	☐
14 The instrument clearly describes expected demands of students (e.g., reading level, response type, test-taking behaviors).	☐	☐	☐

5 The instrument clearly describes the response type expected of students (e.g., oral, paper, and pencil). ☐ ☐ ☐

Chapter Seven

Domains of Assessment

Achievement Domain

Introduction

In *Assessing Minority Students with Learning and Behavioral Problems*, Collier (1988) suggests that bias in standardized instruments occurs for the following reasons:

- experiential background
- socioeconomic status
- family history
- cultural background
- sociolinguistic background
- sex

Almost all referrals for special education assessment result in the use of standardized tests in academic areas. In fact, special education professionals indicate that academic problems are the usual reason for referral (Minnesota Referral Study, 1997). Also, Minnesota eligibility criteria for most disability areas requires the assessment of academic performance using standardized tests.

The purpose of assessing a child's academic functioning is to determine the degree to which the suspected disability impairs a student's ability to function in school and to provide information for educational programming. Other information gathered from performance-based measures, diagnostic tests, observations and other sources are required to corroborate findings on standardized instruments. If a disability does not affect academic or educational performance, then a child is not eligible for special education and related services under Minnesota Rule.

Since reasons for a student's low performance on a standardized test vary, it is important to verify scores reported on standardized tests with informal and/or performance- based measures of achievement. It is also important to determine the cultural bias of the instruments, both standardized and informal, used to assess achievement. Bias may also occur in informal measures of achievement. As a consequence, it is important for each professional conducting assessments to complete a self-test for cultural awareness such as the *Practitioner Diversity Awareness Scale* found in

Chapter 3 to make certain that assessment results do not reflect the biases of the assessor.

Bias should be checked for all standardized assessments that are used in special education, particularly in achievement areas where most assessments are likely to occur; these include:

- basic reading skills
- reading comprehension
- basic math skills
- math application/reasoning
- written expression
- oral expression
- listening comprehension

Process

Assessment Procedures

Standardized individually administered achievement tests must be administered by a licensed and trained professional who is knowledgeable about the suspected disability area and follows professional practices regarding test selection, validity, and reliability for American Indian and African American students. In addition to considering a test's technical validity and reliability, evaluators should also keep in mind how individual students might respond to the format of various achievement tests. For example, the "Cloze" method or other similar strategies may not be appropriate for non-standard English speakers as measures of reading comprehension. In another situation, a student may be reluctant to read aloud thus making it difficult to accurately assess reading fluency. These situations may be related to the student's cultural background rather than the actual achievement level of the student. It is important for the evaluator to not make the assumption that tests are necessarily culturally fair.

In some cases, a "testing-of-limits" procedure can be used to gain additional information about a student's skills and abilities. This technique, which is described in detail in Appendix B, should only be used by very skilled and trained evaluators. It is important for assessors to be mindful that any alterations to the standard test format or directions invalidate the testing conditions and must be noted in the Assessment Summary Report. The derived scores are no longer valid but may nonetheless provide the team with valuable qualitative data that might better help to understand the student's skills and abilities under differing conditions. The testing-of-limits

scores may not be used to calculate the severe discrepancy for specific learning disability eligibility or for meeting standard deviation requirements in other disability areas.

Data on student achievement must also be gathered from sources other than standardized tests. Anecdotal information from parents and general education teachers, diagnostic, curriculum, and other performance based measures, is frequently helpful and also may be used to develop IEP goals and objectives. Following recommended procedures for gathering supplemental data is just as important as following the administration procedures used for standardized instruments.

Also, when interpreting achievement data about any student, including American Indian or African American students, special attention needs to be paid to the student's opportunity to learn. If the student has had a limited opportunity to learn, the referral for special education assessment may not be appropriate and academic interventions may need to be developed and implemented.

The procedures used to reduce bias in the assessment of achievement are similar to those used when assessing cognitive ability. The following elements should be included in a comprehensive assessment:

Elements for Assessing Achievement	
Element 1	**Review the presenting problem**
Element 2	**Conduct record review**
Element 3	**Conduct observation(s)**
Element 4	**Conduct standardized assessment**
Element 5	**Gather data from other sources**
Element 6	**Interpret data**

Element 1: Review the Presenting Problem

It is important to carefully describe the academic problem to determine the direction of the assessment. A statement such as "Does not finish assignments" is not helpful since there may be many causes for such behav-

ior, some of which may be related to the cultural background of the student. Carefully describe the area of academic concern (e.g. reading comprehension, written expression, oral language) and the situation in which the problem occurs to define the parameters of the assessment. Evaluators are recommended to analyze the influence of diversity factors on the performance of the student using the *Sociocultural Checklist* and other information gathered during the prereferral process.

Element 2: Conduct Record Review

Make certain there is documentation of the schooling history including number of schools attended, grades, success or problem areas, involvement in special education or remedial programs, changes in home and family situation, or health conditions that may impact achievement in school.

Element 3: Conduct Observation(s)

Make certain that the student is being compared to a group of culturally similar peers as well as a group of culturally dissimilar peers when observing classroom performance. Use the direct and systematic observation techniques outlined in Chapter 6.

Element 4: Conduct Standardized Assessment

The evaluator should identify broad academic areas that must be assessed based upon the review of the student's presenting problems. In most cases, the evaluator will begin with one or more standardized instruments to identify broad areas of strengths and weaknesses and then assess further with additional supplemental procedures and tests. It may be necessary to use more than one instrument to target areas of functioning when broad based instruments do not adequately address the learning styles or cultural norms of American Indian or African American students.

It is recommended that the *Test Selection Checklist* be used to identify appropriate instruments for an American Indian or African American student. The evaluator should choose tests carefully on the basis of the relative advantages of using an instrument (access, strength of norms, validity, etc.) while being mindful of the limitations of the test (format, timing, etc.). If necessary, very skilled evaluators may also use the "testing-of-limits" procedures described in Appendix B. As previously indicated, assessment adaptations identified by the *Sociocultural Checklist* should be used, being careful to note these adaptations on the Assessment Summary Report.

According to Minnesota Rule, tests must be administered by trained and licensed personnel. In most cases this will involve a specific learning disabilities teacher, although the assessment of oral expression and

Table 7.1 Recommended Achievement Tests

Test	Skills Assessed	Publisher
Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement, Comprehensive Version (KTEA)	Mathematics, Reading	American Guidance Services
Wechsler Individual Achievement Test (WIAT)	Reading, Mathematics, Language, Writing	Psychological Corporation
Woodcock-Johnson-Revised, Part 2, Tests of Achievement (WJ-R)	Reading, Mathematics, Written Language	Riverside Publishing
Oral and Written Language Skills (OWLS)	Oral Expression, Listening Comprehension	American Guidance Service
Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamental 3 (CELF 3) (usually administered by a speech/ language pathologist)	Expressive Language, Receptive Language	Psychological Corporation

listening comprehension will usually involve the services of a speech and language pathologist. The instruments shown in Table 7.1are recommended by the SLD Assessment Committee. In all cases, evaluators should administer the most recent version of the instrument. Reviews of each of these instruments are included in the latest editions of Salvia & Ysseldyke's *Assessment in Remedial and Special Education*, and Sattler's *Assessment of Children's Intelligence and Special Abilities* and in other references.

Element 5: Gather Data from Other Sources

Gather supporting data using one or more of the recommended supplemental techniques to verify findings from standardized tests. It is important to note that some eligibility criteria require achievement information from multiple sources. For example, achievement data from sources other than standardized test scores must be collected in an SLD or MMI assessment.

Diagnostic tests and diagnostic inventories are very useful in pinpointing a student's specific academic problem. Some of these instruments, however, do not include American Indian or African American students in their norming populations; still other instruments are not normed at all. However, instruments such as the *Woodcock Reading Mastery Test*, the *Key Math Test* and others are very useful in verifying the results of broad-based stan-

dardized achievement tests. Many other supplemental techniques may also be used to verify findings.

The Evaluation Assistance Center of Georgetown University developed the information included in Table 7.2 to help education staff gain a greater awareness of various assessment techniques which can be used to supplement information obtained from standardized tests and other more traditional forms of assessment.

A note on group tests…

For group tests it is important to note that group administered achievement tests including Minnesota Basic Standards Requirements Testing, do not have the sensitivity and are not intended to be adequate either for specific eligibility criteria or for IEP writing.

Element 6: Interpret Data

As with all assessments, an interpretation of the results must include a synthesis of information obtained from record review, interviews, observations, standardized tests, diagnostic and informal tests, and information about the student's background. All test protocols should be analyzed to identify specific academic problems and patterns of response. Data from different sources should then be compared to determine if a consistent level of achievement is demonstrated.

Table 7.2: Supplemental Assessment Techniques

Technique	Features
Teacher Ratings/Checklists	– Allow information to be integrated – Are compatible with whole language – Can be adapted for classroom needs – Focus assessment on critical skills – Are both process and product oriented – Help monitor progress without overtesting
Student Self-Ratings	– Provide affective information – Can be used for both assessment and instruction – Provide information on student perception of learning and instruction – Encourage student awareness of learning process and strategies
Records of Work in Progress	– Provide process information – Allow for instructional intervention prior to outcome product
Portfolio Work Samples	– Provide product information – Provide information on student work in different contexts
Dialogue Journals	– Provide information on functional reading and writing skills – Encourage language production – Can be used for both assessment and instruction
Naturalistic Observations	– Provide information on student language use in different contexts – Provide information on student functional language use
Planned Observations	– Help focus assessment on critical skills – Provide detailed information on student learning process not available through other assessment techniques
Oral Interviews and Role Play	– Can be used to elicit specific types of language – Provide information on general oral proficiency in structured environments – Can be used for both assessment and instruction
Story Retellings	– Provide highly structured environments in which to elicit oral speech – Provide information on how student processes oral speech – Can be used for both assessment and instruction
Semantic Maps	– Can be used to monitor reading comprehension, oral comprehension, and content knowledge – Can be used for student self-assessment of writing – Can be used as advance organizers – Can be used for both assessment and instruction
Dictations	– Provide information on student ability to process oral language – Provide estimate of overall language proficiency – Can be used for both assessment and instruction
Cloze Procedure	– Provide information on student ability to integrate language skills – Provide estimate of overall language proficiency – Can be used to measure reading comprehension and achievement – Can be used for both assessment and instruction
Writing Samples	– Provide information on functional literacy skills – Provide information on student ability to integrate language skills – Provide information on higher-level thinking skills – Can be used for both assessment and instruction

The behaviors indicated in Table 7.3 may be indicative of a student's cultural or experiential differences rather than a disability or serious learning problem. If these behaviors are observed during the assessment, the examiner should investigate further and consult, if appropriate, with a cultural representative as part of the data collection and interpretation process.

Table 7.3: Culturally-Based Academic Behaviors

Academic Area	Academic Behavior
Basic Reading Skills	– Reluctance to read out loud – Mispronunciation of certain words – Difficulty going from visual cues to auditory or vice versa – Unfamiliarity with certain types of reading materials – Better functioning when family member is present or when in a group – Reading rate is very slow – Better performance when learning is embedded in a game – Poor word attack skills
Reading Comprehen-sion	– Trouble with interpretive questions – Trouble sequencing from beginning to end – Problem separating facts from inferences – Trouble drawing if…then conclusions – Trouble identifying some concepts such as time (before, after, first, second, third) – Cannot understand language written in formal register – Trouble understanding consequences
Math Computation	– Trouble with math processes requiring drill and practice – Uses visual to calculate (i.e., fingers, drawings) – Reluctant to ask questions – Reluctant to volunteer – Overly concerned with being right
Math Reasoning	– Excessive dependence on teacher to begin work – No participation in class discussion – Finishing is more important than correct answers – Wants to work with others and not independently – Nonlinear thinking – Difficulty setting up problems – Trouble distinguishing relevant from irrelevant information
Written Language	– Poor spelling – Forgets previously learned grammar structure and rules – Only seems to have casual register of language available – Trouble with organizing thoughts on paper – Writing sequence is difficult – Trouble with new concepts – Difficulty with inductive or deductive reasoning – Trouble finishing work

When completed, performance in each area assessed should be summarized on the Assessment Summary Report (ASR). The interpretation of data must also be included on this report as well as the following:

- The team's judgment of the appropriateness of the assessment procedures for the student.
- Any known response patterns of the student's specific racial or cultural group.
- A description of any adaptations made to the instrument, administration procedures or scoring.

Adaptive Behavior Domain

Introduction

Every individual–adult or child–has a repertoire of behaviors that allows him or her to respond to the demands of daily living across many different environments and different societal expectations. From birth, across cultures, every individual is expected to exhibit these skills in an increasingly independent manner that will ultimately lead to effective functioning in adult roles. Adaptive behaviors include skills related to personal independence and social responsibility–skills of self-care and getting along with others (American Association for Mental Retardation–AAMR, 1992). Further, adaptive behaviors are developmental (increasing in scope and complexity from childhood to adulthood); reflect the expectations of others (parents, communities, cultural groups); are influenced by specific situations and environments; and include both ability and performance dimensions.

For many years, adaptive behavior has been a significant component of the definition of mental impairment; prior to the widespread use of intelligence tests, "social competence" and environmental adaptability were primary considerations in the diagnosis of "mental retardation." Special educators returned to the emphasis on social and environmental adaptability in the late 1950s with the first official definition of "mental retardation" by the AAMR; each successive revision of AAMR standards has emphasized the importance of adaptive behavior. This has been further reinforced by court decisions of the 1960s, 70s and 80s that identified reliance on intelligence test results as a major contributor to disproportionate placement of minority children in special education programs for students with mental impairments. Cases such *as Larry P. v. Riles* and *Marshall v. Georgia* consistently identified adaptive behavior as an essential component of eligibility assessments, leading to current mandates in state and federal legislation.

While regulations requiring assessment of adaptive behavior are limited to criteria for mental impairment, the assessment of adaptive behavior is a critical component to many special education assessments, and particularly to the assessment of students from diverse backgrounds. Research indicates that deficits in adaptive behavior skills are highly correlated with teacher referral for special education services, perhaps as often as deficits in academic performance or displays of disruptive behavior. Further, the methods and contexts of adaptive behavior assessment (multiple sources, multiple procedures and multiple "real life" environments) are consistent

with general approaches to limiting bias in the assessment of diverse populations.

Components of Adaptive Behavior Assessment

Adaptive behavior is a very broad domain involving a wide array of skills that students exhibit in different environments in response to varying expectations for independent functioning. It is therefore essential that an assessment of "adaptive behavior" addresses functioning in multiple settings and uses multiple approaches to obtain information. A comprehensive assessment of adaptive behavior thus should address functioning in home and community–settings where academic shortcomings and experience with mainstream culture may be less relevant–and functioning in the school setting, where failure to meet expectations often leads to special education referral.

Although specific eligibility criteria (MMI/MSMI) address results of standardized IQ tests, a comprehensive assessment should include direct observation, locally normed procedures, and input from a range of individuals who are familiar with the student's daily functioning. Many standardized tests in common use fall far short of the accepted standards of technical adequacy in standardization procedures and do not adequately represent the geographic and/or demographic nature of a specific school population (e.g., Kamphaus, 1987). Use of such measures as the *primary* placement criteria in local decision-making should be considered questionable at best, and at the very least, should be supported by other procedures. Comprehensive assessment systems in which individual components are logically linked have been recommended as more appropriate in identifying adaptive behavior deficits and planning subsequent intervention (Cone, 1987). A system combining the quantitative features of behavioral assessment with the qualitative factors that differentiate behavior across environments seems most desirable, particularly if a major goal of the assessment is to develop intervention strategies.

Home and Community Information

Most published measures of adaptive behavior focus on home and community skills as rated by a student's caretakers. Typical areas addressed include personal care such as toileting, dressing, and eating skills; interpersonal abilities such as social awareness, social communication and conflict management; and self-sufficiency skills such as community mobility, prevocational and vocational skills, money management, etc.

The validity of information obtained from family respondents to rating scales is sometimes questioned, particularly when school personnel rate a student's functioning as much lower than parents do. The validity and reli-

ability of any such third-party rating system is influenced by the rater's familiarity with the student; comfort in responding to the standard questions; facility with the language used; and congruence between the implied standards of the measure and the standards of the respondent. While standardized parent rating scales such as the *Vineland* or *Scales of Independent Behavior* generally are appropriate for students living in mainstream communities, the implied social standards may not be consistent with those of different cultures. Disparate ratings from teachers and parents might also merely reflect the situational specificity of many "adaptive behavior" skills and the different results obtained may be equally valid. Information suggesting that a student functions much better in one environment versus another can help determine the impact of cultural and linguistic differences and can be helpful in designing interventions to increase success in school.

School Survival Skills

School-based skills which appear to be highly related to school and adult adjustment are often neglected in the formal evaluation of adaptive behavior, despite their potential modifiability through educational interventions. Furthermore, adaptive behavior deficits in school settings, rather than in home/community environments, are most likely to characterize mildly handicapped students (Reschly, 1982) and appear to differentiate mildly handicapped from nonhandicapped students (e.g., Gresham, Elliott & Black, 1987). This differentiation is critical to developing fair assessments for diverse populations that reduce bias in classification and placement.

Research has identified functional skills which differentiate successful from unsuccessful general education students, skills which often are amenable to direct or indirect instructional approaches. These "school survival skills" generally can be described as task-related behaviors such as academic engagement, following directions, seeking assistance, and organizing materials, as well as functional academic, personal, and social competencies. Survival skills assessment not only can be interpreted in a norm-referenced framework, but also can help predict student outcomes in alternative settings and, subsequently, promote the development and implementation of curricula to improve survival skills for all students.

Expectations of Setting

Most published measures of adaptive behavior reflect parent or teacher perceptions of the student's competence. Equally important, however, is the match between the expectations of the setting (teachers, parents, community) and the student's ability to meet those expectations. While there may be general agreement as to the expected reading and math skills for a fourth grade student or to the nature of classroom or schoolwide

rules for behavior, teachers, parents, cultures, and communities may differ widely in their expectations for daily living skills of children and adolescents. In some cultures, for example, young children are expected to assist with domestic tasks (cooking, cleaning, caretaking), while in other cultures, children are "protected" from such responsibilities and given little opportunity to learn these skills at early ages. In some neighborhoods, parents typically require adult supervision for their children outside of the home or yard due to safety concerns; in other neighborhoods, parents encourage independent mobility over a wide area. In some cultures, various activities and responsibilities are strictly tied to gender and/or age. In some classrooms, teachers expect more independent work and less informal social interaction among students, while teachers in other classrooms may encourage students to seek help and allow moderate degrees of social interaction during work periods. Unless expectations of specific settings are evaluated, quantitative ratings of students' adaptive behavior have little practical significance.

Expectations can be measured through a variety of methods. Interviews with family members and cultural advocates can provide important information about what is expected, what is permitted, and what is appropriate in a given family, neighborhood or cultural community. Similarly, interviews with teachers can provide information about the nature of classroom demands and variation across teachers who work with the individual student. Some published and locally developed rating scales provide measures of expected or desired behavior (e.g., *Social Skills Rating System*, *Mainstream Survival Skills Assessment*) as well as ratings of perceived competence. Ecological observational systems such as *The Instructional Environment System-II–TIES II* (Ysseldyke & Christenson, 1993). are a more objective means of deriving expectations and rules for a specific setting.

Used in conjunction with direct observation and rating scales, data about environmental expectations can help the team not only understand the degree of student deficit relative to peers, but the degree to which the specific deficits are likely to impact general education success. Deficits in areas of limited importance in relevant settings (e.g., the classroom) may have little practical significance to placement and intervention planning, compared to deficits in skills that are highly valued by the teacher, parent, or culture. Further, examining family and cultural expectations versus school expectations will generally be helpful to the team in interpreting the impact of culture on the student's school performance.

Local Norms

The assessment of adaptive behavior, compared to other domains, can benefit from the use of locally normed procedures as supplements to other

methods. The construct of adaptive behavior implies the application of standards for performance that are situationally specific–specific to the environment, community, and/or culture. National norms may thus obscure significant factors in an individual's functioning if that individual's daily environment is significantly different from that of the mainstream.

Local standardization is both an asset and a liability, depending upon the intended use of the measure. The very notion of "school survival" is dependent upon local standards for behavior and tied to the rules and organizational structures of the local school district and individual classroom. The disadvantage of local standardization, of course, is the limited degree of confidence with which generalizations can be made to other populations. Further, in many situations, development of local norms is impractical due to small populations and limited technical resources. Where feasible, however, locally normed measures of functional skills can significantly contribute to the measure of adaptive behavior and can help limit bias in the assessment of local diverse students who are not well represented in national samples. The development of local norms should only be undertaken with expert guidance.

Best Practices in Adaptive Behavior Assessment

The following represent best practices in the area of adaptive behavior assessment:

- Adaptive behavior should be assessed as a component of a comprehensive assessment and for the purpose of program planning as well as identification of disability. This domain should be included in the assessment of all diverse students regardless of the nature of the referral.
- Adaptive behavior assessment should include multiple measures and should not rely on a single scale. The assessment should address functioning across relevant environments (home, community, school); incorporate information from multiple sources (parents, caretakers, teachers) using multiple direct and indirect methods (norm-referenced ratings, locally normed measures, direct observations, self-report scales, interviews); and address expectations as well as individual skills. Professionals using standardized adaptive behavior scales should be aware of the limitations of such procedures, including limitations for students from diverse cultures.
- Data regarding both skill deficits and performance deficits should be obtained in assessing adaptive behavior. Often, students understand the expectations and have appropriate behaviors in

their repertoires but lack motivation or do not accurately perceive prompts to perform.

- Information obtained from an adaptive behavior assessment should be interpreted in terms of ecological and cultural validity in order to best understand a student's functional strengths and limitations. Neither single scores nor single scales should be used as criteria for determining eligibility for special education services.

Recommended Adaptive Behavior Assessment Procedures

As with most other domains, standardized adaptive behavior scales have limited representation of American Indian and African American children in their norming populations. While these measures of adaptive behavior often yield information that mitigates the significance of other criterion measures (e.g., intelligence tests), they nevertheless are greatly influenced by mainstream cultural standards, and results may be biased for some students. It is therefore critical that results from standardized adaptive behavior measures are supplemented with other procedures and sources of information and not merely examined quantitatively to determine if eligibility criteria are met.

Over the years, only two published scales of adaptive behavior have consistently met standards of technical adequacy for the purpose of assisting in eligibility determination– the *Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scale–VABS* (Sparrow, Balla, & Cicchetti, 1984) and the *Scales of Independent Behavior–SIB-R* (Bruininks, Woodcock, Weatherman, & Hill, 1997). Both scales are appropriate for school-age and preschool-age children but use very different formats that can influence reliability and validity of results.

The SIB-R is the most recently normed (1997) and most structured, and it is easy to administer. Computer assisted scoring is highly recommended due to the complexity of derived tables of scores. The SIB-R has the advantage of a maladaptive behavior component, and its four-point scaling reflecting frequency and consistency of displayed skills provides more specific information while also making responding more complex. In general, the format SIB-R is best suited to literate respondents who are patient with the structured presentation of the scale.

The Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scale use a semi-structured interview format in which questions are not asked directly, but information is obtained through the interview process. This requires greater familiarity on the part of the interviewer and generally will take more time to complete. However, due to the less formal structure, the VABS might be better suited to assessments involving American Indian and African American parents. The style of the interview can be adapted to the preferred interaction style of the

respondent. Users should note that the VABS norms are more than ten years old (1986) and a revision or restandardization may be in process.

The VABS also has a *Classroom Survey* edition that has significant limitations for its use in determining eligibility and instructional planning. This edition is intended to be completed by school personnel who know the student well. However, many items will require "guessing" as most of the skills are likely displayed in home settings only. This edition of the VABS is not a measure of school-based skills. There are few reasons to use this scale as there are better measures of school-based skills and more appropriate measures of home/community skills.

Many measures of social skills are appropriate components of adaptive behavior assessments, including the *Social Skills Rating System* and the *Walker-McConnell Scale of Social Competence*. These measures address observed social skills and preferred/expected skills of parents and/or teachers, and allow for self reporting as well.

The Mainstream Survival Skills Assessment (MSSA) is a system of measuring school survival skills and teacher expectations using multiple methods (norm-referenced ratings, observation, interview, expectancy ratings) that was normed for urban students (Minneapolis norms) and generally for students in Minnesota (state norms). While its norms may be useful for helping with eligibility decisions, only the urban norms include significant numbers of American Indian and African American students. Norms also included students with Limited English Proficiency and separate data were collected for a sample from this population, indicating that the MSSA might be helpful in reducing bias for LEP students. (The MSSA is available from the Minneapolis Public Schools.)

Direct observation systems that address interpersonal interactions, self-management and task related behaviors are well-suited to the assessment of adaptive behavior. The TIES-II and other published scales and self-designed structured observation methods all contribute relevant information both to the identification of deficits and the development of intervention strategies.

Communication Domain

Introduction

The team member responsible for carrying out the communication assessment should be familiar with information on communication diversity found in these guidelines and in other sources. As noted throughout these guidelines, dialects are not communication disorders. Dialects are systematic, functional, and valid forms of oral communication associated with such factors as geographic region, race, culture, and socioeconomic groups. All language and cultural groups have rules for both verbal and nonverbal communication. While these rules may be informal, they allow for differences in social class, gender, age, region, and so forth. Members recognize communication behavior that is inappropriate or "different" although they may not classify it as "disordered" or "disabled." The fact that a student uses a dialect or nonstandard variety of English does not necessarily preclude the possibility of a communication disorder. One of the critical tasks for the team is to determine whether the student's communication skills are considered "different" by members of the language and cultural group. To do this, comparisons should be made with peers of similar language and cultural background whenever possible. Following are some additional observations regarding the impact of diversity on communication:

- In addition to observed differences in phonology and syntax, differences in culture and socioeconomic status may also impact development of communication skills. The type of speech and language addressed to young children and their expected roles as conversationalists differs across families. In some families, conversation is child-centered. In other families, conversation is situation-centered and the children are expected to adapt to the present situation.
- Socioeconomic status is more critical to the development of language than race or ethnicity. The factor most related to the socioeconomic status is the education of the mother. The more educated the mother, regardless of race, a larger vocabulary us used, more abstractions are used, more declarative speech and questions are used, and most significantly, more time is spent interacting with the children.
- Children with stable, two parent low income households have language skills at school entry equal to those of middle class children. Family income is not an isolated factor in the development of language. Family practices and stability also

have a significant influence on the language development of children.

- Families vary in the kind of narrative style that is used to convey information. Two examples of different narrative styles are topic centered and associative. In some families, narratives are topic centered and linear, while the narratives used in other families are associative and focus more on the people involved, their relationships and related situations.

Assessment Procedures

A comprehensive communication assessment involves the systematic collection of a variety of data. Each aspect of the assessment process, including the use of standardized instruments, is described in the following sections. Please note that Element 5 contains specific information for assessing language, articulation, fluency, and voice.

Elements for Assessing Communication	
Element 1	**Review of background information**
Element 2	**Conduct observation(s)**
Element 3	**Conduct a communication review**
Element 4	**Collect language sample(s)**
Element 5	**Conduct standardized assessment**
Element 6	**Conduct supplemental assessments**
Element 7	**Interpret assessment data**

Element 1: Review of Background Information

In addition to general background information, clinicians or other team members should look specifically for information regarding communication. If this information is not already available through existing records, it should be gathered through the assessment process. Following are areas important to the data gathering process:

- Previous assessment or treatment for speech/language disorders or other areas identified by a review of special education history.

- History of language use by the family and the student, including languages or dialects spoken by parents, grandparents, and extended family members.
- Information concerning the student's primary language or dialect (e.g., *Home Language Questionnaire*).
- Other information relevant to communication obtained from the student's parents.

Element 2: Conduct Observation(s)

In addition to the types of communication skills that are typically the focus of an observation, team members are recommended to seek answers to the following types of questions:

- What dialect, language, or communication style does the student use when interacting with members of the same race or cultural group? When interacting with members of a different group?
- How does the student interact with adults and peers who are of a similar race and cultural background and those of different backgrounds?
- How do adults and peers of similar and different backgrounds interact with the student?
- Does the student's communication have its desired effect? Is the student understood?
- Does the student make appropriate verbal and nonverbal responses in individual, small group, and large group situations?
- What language or dialect does the student use when responding verbally in individual, small group, and large group situations?
- Does the student's communication skills differ in non-structured classroom activities as compared to highly structured activities?
- Are the communication styles of the teacher and the student culturally compatible?
- Can the student follow directions given in the classroom?
- Does the student compensate for language difficulties in the classroom by asking for assistance from peers or adults and by watching others?

Element 3: Conduct a Communication Review

In addition to information already gathered through the *Home and Family Interview*, additional data should be gathered from the

student's parents or caregivers regarding language development utilizing structured protocols or informal checklists of language skills.

Element 4: Collect Language Sample(s)

Collection and analysis of at least one language sample is an important part of a comprehensive communication assessment for diverse students. Spontaneous language samples taken in a variety of settings with a variety of speech partners will enable the student to demonstrate the range of his/her communication abilities. Samples can be used for eligibility purposes and also for instructional planning. A helpful resource for collecting language samples can be found in *Linguistically, Culturally Diverse Populations: Language Sample Analysis Companion Guide*, Cooperative (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 1997).

In addition, when obtaining a language sample, be sure to assess language in a variety of different speech situations with a variety of partners. Be cognizant of the fact that many African American children code-switch between African American English and Standard American English dependent on the speaking situation. When possible, focus on the more universal aspects of language (those that are used by all children regardless of their language or cultural background) such as the acquisition sequence and frequency of universally used semantic and pragmatic categories.

Following are additional recommendations for gathering and analyzing language samples:

- Use a variety of settings, including the following: classroom, playground, less structured classes such as physical education, lunchroom, etc.
- Gather samples with a variety of speaking partners, including persons of similar race and cultural background and persons of different backgrounds.
- Look for a variety of speaking patterns.
- Employ structured and unstructured conversations.
- Use discussions on topics from class.
- Use both concrete and abstract ideas.
- Assess ability to sequence events.
- Assess use and formation of questions.
- Assess ability to analyze communicative intent.
- Assess ability to get a message across and relate ideas.

- Tape record language samples and transcribe at a later time.
- If uncertain as to the appropriateness of a dialect-speaker's language sample, ask a cultural representative to listen to the tape recording and give their impressions.

Element 5: Conduct Standardized Assessment

The selection and interpretation of standardized assessment instruments will depend on the area of communication that is under consideration (language, articulation, fluency, or voice). Educators should utilize the *Test Selection Checklist* when selecting standardized instruments. Clinicians are also advised to gather information concerning the student's use of dialects or nonstandard English through record review, observations, and/or language samples before selecting and administering standardized language instruments.

Assessing for Language Disorders

The language domain is generally assessed through means of standardized instruments and language samples. When assessing American Indian and African American students, standardized language tests can serve as benchmark indicators but may not always be technically adequate. Clinicians should use the *Test Selection Checklist* to help with the process of determining which tests are appropriate. Whenever possible, speech/language pathologists are recommended to utilize instruments that have subgroup norms or scoring guidelines for American Indian or African American students. Clinicians may also use the "testing-of-limits" procedures found in Appendix B, but this strategy should only be used by very experienced examiners. In her videotape presentation, *Non-Biased Assessment of the African American Child*, Dr. Toya Wyatt (1995) notes that several types of bias may impact the validity of standardized instruments including:

- *Situational bias:* differences in communication style.
- *Test format bias*: assessment tasks may be culturally inappropriate (for example, labeling commonly known vocabulary).
- *Value bias*: the developers of standardized instruments may make assumptions about common values or life experiences (for example, what to do when crossing the street).
- *Linguistic bias*: the language of the test may be different from that spoken by the student (Standard English vs. African American English; formal language register vs. casual register).

- *Normative sample bias*: members of racial, cultural, language and socioeconomic groups may be represented in the norming sample in very small numbers.
- *Theoretical bias*: tests may be based upon a theory of language acquisition or cognitive development that is flawed or that does not recognize alternative dialects.

Assessing for Articulation Disorders

Articulation disorders are generally identified through the use of standardized instruments. Articulation differences exist in many different dialects of English and should never be considered articulation disorders. Prosodic differences also exist which may be cultural and affect intelligibility for listeners outside the cultural group but are not considered characteristics of an articulation disorder. When assessing speakers of nonstandard English or speakers of other languages, clinicians should consider whether there are sounds in that language that are not used in Standard English and vice-versa. When possible, clinicians should utilize tests that were developed for African American speakers or have separate scoring tables for minority groups.

English spoken by American Indians may retain the phonemic patterns and phonologic constraints characteristic of the community's tribal language. Research on specific articulation patterns on Indian tribes in Minnesota does not exist at this time, however.

Because Ojibwe and Dakota are the predominant tribes in Minnesota, clinicians should study the charts describing characteristics of those languages which can be found in Chapter 9. Students from other tribal backgrounds may move to the state, creating the need to research characteristics of other Indian languages through interviews or review of written materials.

The phonological characteristics of African American English are well documented. Clinicians should consult the phonological tables included in Chapter 10 to determine whether the articulation of an African American student is typical of dialect speakers.

Assessing for Voice Disorders

Other than differences in volume, no specific pathologies or deviations are reported for American Indian and African American students with regard to voice. Use of standard assessment procedures is appropriate.

Assessing for Fluency Disorders

Fluency disorders are common to all cultures and languages even though some languages have no specific term to describe them. In her text,

Communication Disorders in Multicultural Populations, Battle (1993) remarks that "Indications are that sound repetitions and voiced and unvoiced sound prolongations are the universal basic behavioral components of the stuttering syndrome and that concomitant stuttering behaviors such as eye blinks and extraneous facial, limb, and body movements are also universally observed." Battle also notes that research has found a higher prevalence of fluency disorders in the African, West Indian, and African American populations than in the general American population. For those students who speak two or more languages or dialects, the fluency disorder should be observed in each language or dialect spoken.

Element 6: Conduct Supplemental Assessments

In addition to the use of standardized instruments and language samples, clinicians are recommended to utilize at least one alternative source of information. The strategies shown in Table 7.4 are adapted from *Multicultural Students with Special Language Needs: Practical Strategies for Assessment and Intervention* (Roseberry-McKibbin, 1995).

Element 7: Interpret Assessment Data

As with all assessment data, an interpretation of a communication assessment must include a synthesis of information obtained from a review of background information, communication interviews, observations, language samples, and the results of standardized, diagnostic, and informal testing. All protocols should be analyzed for identifying specific types of language problems and patterns of response. Data from different sources should then be compared to determine if a consistent pattern emerges which is indicative of a communication disorder.

Table 7.4: Supplemental Speech and Language Assessment Strategies

Technique	Strategy
Criterion-Referenced Tasks	Gather information about the student's use of language in the classroom and compare to teacher and environmental expectations.
Functional Language Assessment	Examine and prioritize communication functions and determine current levels of functioning. This may be done with a structured instrument such as the C.O.A.C.H. or by information measures. This information can help determine whether students can perform communication functions and establish the need for assistance.
Checklists	Completed by parents or teachers. May include checklists of academic language skills.
Questionnaires	Gather information from a variety of people who interact with the student to gain a broad understanding of the student's communication in everyday settings.
Additional Language Samples	Used to see how a student uses language in areas where prior testing and probes has indicated a possible weakness. Conducted in different settings than prior testing and language samples to gather additional information.
Dynamic Assessment	Test-teach-retest models or other methods that evaluate language use over time. Test-teach-retest is particularly helpful if the student is unfamiliar with the test requirements because of cultural or experiential differences (e.g., labeling objects). Focus on the ability to learn language rather than current level of performance.
Authentic Assessment	Evaluation of portfolios of classroom work, essays, stories and other materials.
Holistic Evaluation	Focus on functional use of language to communicate meaning in a variety of situations.
Narratives	Assess the student's ability to create and retell narratives.
Pictures	Pictures can be used in a variety of ways to gather information about a student's language in a variety of settings.
Picture Pairs	Show several pairs of related pictures. Ask the student to select two pictures that are related and to explain why they are related or tell a story involving the two pictures.
Sequencing	Show story pictures. Ask the student to put the pictures in the correct sequence and to explain or tell the story.
Problem Solving	Present an everyday problem verbally or in picture form. Ask the student to explain how he/she would resolve the problem.
Direction Following	Ask the student to give directions to their home, a neighborhood location, etc.
Barrier Games	Have the student being assessed take turns giving and receiving directions in a barrier game where they arrange pictures on a board. Used to gather information about expressive and receptive language.
Similarities	Show pictures of a variety of objects and ask the student to explain how they are the same and how they are different.

Source: *Multicultural Students with Special Language Needs: Practical Strategies for Assessment and Intervention* (1995)

Intellectual Functioning Domain

Introduction

School psychologists have used intelligence tests for decades. This practice has been intertwined with special education practice through eligibility determinations and placement decisions according to federal and state laws (Reschly & Grimes, 1995). The utility of such tests has been demonstrated in greater accuracy in identifying students with mental impairments and specific learning disabilities. Conversely, the historic misuse of testing of intellectual abilities (IQ tests) for classification is well documented. The discriminatory use of IQ tests led to law suits, most notably *Larry P. v. Riles* and *Parents in Action on Special Education (PASE) v. Joseph P. Hannon*. While the results of these legal cases do not clearly point toward eliminating the use of tests of intellectual ability, they do lead to several caveats to avoid misuse and bias.

According to Reschly and Grimes (1995), the courts concluded that intelligence tests were not biased if certain standards were met. These standards include (a) rigorous implementation of procedural safeguards in the referral, classification, and placement process, (b) implementation of a multifaceted assessment designed to identify specific education needs by a group of professionals, and (c) classification, placement, and programming decisions made by a team including the professionals and parents. In the years since *Larry P. vs. Riles*, researchers and test developers have improved the validity of instruments for a wide range of students as well as strengthened the link between assessment measures and school performance. However, continuous improvement is needed in these areas. The selection of procedures to assess the intellectual ability of diverse students is critical to the overall goal of reducing bias in assessment. Reschly and Grimes (1995) suggest three general best practice guidelines: (1) using careful judgment about when and how intellectual instruments are used, (2) using careful judgment about the selection, administration, and interpretation of measures, and (3) using preventative strategies to dispel misconceptions and avoid the misuse of tests.

In addition to these practices, Suzuki, Vraniak & Kugler (1996) further recommend that examiners interpret assessment scores within the student's "cultural and environmental context." Before conducting and interpreting a test, it is important for the examiner to have an understanding of cultural and racial factors which impact the assessment process. As such, examiners should not only have to be knowledgeable about testing and specific theories of intelligence, they also must possess the knowledge and sensitiv-

ity with regard to how specific cultural and racial groups respond to various test and assessment processes.

With regard to the test itself, one should be aware of such concepts as the standard error of measurement, the floor or ceiling of the test, regression to the mean, and the relevance and validity of the test for the specific use employed.

With regard to the student, consider the student's socioeconomic status, background, environment, communication, and social, medical, and educational history, residential and regional issues, acculturation as well as the past and current family situation. Educators should carefully examine the items included in the *Sociocultural Checklist* to review aspects of the student's social environment prior to conducting an assessment.

Process

Assessment Procedures

Licensed school psychologists, licensed psychologists and others who assess intellectual abilities must follow the appropriate professional code of ethics and professional practices (e.g., APA, CEC and NASP) regarding test selection, validity, and reliability and usage with American Indian and African American students. In addition to considering technical validity and reliability, psychologists should also keep in mind the need to establish rapport and how individual students respond to the testing situation. Similarly, one cannot assume that tests which purport to be "culture fair" are truly culture fair for a given student.

Suzuki et al (1996) point out that interpretations can be modified based on professional knowledge and judgment about specific cultural and racial performance patterns and cultural loading on test items. Thus, psychologists must be knowledgeable about racial and cultural profiles and examine tests closely to determine their relative advantages and limitations.

The general approach for conducting intellectual assessment is described below in the five elements for assessing an intellectual ability.

Element 1: Conduct Record Review

When assessing intellectual ability, the first step is a thorough review of records. Student records may contain relevant background data, work samples, behavior, etc., that can help support other assessment data collected. Specific factors to look for include some of the following:

- Student's age, sensory status, physical status.
- Student's language competencies.
- Degree of acculturation (See Sattler, 1998; Moreland, 1996 as well as *Sociocultural Checklist* and *Guide*).
- Grades and classroom grades.
- Achievement data (and discrepancies between achievement, classroom work, and performance related functioning).
- Accommodations and modifications and their results.
- Retentions.
- Previous special education referrals or placements.

Elements for Assessing Intellectual Ability	
Element 1	**Conduct record review**
Element 2	**Conduct standardized assessment**
Element 3	**Conduct supplemental assessment**
Element 4	**Gather data from other sources**
Element 5	**Interpret data**

- Student strengths.
- Social and emotional adjustment.
- Physical health and mental health considerations.
- Pattern of school changes.
- Data from non-school sources such as social services, court records or outside assessments (e.g., mental health diagnoses and treatment).

Element 2: Conduct Standardized Assessment

Identify broad areas of functioning that should be addressed in the assessment based upon the student's presenting problems. In most cases, begin with one or more standardized instrument to identify strengths and weaknesses. Utilize a cross-battery approach to target areas of functioning when a single instrument does not adequately address all area of concern. The *Test Selection Checklist* (see Chapter 6) should be used to identify appropriate instruments for an individual student. Skilled and trained assessors may also utilize the "testing-of-limits" procedures described by Sattler (1988) in *Assessment of Children's Intelligence and Special Abilities* and which appears in Appendix B. Also, as previously indicated, educators should make any assessment adaptations according to information obtained from the *Sociocultural Checklist* and *Sociocultural Guide*, being careful to note these adaptations.

The standardized instruments of intellectual ability shown in Table 7.5 are those which have been recommended for use by the Minnesota School Psychologists Association (MSPA). To ensure maximum reliability and validity, assessors should utilize the most recent version of the test, which include normative information appropriate to the students that are being assessed. In-depth reviews of each of these cognitive instruments can be seen in the latest editions of Salvia & Ysseldyke's *Assessment in Remedial and Special Education* or Sattler's *Assessment of Children's Intelligence and Special Abilities.*

Table 7.5: Recommended Cognitive Tests

Test	Date	Publisher
Differential Ability Scales (DAS)	1990	Psychological Corporation
Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-III (WISC-III)	1991	Psychological Corporation
Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale III (WAIS-III)	1997	Psychological Corporation

Wechsler Preschool and Primary Scales of Intelligence Revised (WPPSI)	1989	Psychological Corporation
Woodcock-Johnson Psychoeducational Battery-Revised	1991	The Riverside Publishing Company
Kaufman Adolescent and Adult Intelligence Test (KAIT)	1993	American Guidance Service, Inc.
Das-Naglieri Cognitive Assessment System	1997	The Riverside Publishing Company

Element 3: Conduct Supplemental Assessment

If necessary, follow up with one or more supplemental instruments that focus on areas of strengths and weaknesses that surfaced in Element 2. The instruments shown in Table 7.6 are those which have been recommended by the Minnesota School Psychologists Association.

Table 7.6: Recommended Supplemental Tests

Test	Date	Publisher
Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children (K-ABC)	1983	American Guidance Services
Wide Range Assessment of Memory and Learning (WRAML)	1990	Jastak Associates
California Verbal Learning Test-Children's Version (CVLT)	1994	Harcourt Brace
Test of Nonverbal Intelligence III (TONI-III)	1997	Pro-Ed
Comprehensive Test of Nonverbal Intelligence (C-TONI)	1996	American Guidance Services
Naglieri Test of Nonverbal Ability	1996	Harcourt-Brace
Leiter International Performance Scale-Revised	1997	Stoelting Co.

Element 4: Gather Data from Other Sources

Corroborate data gathered through elements 2 and 3 with at least one additional data source, such as those listed below:

- Criterion-referenced tests.
- Dynamic assessment such as test-teach-retest models.
- Clinical Interview (Sattler, 1998) with family members, community members, etc.
- Collateral data including interviews with teachers and others.
- Observation and analysis of behavior, problem-solving and task completion in the testing situation as well as other settings.

Element 5: Interpret Data

Data from each source indicated (broad intellectual, supplemental assessments, and other data sources) should be interpreted with regard to information gathered about the student's background. Data from all sources should then be compared and professional judgement used to determine if a consistent pattern of ability is demonstrated. Performance in each area of assessment and conclusions drawn from the student's performance across data sources should be summarized in the Assessment Summary Report. In addition, the Assessment Summary Report should include information as to the following:

- The examiner's judgement of the appropriateness of the assessment procedures for the student.
- Known response patterns of the student's specific racial or cultural group.
- A description of any adaptations made to the instrument, administration procedures or scoring.
- The examiner's degree of confidence in the evaluation results.

Social/Emotional/Behavioral Domain

Introduction

A student's social, emotional, and behavioral functioning is assessed for the purpose of identifying needs (across all disabilities) or for identifying primary disability such as E/BD. When assessing the social, emotional, and behavioral domains, assessors need to be especially cautious and sensitive to diversity factors. Culturally relevant behavior may be misinterpreted as problem behavior. For example, a teacher may interpret a student's lack of eye contact as not paying attention or listening when working with an American Indian student from a traditional home who "refuses to look the teacher in the eye" as a sign of respect. On the other hand, factors in the student's background that are sometimes correlated with racial or minority status (e.g., poverty or trauma related stress, racism) may contribute to a social, emotional, or behavioral problem. Table 7.7 provides information about how sociocultural circumstances can sometimes impact observed problem behaviors.

Various theories purport to explain the causes of social, emotional, and behavior problems. These theories subsequently influence definitions and assessment approaches. Theories of causation range from viewing the cause as within the student (biophysical), unconscious conflicts or developmental lags (psychodynamic), or within the family such as abuse, neglect, faulty parenting, etc. (sociological). Other theories attribute causation to society as a whole or schools in particular (ecological). For example, some would argue that a certain behavior is a justifiable reaction to a society that oppresses a student or to a school that rejects the student's cultural values. If students feel alienated from school and society they may develop behavior patterns that conflict with a school's academic and behavioral expectations. Behavioral theories posit that students learn maladaptive behavior through environmental contingencies (behavioral and social learning). Current theory in developmental psychopathology describes multiple pathways leading to a disorder. For example, a student's problem may result from a combination of inherited dispositions, family problems, environmental stressors, and poor environmental match. The debate over theories of causation is on-going and perhaps impossible to resolve. Most experts agree that no single theory accounts for all observed social, emotional, or behavioral problems.

Within the parameters of a special education assessment of diverse students, team members need to consider whether a student's social, emotional, and behavioral problems are related to actual or perceived racial

and cultural differences Such information may suggest appropriate general education interventions or special education instructional strategies in addition to establishing special education eligibility and educational needs.

Table 7.7: Behaviors Influenced by Sociocultural Conditions

General Area	Selected Indication Behaviors	Sociocultural Conditions
Withdrawn Behavior	▪ Not responding when spoken to. ▪ Fails to talk though has skill. ▪ Prefers to be alone.	▪ Normal stage in second language acquisition and acculturation. ▪ Culturally appropriate to native culture. ▪ Does not feel accepted by culturally different peers.
Defensive Behavior	▪ Losing belongings. ▪ Exhibits "I don't care" attitude. ▪ Lack of responsibility. ▪ Wastes time. ▪ Arrives late. ▪ Cheating. ▪ Blames others. ▪ Difficulty in changing activities.	▪ Presupposes familiarity with having belongings. ▪ Acculturation may cause anxiety and resistance to change. ▪ Concepts of time vary considerably from culture to culture. ▪ External locus of control may be taught or encouraged in some cultures. ▪ External vs. internal locus of control confusion results from acculturation process. ▪ Concepts of cheating/stealing vary from culture to culture. ▪ Cooperation versus sharing.
Disorganized Behavior	▪ Confused in terms of time. ▪ Poor living skills. ▪ Extreme social withdrawal. ▪ Poor interpersonal relationships.	▪ Concepts of time vary considerably from culture to culture. ▪ Culturally appropriate to native culture. ▪ Normal state in second language acquisition and acculturation.
Aggressive Behavior	▪ Talks out in class. ▪ Fights or harasses others. ▪ Impulsive behavior. ▪ Talks back to teacher. ▪ Does not follow class rules.	▪ Culturally appropriate in communication style. ▪ Presupposes familiarity with appropriate school behavior and language.

Adapted from Collier, 1985

As with all assessment domains, information about social, emotional, or behavioral issues should be gathered from a variety of sources using a variety of methods. This means gathering information from students, families, community members, and teachers as needed. Methods may be structured or unstructured. For example, interviews and observations can be either highly structured and standardized or informal in nature. Standardized instruments help assure consistency in evaluations. In a discussion about assessment issues of minority children, Sattler (1988) remarks that:

> Recommendations for assessing ethnic minority children include improving the clinician's role, optimizing the testing situation, using tests appropriately, developing appropriate interventions, and interpreting data appropriately. The fundamental solution to the problem of testing minority children is to eliminate social inequalities and prejudice from our society. In addition, we must develop tests, validated on ethnic minorities, that better measure the processes by which the children learn and that include items reflective of their culture. (p. 595)

Process

The following six element process is recommended for educators:

Elements for Assessing Social and Emotional Functioning	
Element 1	**Review the presenting problem**
Element 2	**Conduct record review**
Element 3	**Conduct observation(s)**
Element 4	**Conduct standardized assessment**
Element 5	**Gather data from other sources**
Element 6	**Interpret data**

Element 1: Review the Presenting Problem:

The planning team may consider the following questions:

- What is the student doing, thinking, or feeling that brings him or her distress or that brings him or her into conflict with the environment?
- In what environment does it occur?
- In which environments are the behavior absent?
- What are the antecedents?
- What are the consequences?
- Who is present when it occurs?
- What is the frequency?
- What is the duration?
- With what intensity does it occur?
- What time of day does it occur? Is there a relationship between the time of day and other factors?
- What is the hypothesized function or intent of the behavior?

Element 2: Conduct Record Review

Review background information and other pertinent factors contained in the student's record. For example, what information does the record include or not include that may be relevant to the presenting behavior? This may include any history of the behavior as well as any specific interventions previously attempted and their effects. In addition, a review of information regarding the student's strengths, current assessment results, present level of educational performance, social and emotional adjustment, health and mental health conditions, etc., should be conducted. Whenever possible, information should be obtained from individuals who are members of the same racial/ethnic group as the student. Also, the person reviewing and compiling this information should have competencies to evaluate social, emotional or behavioral concerns, such as a school psychologist, school social worker, or special education teacher. If other staff assist in gathering information (for example, a cultural representative), they should do so with explicit guidance from licensed staff.

Element 3: Conduct Observation(s)

According to Sattler (1988), systematic observation is conducted by a trained observer, watching behavior in natural settings and recording and classifying behaviors as they occur in order to ensure that observation data may be replicated. The following are characteristics of systematic observations:

- Observations typically include an operational definition of the behavior in question.

- Observations may occur in sequence from observing global to specific behaviors.
- Observations occur at times when the behaviors are likely to occur.
- Observations occur across settings; e.g., various classes, playground, home and community.
- Observations are most efficient for high rate versus very low rate behaviors.
- Observations should clarify the nature of the observed data; i.e., precise descriptive data and inferential statements.

Element 4: Conduct Standardized Assessment

Social, emotional, and behavioral assessment instruments should be selected by a trained professional who can examine their psychometric properties by utilizing the *Test Selection Checklist*. In the context of cultural issues, educators should pay particular attention to item 6 on the checklist which recommends that an item-by-item analysis be made of the instrument from the framework of cultural and linguistic characteristics of diverse cultural groups.

It will be helpful to review the instrument with the assistance of a cultural representative for specific behaviors that may be inappropriate in the student's culture and living situation. In general, social, emotional, and/or behavioral instruments represent middle-class expectations regarding behavior and social skills. The scales may not reflect some students' experiences or parents' expectations. For example, items pertaining to cruelty to animals may be problematic for students in rural areas who commonly hunt wild game or other animals. If the selected instrument has numerous bi-

Table 7.8: Recommended Social, Emotional, Behavioral Measures

Test	Date	Publisher
Behavior Evaluation Scales II–BES II	1994	Hawthorne
Behavior Assessment System for Children–BASC	1992	American Guidance Service
Child Behavior Checklist–CBCL	1991	University of Vermont
Conners Rating Scales	1989	Multi-Health Systems
Social Skills Rating System–SSRS	1990	American Guidance Service

ased items, it may be used for the purpose of gathering diagnostic information, but the scores should not be calculated or used for eligibility.

A list of commonly used standardized behavior rating scales is included in Table 7.8. These instruments are specifically recommended by the Minnesota School Psychologists Association (MSPA) because of their research base and broad norms. Educators should not assume that the instruments listed below are automatically appropriate for any individual minority student. Use the *Test Selection Checklist* and the other recommendations contained within these guidelines to choose the most appropriate instruments for the individual student. When selecting assessment measures, it is important to be aware that several systems (e.g., BASC, Achenbach) have multiple forms for collecting data (teacher, parent, and self-rating) to promote comparison across respondents. It is not advisable to use and compare forms from different assessment systems. Rather, it is recommended that educators make a decision to use one system or another based on the assessment needs of the student.

In addition, the team should conduct a follow-up assessment to obtain additional information about specific social, emotional or behavioral concerns identified as a result of a broad assessment. The team may collect information using various methods. Measures which can be used to identify depression and anxiety include the following :

Self-Report Measures: *Children's Depression Inventory*–CDI (Kovacs, 1992); *Reynolds Child Depression Scale*–RCDS (Reynolds & Graves, 1989); *Reynolds Adolescent Depression Scale*–RADS (Reynolds & Coats, 1986); *Children's Manifest Anxiety Scale–Revised* (Reynolds & Richmond, 1978); *Stait-Trait Anxiety Inventory for Children*–STAIC (Spielberger et al, 1973)

Projective Measures: *Thematic Apperception Test*–TAT (Murray, 1943) Children's Apperception Test–CAT; Robert's Apperception Test

Other assessment strategies may include diagnostic structured, semistructured, and unstructured interviews with child, parent, and teacher and the application of direct observation methods in a variety of settings.

Note: Projective and personality measures may be considered in the assessment process, but should only be used by a qualified psychologist with APA approved clinical training and competency in making diagnostic and treatment recommendations.

Assessors should note that because normative data and evidence of reliability and validity are limited, the *Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory* (MMPI) is *not* recommended for use with American Indian students. Similarly, the *Emotional and Behavioral Problem Scale* (Wright, 1989) is not recommended for use with children of minority groups.

Element 5: Gather Data from Other Sources

In conducting a thorough assessment, it is important to consider special background factors. This is true in general and particularly important when considering the influence of cultural factors on social, emotional, or behavioral patterns. Educators must consider the following questions:

- Is the student on medication? If yes, what time of day is the medication taken? Are there any side effects?
- Is the student taking it regularly?
- Does the student have a medical diagnosis of a mental health disorder? What impact, if any, does this have on school-based behavior?
- Is the student using alcohol, drugs, caffeine, etc.?
- Where and with whom is the student living at present? Does the student have a stable living situation?
- Is the behavior the result of a social skills deficit?
- What are the behavior expectations at school? At home?
- Is there a mismatch between the behavioral expectations at home and in school?
- Is there a mismatch between a teacher's expectations and the student's learning style?
- Is the student aware of differences in behavioral expectations across settings because of cultural or other differences?
- Are there differences in nonverbal communication style that are related to the behavior in question?
- Has the student had instruction or guidance in developing behavioral skills appropriate to the setting?
- Is the student able to modify his/her behavior according to the expectations of the settings? When and under what circumstances?
- Does the parent support the desired behavioral change?
- Is there reinforcement for the desired/undesired behavior? What?

- What are meaningful reinforcements for this individual?
- Are there health factors related to the behavior?
- Is the behavior the result of a deficit in academic, communication, and/or intellectual skills?
- How well informed is the team about the student's background?

Review the *Home and Family Interview* and *Sociocultural Checklist* for additional questions and information.

Strengths and assets are also an essential part of the assessment process:

- Conduct observations of the student in a situation where he/she is successful.
- Conduct interviews with individuals who have a positive relationship with the student.
- Conduct a standardized strength-based assessment using the *Behavior Evaluation Rating Scale* (Epstein & Sharma, 1998).
- Utilize other inventories and methods which focus on strengths.

If the assessment team suspects that the student's social, emotional, and/or behavioral problems may be related to deficits in functional skills or intellectual ability, they should assess those areas through one or more of the following means:

- *Scales of Independent Behavior-Revised (SIB-R)*
- *Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scale*
- *The Instructional Environmental System-II (TIES-II)*
- *Social Skills Rating Scale*
- Record review
- Observations
- Standardized measures of intellectual ability

The SIB-R and the VABS are adaptive behavior scales that provide information on behavior, basic skills, social skills, and communication skills. As such, they may be useful tools to use as part of a social, emotional, or behavioral assessment with some students. Refer to recommendations in the Adaptive Behavior Domain in these guidelines for additional information.

Element 6: Interpret Data

Conducting and interpreting comprehensive assessment data on social, emotional, and behavioral needs can be a daunting task. Experts agree that best practice is to use processes and methods that are objective, behaviorally oriented, functional, and culturally sensitive and include multiple methods and multiple sources (Eun-Ja, Pullis, Reilly & Townsend, 1994; Huberty, 1996; McConaughy & Ritter, 1995). Integrating data from multiple sources can help account for some of the variability that occurs when a variety of individuals (e.g., parents, teachers, and student) participate in the assessment process. Huberty offers some general assumptions about optimizing the data integration process; he suggests that:

- Data are most easily integrated as they become more objective and inference decreases.
- As data are added to existing data, generally they contribute to increased description, accuracy, and incremental validity to a maximum.
- The data must accurately represent the behavior or characteristics or traits of the student in various settings.
- In the case that the data are discrepant between each other, they represent variation in behavior and are not the results of faulty assessment procedures.

Reynolds and Kamphaus (1992) suggest that emotional and behavior difficulties have many different aspects so it is essential that educators use an assessment approach that integrates information and which results in a more comprehensive picture of the individual. However, due to the nature of the assessment instruments used in this process, particularly with rating scales, differences among raters will inevitably occur as a result of their varying perceptions about the student's behavior. To some extent, these differences can be accounted for by the individual biases of those who are asked to observe and rate the student's behavior. This is referred to as "response set" and according to Reynolds and Kamphaus, includes such biases as antipathies or "halo effects" on the part of respondents. They stress, however, that not all differences among persons rating the student reflect bias, simply because students will behave differently in different settings. While the task of sorting out and accounting for differing perceptions of student behavior is one that is challenging for educators, using an integrated approach to the interpretation of results obtained from multiple sources of information will help to "minimize the threats to interpretation that would be present if only a single type of assessment procedure were used."

Chapter Eight
Eligibility Criteria

Emotional/Behavioral Disorders

Introduction

In order to find that a student has an emotional/behavioral disorder, the team must determine that the student meets eligibility criteria. The team must also specifically rule out the following exclusionary or special factors (see following section on special factors) as the primary cause of the student's behavior or emotional distress:

- Intellectual deficit
- Sensory deficits
- Health issues
- Cultural differences
- Linguistic differences
- Stressors from transient medical or psychosocial events
- Chemical use/abuse/addiction
- History of inconsistent educational programming

Educators may gather information regarding these exclusionary factors through the administration of the *Sociocultural Checklist, Home and Family Interview* and other assessment procedures outlined in these guidelines. To document eligibility, the team must show that it (a) systematically gathered information related to the exclusionary factors, and (b) reviewed and interpreted this information and (c) determined the impact of these factors on the student's social, emotional or behavioral functioning. The domain-specific procedures outlined in Chapter 7 will provide the team with a broad base of information.

It is recommended that, when appropriate, teams involve a cultural representative in reviewing the information and assisting in determining eligibility. Some commonly used standardized instruments have inadequate norms for evaluating minority populations. In addition, records may contain reports and labels that are subject to cultural bias. Therefore, all information will be more fairly treated if evaluated within the context of the social and cultural norms and expectations of the student.

Eligibility criteria for Emotional or Behavioral Disorders is divided into four areas in Minnesota Rule as well as in the E/BD manual, *Minnesota Identification and Eligibility for Children and Youth Experiencing Emotional or Behavioral Disorders* (State of Minnesota, 1991). The four main areas, along with specific recommendations, are presented below:

Area One

An established pattern must exist that is characterized by one or more of the following behavior clusters: severely aggressive or impulsive AND/OR severely withdrawn or anxious AND/OR severely disordered thought processes or unusual behavior patterns.

Recommendation: As general best practice, recommended procedures include using a standardized instrument that measures broad-based syndromes or dimensions (e.g., CBCL, TRF, BASC). Behavior rating scales are one of the most popular methods for gathering information, are frequently based on concepts that have different meanings in different cultures which can affect the ratings and interpretation of responses (e.g., hyperactivity, shyness, aggressiveness, independence, Vazquez et al, 1996).

The team must determine that the behavior is not due to (Nuttall, Sanchez, Osorio, Nuttall & Varvogli, 1996):

- temporary difficulties adjusting to a new environment.
- a reaction to racial teasing or harassment.
- lack of experience with choices and consequences.
- culturally-based differences in discipline and behavioral expectations.
- a culturally-based learning style which is more active and impulsive than that favored in the school environment.
- a culturally-based learning style which is more passive and dependent than that favored in the school environment.
- inadequate language skills or differences in verbal and nonverbal communication.

Area Two

The emotional or behavioral condition must adversely affect educational performance to the degree that it results in one of the following: unsatisfactory interpersonal relationships with an established significant impairment in personal, social, vocational, or academic skills OR unsatisfactory educational progress with an established significant impairment in academic, vocational, or personal or social skills.

Recommendation: The team must determine that the student has unsatisfactory interpersonal relationships with members of the same racial/cultural group as well as with persons of different background. The team must determine that the student's unsatisfactory educational progress is not due to:

- lack of intellectual ability.
- inconsistent or inadequate opportunities to learn.
- a culturally-based learning style that is different than that favored in the school environment.
- inadequate language skills or differences in verbal and nonverbal communication.

The team must document that appropriate instructional interventions have been implemented.

Area Three

The data collected must document that the emotional or behavioral impairment(s) interferes with learning AND occurs across settings AND over a long period of time OR occurs suddenly such as in a crisis.

Recommendation: The team must document that the impairment occurs in academic and nonacademic settings, in school and in the home or in the community. These findings must be supported by two or more of the following data sources:

- adaptive behavioral scales
- sociometric or social skills measures
- achievement measures
- cognitive measures
- grades
- systematic behavioral checklists
- systematic behavioral observations
- vocational skill inventories or reports

Area Four

The team must use the data collected to verify the following: the primary cause OR the primary cause that coexists with exclusionary factors AND not a disciplinary action.

Recommendation: To verify the primary cause or the cause that coexists with exclusionary factors, the data collected by the team should include the following:

- *Sociocultural Checklist.*
- *Home and Family Interview.*
- Student interview.
- Interview with adult who is knowledgeable of the student and of the student's racial/cultural background.
- Behavior checklist completed by more than one teacher, by a home-school liaison, or cultural representative, and by the family.
- Appropriate standardized social/emotional measures.
- Observations in academic and nonacademic settings.
- Achievement data from standardized instruments and/or nonstandardized measures.
- Comparisons of achievement and behavior with peers of similar racial/cultural background.
- Intellectual assessment when needed.

Consideration of Special Factors

In addition to the process outlined in the previous section, teams need to be cognizant of a number of other personal and social issues which must be considered when identifying emotional and behavioral disorders. To facilitate this process, many of the factors cited below are included in the *E/BD Assessment Summary Worksheet: Emotional/Behavioral Disorders* which can be seen at the end of this section. While the worksheet tends to be broader in scope in terms of examining special factors which need to be considered by teams, the following list contains specific questions that teams can use to address such factors. Teams should use such resources as the *Home and Family Interview* and *Sociocultural Checklist* to obtain information about these special factors. Specific questions that need to be considered by the team are listed in Chapter 7.

Introduction to the *E/BD Assessment Summary Worksheet*…

The *E/BD Assessment Summary Worksheet* was adapted from one used in the Anoka-Hennepin School District and is also based on the 1991 *E/BD Assessment Manual* developed by the Department of Children, Families & Learning. This worksheet is to be completed only after evaluators have finished their assessments. Refer to the information which has been obtained on this worksheet when completing the Assessment Summary Report. Note that Minnesota Rule states that in order for a learner to be eligible for special education and related services under the label of E/BD, criteria must be met in the four key areas included in this assessment worksheet.

Emotional/Behavioral Disorders Summary Worksheet

Minnesota Department of Education

Learner's Name: ..... Date of Staffing: .....

School: ..... Grade: .....

Assessment Team Members: .....

Instructions: This worksheet must be completed on all assessments for possible E/BD placements. The Assessment Team Members are the individuals specified on the *Notice of An Educational Assessment/Reassessment Plan*. This summary is to be completed only after those individuals have finished their assessments. Refer to this form when completing the *Assessment Team Summary Report*. Please note Minnesota Rule states that in order for a learner to be eligible for special education and related services under the label of E/BD, the following criteria must be met in the four areas described in the following sections. For more detailed information, please refer to the state rule which outlines the four criteria areas.

AREA 1

Indicate sources of information used for Area 1:

An established pattern must exist that is characterized by one or more of the following behavior clusters and is not due to cultural, language, or socioeconomic differences:

Severely Aggressive

- ☐ Kicking, biting, hitting, spitting, pinching
- ☐ Developmentally inappropriate-hurtful
- ☐ Physically or verbally abusive Impulsive or violent
- ☐ Destructive of property
- ☐ Intimidating
- ☐ Becoming hysterical or extremely angry when things do not go their way
- ☐ Threatening to others or excessively antagonistic
- ☐ Being cruel to animals

Anxious Behaviors

- ☐ Intense fears of school-school phobia
- ☐ Overly perfectionist
- ☐ Developing physical symptoms related to stress
- ☐ Frequent crying for no obvious reasons
- ☐ Adjustment disorders
- ☐ Child acts very happy, then very sad, in a very short period of time
- ☐ Toileting, sleeping or eating problems
- ☐ Fearful to try new things-fearful of failure
- ☐ Difficulties separating from caregivers
- ☐ Excessive physical complaints

Severely Withdrawn

- ☐ Pervasive unhappiness or a sad disposition
- ☐ Depression
- ☐ Wide mood swings
- ☐ Isolation from peers
- ☐ Consistently prefers solitary activities
- ☐ Loss of interest in activities
- ☐ Feelings of worthlessness
- ☐ Not liked by others
- ☐ Changes in sleeping and/or eating patterns
- ☐ Difficulties attaching to others
- ☐ Affective disorders

Impulsive Behaviors

- ☐ Easily distractible, unable to pay attention
- ☐ Difficulty staying with one task
- ☐ Difficulty staying in one place or position
- ☐ Difficulty waiting

Severely Disordered Thought Processes and Atypical Communication

- ☐ Atypical communication styles such as lacking meaningful language or the use of abstract languages
- ☐ Talking out loud to self frequently
- ☐ Reality distortion beyond normal developmental play and fantasy
- ☐ Situational inappropriate laughter, crying, sounds or language
- ☐ Hallucinations or delusions of grandeur
- ☐ Schizophrenia

Unusual Behavior Patterns

- ☐ Continual self-stimulation
- ☐ Overly affectionate behaviors towards unfamiliar persons
- ☐ Self-mutilation such as pinching one self, biting oneself, or head banging
- ☐ Rigid or ritualistic patterns
- ☐ Perseveration or obsession with specific objects
- ☐ Stereotypical movements such as spinning, tapping or rubbing

AREA 2

Indicate sources of information used for Area 2:

1. The established pattern(s) that have been targeted from Area 1 must be supported by multiple data sources to show that it adversely affects educational performance. There must be a demonstrable causal relationship between the student's behavior and a decrease in his/her educational performance.

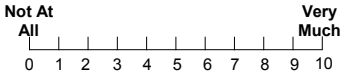
   A. Is the student's educational performance within a reasonable range of chronological age and ability level? ☐ Yes ☐ No

   B. If the student is performing below reasonable academic expectations, does the search for a cause point strongly to an emotional or behavioral disorder? ☐ Yes ☐ No

   C. Does the behavior impact student's pattern of school attendance? ☐ Yes ☐ No

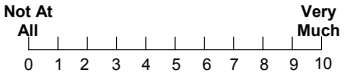
   D. Has the behavior impacted student's pattern of school performance in the past? ☐ Yes ☐ No

   E. Mark the extent to which the established pattern(s) from Area 1 interferes with a successful level of educational functioning.

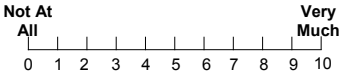


2. A pattern of inability to build or maintain satisfactory or interpersonal relations with peers, parent, teachers, and other significant adults necessary to the learning process. This means that the behavior must exist at unacceptable levels across settings. Mark extent to which a pattern of inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relations interferes with successful school functioning:

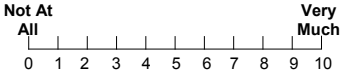
A. **Peers**



B. **Parent**



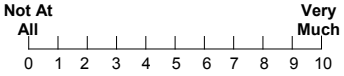
C. **Teachers**



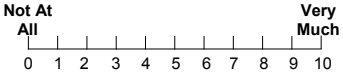
D. **Other Adults**

3. A pattern of failure to attain or maintain a satisfactory rate of educational progress refers to a difference between the student's potential to learn, and how much is being learned. There must be documentation of an established significant impairment in personal, social, vocational, or academic skills that is not due to an inconsistent education. Appropriate data sources to establish these factors are imperative. The team must verify if a significant impairment exists in any of the following:

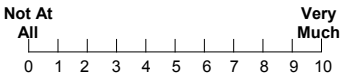
A. **Academic Skills:** The skills to apply information to age and ability appropriate tasks, to meet expectations for processing information and learning.



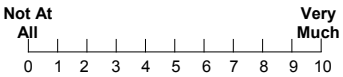
B. **Social Skills:** The skills to engage with peers and adults in both formal and informal manners. The skills to initiate and build relationships. The ability to manage one's behavior in a variety of environments.



C. **Vocational Skills:** The skills to arrive on time and prepared to follow directions and complete assigned tasks. The ability to manage personal needs in a work setting.



D. **Personal Skills:** The skills to effectively manage personal care skills, personal hygiene skills, communication change, and stress without verbal or physical harm to self or others.



AREA 3

Indicate sources of information used for Area 3:

The data must establish that the impairment affects items 1 and 2 and 3 or 4 listed below:

1. Severely interferes with the student's or others educational performance exhibited by:
   - Extremely negative attitudes toward learning ☐ Yes ☐ No
   - Demonstrating difficulties with abstract or logical thinking ☐ Yes ☐ No
   - Behavior which severely disrupts learning climate of others ☐ Yes ☐ No

AND

2. Is pervasive as evidenced by occurrences across educational settings, the home, or in community settings; the condition is pervasive and is evidenced in the following settings:
   - More than one teacher's class, recess, or lunch ☐ Yes ☐ No
   - With parents, relatives, or guardians ☐ Yes ☐ No
   - With neighbors, at church, social gatherings, or while shopping ☐ Yes ☐ No

AND

3. Duration; evidence must show that:
   - The impairment has been in evidence for 6 months ☐ Yes ☐ No

OR

4. A crisis of such intensity that the student is considered a danger to self and others; evidence much show that:
   - The behavior places the student or others in imminent danger* ☐ Yes ☐ No

** The team may use this criteria in place of item 3 (i.e., 6 month duration)*

AREA 4

Indicate sources of information used for Area 4:

The assessment team is responsible for verifying a large amount of information. Specifically, there are five major areas.

1. The behavior may occur with, but is not primarily the result of, intellectual, sensory, health, cultural, linguistic factors; the team concludes the following:
   - A. The behavior is *not* primarily due to these factors ☐ Yes ☐ No

2. The team must verify that the behavior is not primarily the result of a mismatch between the teacher, curriculum, classroom, or learning environment and when suspected, interventions were tried but were unsuccessful.
   - A. The behavior is *not* primarily due to educational factors ☐ Yes ☐ No

3. The team must verify that the behavior is not primarily the result of stressors such as transient medical or psychosocial events, chemical use, and/or drug addiction.
   - A. There is evidence or anecdotal records of a transient event ☐ Yes ☐ No
   - B. The transient event has led to an intense disruption of behavior ☐ Yes ☐ No
   - C. The behavior is *not* primarily the result of chemical use or abuse ☐ Yes ☐ No

4. The established behavioral pattern may occur with but is not primarily the result of a history of an inconsistent educational program. The whole student must be looked at, not as a single factor in isolation. Items which are checked "Yes" warrant further investigation.
   - A. The student has attended more than three schools in one year ☐ Yes ☐ No
   - B. The family's primary income source is seasonal or very inconsistent ☐ Yes ☐ No
   - C. The child has not completed an entire year at a single school ☐ Yes ☐ No

5. The team must verify that identification is not based solely on a conflict between the individual and political governmental entity or that it is the result of a disciplinary action. This verification is necessary to provide clear documentation that an eligibility decision was not reached because the student may have had a conflict with authority systems or for disciplinary actions. The team must verify the following:

   A. The eligibility decision was not based on a conflict with the system ..... ☐ Yes ☐ No

   B. The eligibility decision was not the result of a disciplinary action ..... ☐ Yes ☐ No

   C. The child has not completed an entire year at a single school ..... ☐ Yes ☐ No

Sociocultural Factors	Data Sources:	
Impact of diversity on student school performance: *Race and Culture* *Communication* *Socioeconomic Status* **Other**	☐ *Sociocultural Checklist* ☐ *Home and Family Interview* ☐ Other	

According to IDEA '97, a student is **NOT** eligible for special education services if one of the following is the determinant (primary) cause for the learning problem. Place a check in the appropriate box below:

Is the primary cause due to a lack of instruction in reading or math? ☐ Yes ☐ No

OR

Is the primary cause due to Limited English proficiency? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Based on the assessment data and other sources of information collected for this student, the team has concluded that:

The student meets criteria. ☐*Yes* ☐*No*

The student is in need of special education and related services. ☐*Yes* ☐*No*

Notes:

Mild to Moderate Mentally Impaired (MMI)

Introduction

Historically, the determination of mental retardation or mental impairment has been of particular concern for minority students in the United States. Minnesota Rule defines mild to moderate mentally impaired as "students with significantly subaverage general intellectual functioning resulting in or associated with concurrent deficits in adaptive behavior that may require special education instruction and related services." For all students, confirming the presence of deficits in adaptive behavior at home and in the community is essential for the determination of eligibility for MMI. For American Indian and African American students it is equally important to use procedures designed to reduce bias in the assessment process in order to make this determination.

Criteria for MMI (MR 3525.1333)

Two criteria must be met to establish eligibility for mild to moderate mentally impaired. The team must provide documentation of 1) adaptive behavior deficits during the developmental period and 2) significantly subaverage intellectual functioning. Each criteria component as it appears in Minnesota Rule is noted below along with recommendations for reducing bias in the assessment process. Educators are advised to utilize the *MMI Summary Worksheet* which appears at the end of this section in order to document procedures and information sources.

Adaptive Behavior

Includes performance that falls at or below the 15th percentile in the following adaptive behavior areas measured in both school and home or community on nationally-normed, technically adequate measures of adaptive behavior. These data (measures of adaptive behavior) are supported by written evidence drawn from *two or more* of the following sources:

- Documented systematic observation(s)
- Classroom work samples
- Interviews
- Sociometric measures
- Criterion referenced measures
- Educational history
- Medical history

Recommendation: This determination of the student's adaptive behavior level must be made using recommended procedures for nationally-normed tests. Recommended procedures for reducing bias in nationally-normed tests have been noted previously and include checking technical manuals for normative data, determining the match between sample population data and student, etc. There may be concerns that measures of adaptive behavior do not adequately reflect the developmental expectations, values, or child rearing practices of an American Indian or African American student. It may be necessary to modify interview questions and observation forms to capture parental perceptions of student performance in each of the required domains relative to family or cultural standards. In addition, it is recommended that evaluators determine from parents if the student has had a long history of general delay in two or more areas, especially when compared to siblings or peers (see Adaptive Behavior Domain, Chapter 7).

Areas of Adaptive Behavior

Area One—Personal or Independent Functioning

Personal or independent functioning includes competencies associated with looking after oneself. It identifies all essential behaviors a person must exhibit in order to be regarded as at least minimally competent in a typical environment.

Recommendation: The team needs to carefully describe, taking into consideration different cultural norms, "essential behavior" and a "typical environment" for the student. The parents or, if appropriate, a cultural representative need to be involved in making this determination.

Area Two—Personal or Social Functioning

Personal or social functioning includes all those behaviors involving the individual with other people that must be exhibited at minimally competent levels in order for the individual to be considered acceptable and successful in interpersonal relations.

Recommendation: The team should gather information regarding interpersonal relations with members of the same racial/ethnic group if possible. If this is not possible, a trained cultural representative can provide information and can perform observations to help determine if a student's functioning in this area is appropriate in terms of different cultural norms.

Area Three–Functional Academic Competencies

Functional academic competencies address basic fundamental literacy skills and knowledge of the basic concept of time and money. Functional academics refer to very basic reading and writing skills and to practical, everyday demands for knowledge of numerical and temporal relationships.

Recommendation: The team should consider the student's prior educational experiences and exposure to curriculum in interpreting data on functional academic competencies. For example, a student who has attended many different schools, may not have had instruction in a specific skill.

In addition it is also recommended to carefully examine the *School Environment Survey,* observation results and student's work samples to determine whether the classroom environment has affected the student's ability to perform the required work. If there is a question about whether or not a work sample represents the student's true ability to perform a task in a specific environment, the student should be asked to repeat the task on the work sample in a different setting and analyze the results.

Area Four–Vocational or Occupational Competencies

Student competencies associated with the vocational or occupational area are not expected to develop until the student's early school age years, and they become increasingly important at progressively higher grade levels. The vocational or occupational area includes three areas: knowledge about careers and work; appropriate attitudes and values concerning careers and work; and specific skills associated with job or career.

Recommendation: The team needs to consider information about different cultural expectations in the areas of knowledge about careers and work and appropriate attitudes and values concerning careers and work. Refer to the *Sociocultural Checklist* and the *Home and Family Interview* form for information about these issues. A cultural representative can help describe any differences in family or cultural expectations in the area of work.

Significantly Subaverage Intellectual Functioning

Subaverage functioning as indicated by an intelligence quotient below 70 plus or minus 1 standard error of measurement (using instruments with a reliability quotient of .90 or greater) on an intelligence test that is standard-

ized, nationally-normed, technically adequate, and individually administered."

Recommendation: As previously noted, students may receive lower scores on tests of intellectual ability due to differences in educational, socioeconomic, communication, or cultural background. Specific adaptations in test administration, scoring, or other accommodations, may be necessary in some rare cases.

It is important to remember that test scores do not determine eligibility. For example, the results of intellectual ability scores must be verified through multiple data sources such as interviews and observations as outlined in Chapter 7. Interpretation of assessment data is a responsibility of the team, including the parents. The team makes the determination of eligibility, not the scores.

Lack of Instruction in Reading or Math and Limited English Proficiency

IDEA states that a student shall not be found to have a disability "if the determinant factor for such determination is lack of instruction in reading or math or limited English proficiency."

Recommendation: The team should review both the *Home and Family Interview* and the *Sociocultural Checklist* as well as educational records for information about the school and instructional history of the student. If a student has had little exposure to the general education curriculum in reading or math, the team must establish this is not the determinant factor or primary cause of the learning problem.

Recommendation for Limited English Proficiency: The team should review information regarding the student's native language and English language proficiency found in the *Home Language Questionnaire*, the *Home and Family Interview* and the *Sociocultural Checklist* as well as the district's referral form. If the learner is limited English proficient, the team must establish that this is not the determinant factor or primary cause of the learning problem.

Introduction to the *MMI Summary Worksheet*…

MMI Summary Worksheet

Minnesota Department of Education

Teams must document their consideration of procedures used to reduce bias in the assessment process with American Indian or African American students. This form may be attached to the ASR to provide documentation.

Criteria Area	Data Sources	Interpretation
Intellectual Functioning ☐ Standardized instrument ☐ Supplemental procedures ☐ Other data sources		
Adaptive Behavior ☐ Personal or Independent Functioning ☐ ***Personal or Social Functioning*** ☐ Functional Academic Competencies ☐ Vocational or Occupational Competencies	☐ Documented systematic observations ☐ Classroom work samples ☐ Interviews ☐ Sociometric measures ☐ Criterion-referenced measures ☐ Educational history	
Sociocultural Factors Impact of diversity on student school performance: *Race and Culture* *Communication* *Socioeconomic Status* **Other**	Data Sources: ☐ *Sociocultural Checklist* ☐ *Home and Family Interview* ☐ Other	

According to IDEA '97, a student is **NOT** eligible for special education services if one of the following is the determinant (primary) cause for the learning problem. Place a check in the appropriate box below:

Is the primary cause due to a lack of instruction in reading or math ? ☐ Yes ☐ No

OR

Is the primary cause due to Limited English Proficiency ? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Based on the assessment data and other sources of information collected for this student, the team has concluded that:

The student meets criteria. ☐ Yes ☐ No

The student is in need of special education and related services. ☐ Yes ☐ No

Specific Learning Disabilities

Introduction

Specific learning disability is defined as a condition within the individual affecting learning relative to potential (MN Rule 3525.1341 Subp. 1). For every student assessed for a suspected SLD, there is the potential for bias in each criteria area. There are also requirements for teams to eliminate SLD exclusionary factors as a primary cause of the student's underachievement, complicating the process of reducing bias. The following information may assist teams in reducing the potential for bias in SLD assessment.

Criteria for SLD [M. R. 3525.1341 Subp. 2.]

Three criteria must be met at required levels to establish SLD eligibility. The team must provide documentation of 1) severe underachievement in response to usual classroom instruction, 2) severe discrepancy between general intellectual ability and achievement in one of seven areas, and 3) an information processing condition manifested in one of six components in a variety of settings. Information about each component must be sought from the parent and included as part of the assessment. Additional assessment data must confirm that the disabling effects of the SLD occur in a variety of settings. Each criterion component is explained in the following section and corresponding recommendations are provided.

Severe Underachievement

The student must demonstrate severe underachievement in response to usual classroom instruction. The performance measures used to verify this finding must be both representative of the student's curriculum and useful for developing instructional goals and objectives. The following assessment procedures are required to verify this finding.

Required Sources

Teams must include evidence of low achievement from sources such as:

- Cumulative record reviews
- Classwork samples
- Anecdotal teacher records
- Formal and informal tests
- Curriculum-based assessment results
- Also, the team may include achievement results from instructional support programs such as Title I

Recommendation: The methods used to assess severe underachievement must be related to the curriculum and

useful for developing instructional goals and objectives. The team must determine the methods and procedures to use in order to reduce bias in assessment. Care should be taken to follow the procedures outlined in the Achievement Domain found in Chapter 7.

Required Observation

At least one team member other than the student's regular teacher shall observe the student's academic performance in the regular classroom setting. In the case of a student served through an Early Childhood Special Education program or who is out of school, a team member shall observe the student in an environment appropriate for a student of that age.

Recommendation: It may be appropriate to have a trained cultural representative observe the student. Modifications may be needed to the observation form, along with additional information regarding the cultural relevance of some academic indicators (see Achievement Domain in Chapter 7).

Exclusionary Factors

Exclusionary factors relate specifically to underachievement. The team must show that it (a) systematically gathered information related to the exclusionary factors and that it (b) reviewed this information and considered the impact of these factors on the student. The team must specifically rule out the following factors as the cause of the underachievement:

- Vision, hearing or motor impairment
- Mental impairment
- Emotional or behavioral disorders
- Environmental, cultural or economic influence
- History of an inconsistent education program [M.R. 3525.1341 Subp. 2 (B) (3) (c)].

Recommendation: Information regarding exclusionary factors may be gathered through the *Sociocultural Checklist, Home and Family Interview,* and other assessment procedures outlined in these guidelines. It is recommended that, when appropriate, a cultural representative be involved in

gathering and reviewing assessment information to determine eligibility.

Severe Discrepancy

The student must demonstrate a severe discrepancy between ability and achievement determined through standardized tests in one of the following seven areas:

- basic reading skills
- reading comprehension
- mathematical calculation
- mathematical reasoning
- written expression
- oral expression
- listening comprehension

The demonstration of a severe discrepancy may not be based solely on the use of standardized tests. The team shall consider standardized test results as only one component of the eligibility criteria. The instruments used to assess the student's ability and achievement must be individually administered and interpreted by an appropriately licensed person using standardized procedures. For initial placement, the severe discrepancy must be equal to or greater than -1.75 standard deviations below the mean of the distribution of the difference scores for the general population of individuals at the student's chronological age.

Recommendation: Standard scores on ability and/or achievement tests for an African American or American Indian students may not be as reliable in establishing a severe discrepancy, depending on the level of difference in educational, communication, cultural or economic background (see Intellectual Domain, Chapter 7). Care must be taken to:

- Verify the results of both the general intellectual ability and achievement tests using supplemental procedures.
- Determine the effects of culture or bias on the derived scores (Information may be gathered through *Sociocultural Checklist*, *Home and Family Interview* and the assessment procedures outlined in the sections on the Intellectual and Achievement Domains in Chapter 7).
- Determine whether or not test results are representative of the student's functioning by comparing results to class work samples and teacher observations.

- Verify the presence of a severe discrepancy through use of the Minnesota Regression Table and an analysis of other available information.
- In rare cases, use the override procedure.

Information Processing

Information processing conditions occur in the areas of storage, organization, acquisition, retrieval, expression or manipulation of information. The assessment of information processing is performed using observations, teacher interviews, *Home and Family Interview*, and other informal methods. The team must analyze the data for patterns of behaviors that are similar across settings. Often, it is difficult to clearly identify observed behaviors that have a cultural component and distinguish them from those that reflect problems with processing information. As a result, it is recommended that multiple sources of information be gathered across different settings to support an information processing problem. Recommended data collection forms for information processing are included in the *SLD Companion Manual* (Minnesota Department of Children, Families & Learning, 1998).

According to Minnesota Rule, the team must have sufficient assessment data that verify the following conclusions:

- The student has an information processing condition.
- The disabling effects of the student's information processing condition occur in a variety of settings.

Recommendation: Information processing conditions may be determined and documented using observation techniques in a variety of settings. It is not necessary to use a standardized test to make this determination. However, the verification of an information processing condition relies heavily on professional training and determining a pattern in observational data (see *SLD Companion Manual*).

Some behaviors found on the Minnesota information processing data collection forms may be indicators of a potential information processing problem and are listed in Table 8.1. These same behaviors are also identified in the research literature, the *Sociocultural Checklist*, and other checklists as having a potential cultural basis. Students exhibiting problems in the behaviors noted in the chart may actually be demonstrating appropriate cultural behavior. If any of these behaviors are noted during an observation, interview, or checklist, the team should probe further to determine if the behavior is the result of cultural norms or is indicative of an information processing condition. If appropriate, a cultural representative may assist in the interpretation of observed data.

Lack of Instruction in Reading or Math & Limited English Proficiency

According to IDEA '97, a student shall not be found to have a disability "if the determinant factor for such determination is lack of instruction in reading or math or limited English proficiency.

Recommendation for Lack of Instruction in Reading or Math: The team should review both the *Home and Family Interview* and the *Sociocultural*

Table 8.1: Behaviors Related to Information Processing Problems with a Possible Cultural Component

The student has difficulty with…

- using planning skills
- responding on time
- participating in classroom activities
- making inferences
- maintaining an appropriate activity level
- maintaining concentration (distractible)
- planning behavior in advance (impulsive)
- being independent (not overly cooperative or) compliant
- interpreting social cues
- retaining and recalling sequences
- handing in assignments on time
- completing assignments
- aligning work spatially
- sequencing material
- naming or labeling objects or concepts
- recalling sounds associated with letters or words
- responding appropriately to nonverbal communication
- asking questions or giving answers related to the content
- summarizing information
- differentiating details from key concepts
- reading aloud or giving oral reports
- demonstrating how to do something
- learning new things easily
- understanding or processing information readily

Checklist for information about the school and instructional history of the student. If a student has had little exposure to the curriculum in reading or math, the team must establish this is not the determinant factor or primary cause of the learning problem.

Recommendation for Limited English Proficiency: The team should review information regarding the student's native language and English language proficiency found in the *Home Language Questionnaire* (completed at enrollment), the *Home and Family Interview* and the *Sociocultural Checklist* as well as the district's referral form. If the learner is limited English proficient, the team must establish that this is not the determinant factor or primary cause of the learning problem.

To help teams determine SLD eligibility, an SLD Summary Worksheet is presented on the following pages. The worksheet can be used to document team consideration of procedures that were used to reduce bias in the eligibility determination.

Introduction to the *SLD Summary Worksheet*…

When evaluating American Indian or African American students, it is recommended the team gather and consider information from a variety of sources, including observations, interviews and other types of data collection strategies. Teams must document their consideration of procedures used to reduce bias in the assessment process with American Indian or African American students. The *SLD Summary Worksheet*, which is presented on the following pages, was developed as a means to document this information and may be attached to the Assessment Summary Report of the due process forms.

SLD Summary Worksheet

Minnesota Department of Education

When evaluating American Indian or African American students, it is recommended the Team gather and consider information from a variety of sources, including observations, adaptive rating scales and other types of data collection strategies. Teams must document their consideration of procedures used to reduce bias in the assessment process with American Indian or African American students. This form may be attached to the Assessment Summary Report to provide documentation

Criteria Area	Data Sources	Interpretation
Severe Underachievement	*(Check all that apply)* ☐ cumulative record reviews ☐ classwork samples ☐ anecdotal teacher records ☐ formal and informal tests ☐ curriculum based assessment results ☐ results from instructional support programs such as Title I, etc. *Parent Information relative to severe underachievement:*	
Observation(s)		
Severe Discrepancy **General Intellectual Ability** ☐ Standardized instruments ☐ Supplemental procedures ☐ Other data sources ***Achievement*** ☐ basic reading skills ☐ reading comprehension ☐ mathematical calculation ☐ mathematical reasoning ☐ written expression ☐ oral expression ☐ listening comprehension *Was a severe discrepancy verified through observation(s)?* ☐ Yes ☐ No	*Parent Information relative to severe discrepancy:* Other sources:	

Criteria Area	Data Sources	Interpretation
Information Processing *(Check all that apply)* ☐ Storage ☐ Organization ☐ Acquisition ☐ Retrieval ☐ Expression ☐ Manipulation	*Parent Information relative to information processing:* Other sources:	
Does the information processing problem exist in a variety of settings? ☐ Yes ☐ No	Indicate setting(s) where information processing problem is observed: *(Check all that apply)* ☐ Home ☐ School ☐ Community ☐ Work site	
Exclusionary Factors Must be ruled out as primary cause of the student's underachievement. Note that there is some overlap with the sociocultural factors. *(Check all that apply)* ☐ vision, hearing, or motor impairment ☐ mental impairment ☐ emotional or behavioral disorders ☐ environmental, cultural, or economic influence ☐ history of an inconsistent educational program	*Parent Information relative to exclusionary factors:* Other sources:	
Sociocultural Factors Impact of diversity on student school performance: *Race and Culture* *Communication* *Socioeconomic Status* *Other*	Data Sources: ☐ *Sociocultural Checklist* ☐ *Home and Family Interview* ☐ Other	

According to 1997 IDEA , a student is **NOT** eligible for special education services if one of the following is the determinant (primary) cause for the learning problem. Place a check in the appropriate box below:

Is the primary cause due to a lack of instruction in reading or math ? ☐ Yes ☐ No

OR

Is the primary cause due to Limited English Proficiency ? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Based on the assessment data and other sources of information collected for this student, the team has concluded that:

The student meets criteria. ☐ Yes ☐ No

The student is in need of special education and related services. ☐ Yes ☐ No

Speech or Language Impairment

Introduction

The distinction between communication differences and disorders is a fundamental concern of speech/language clinicians. The continuum of communication variation due to regional dialects, socioeconomics, and the influence of other languages have been discussed at length in these guidelines (Chapters 2, 7, 9, and 10). At the time of eligibility determination, the team must review information on the student's language background and determine that the student exhibits an impairment rather than a difference that can be attributed to the sociocultural factors.

A speech or language impairment is defined in Minnesota Rule as a condition that affects a student's ability to communicate and "that adversely affects a student's educational performance." Speech and language impairments have four criteria areas, each with its own definition: fluency, voice, articulation, and language. As is evident in the subcategory recommendations which follow, greater care to distinguish speech and language differences from disorders needs to be taken in the areas of articulation and language.

Consideration for dialectical differences is embedded in each of the criteria areas. One part of the evaluation method for each area is the judgment of a speech/language clinician and another adult. For speakers of nonstandard English, the communication behavior should be judged as interfering with communication by an adult who shares the student's cultural and language background or who is knowledgeable of the nonstandard dialect. Teams are recommended to follow the procedures for assessing the Communication Domain as outlined in Chapter 7.

Criteria for Speech and Language Impairments (MR 3525.1343)

Fluency Disorder

Fluency disorders are defined as "the intrusion or repetition of sounds, syllables, and words; prolongations of sounds; avoidance of words; silent blocks; or inappropriate inhalation, exhalation, or phonation patterns. These patterns may also be accompanied by facial and body movements associated with the effort to speak. Fluency patterns that can be attributed only to dialectical, cultural, or ethnic differences or to the influence of a foreign language should not be identified as a disorder."

Students must meet the following criteria in order to be determined to have a fluency disorder:

a. The behavior interferes with communication as judged by a teacher of communication disorders and either another adult or the student, and

b. dysfluent behaviors occur during at least five percent of the words spoken in two or more speech samples.

Recommendation: As noted above, whenever there are concerns that the student speaks a nonstandard form of English, the fluency should be judged as dysfluent by an adult who shares the student's language and cultural background or who is knowledgeable of the nonstandard dialect.

Voice Disorder

A voice disorder is defined in rule as "the absence of voice or presence of abnormal quality, pitch, resonance, loudness, or duration. Voice patterns that can be attributed only to dialectical, cultural, or ethnic differences or to the influence of a foreign language should not be identified as a disorder."

Students must meet the following criteria in order to be determined to have a voice disorder:

a. the behavior interferes with communication as judged by a teacher of communication disorders and either another adult or the student; and

b. achievement of a moderate to severe vocal severity rating is demonstrated on a voice assessment profile administered on two separate occasions, two weeks apart, at different times of the day.

Recommendation: As noted elsewhere in these guidelines, variations of English affect such aspects of language as loudness and pitch as well as pronunciation and syntax. The team should ascertain that the perceived problems with vocal quality, pitch, loudness, or other characteristics are not typical of the student's language or cultural group. As noted above, whenever there are concerns that the student speaks a nonstandard form of English, the voice quality should be judged as impaired by an adult who shares the student's language and cultural background or who is knowledgeable of the nonstandard dialect.

Articulation Disorder

An articulation disorder is defined as "the absence of or incorrect production of speech sounds that are developmentally appropriate. Articulation patterns that can be attributed only to dialectical, cultural, or ethnic differences or to the influence of a foreign language should not be identified as a disorder."

Students must meet at least two of the following four criteria in order to be determined to have an articulation disorder:

The team must document that:

a. the behavior interferes with communication as judged by a teacher of communication disorders and either another adult or the student.

In addition, the team must document that the learner meets at least one of criteria options b, c or d:

b. test performance falls 2.0 standard deviations below the mean on a technically adequate, norm-referenced articulation test; or

c. performance on a pressure consonant test indicates problems in nasal resonance; or

d. a student is nine years of age or older and a sound is consistently in error as documented by two three-minute conversational speech samples.

Recommendation: As noted above, whenever there are concerns that the student speaks a nonstandard form of English, the articulation should be judged as impaired by an adult who shares the student's language and cultural background or who is knowledgeable of the nonstandard dialect.

With regard to option b, the *Test Selection Checklist* found in these guidelines should be utilized in choosing a technically adequate instrument. Subgroup norms for nonstandard English speakers may be appropriate. In determining eligibility through option b or d, the team should review the phonological charts found in Chapters 9 and 10 and ascertain that the perceived errors in pronunciation are not, in fact, characteristic of a nonstandard English dialect.

Language Disorder

Determining that a student has a language disorder requires the greatest level of skill and analysis of the areas of speech and language impairments. Language development and usage is influenced by a multitude of factors, including the family's language, educational, and socioeconomic background; student rearing practices; health and developmental factors; exposure to a variety of experiences and concepts; and culturally-based narrative styles. Minnesota Rule defines a language disorder as "a breakdown in communication as characterized by problems in expressing needs, ideas, or information that may be accompanied by problems in understanding. Language patterns that can be attributed only to dialectical, cultural, or ethnic differences or to the influence of a foreign language should not be identified as a disorder."

As with the area of articulation, the team has some options in determining eligibility. The team must document that the student meets both a and b:

a. the behavior interferes with communication as judged by a teacher of communication disorders and either another adult or the student; and

b. an analysis of a language sample or documented observation of communicative interaction indicates the student's language behavior falls below or is different from what would be expected given consideration to chronological age, developmental level, or cognitive level.

In addition, the student must meet either c or d:

c. the student scores 2.0 standard deviations below the mean on at least two technically adequate, norm-referenced language tests if available; or

d. if technically adequate, norm-referenced language tests are not available to provide evidence of a deficit of 2.0 standard deviations below the mean in the area of language, two documented measurement procedures indicate a substantial difference from what would be expected given consideration to chronological age, developmental level, or cognitive level. These procedures may include additional language samples, criterion-referenced instruments, observations in natural environments, and parent reports.

Recommendation: As noted above, whenever there are concerns that the student speaks a nonstandard form of English, the language should be judged as impaired by an adult who shares the student's language and cultural background or who is knowledgeable of the nonstandard dialect.

With regard to option b, the team should follow the recommendations for gathering analyzing language samples found in the Communication Domain in Chapter 7 as well as the observation guidelines found in Chapter 6. In addition to dialectical differences in pronunciation and syntax, the team should be aware of differences in narrative style and conversational rules that are culturally-based. Wyatt (1995) indicates that the following behaviors are suggestive of a language impairment when observed in African American children.

- The student rarely initiates verbal interactions with same language or dialect peers.
- Peers rarely initiate verbal interactions with the student.

- The student does not respond verbally when verbal interactions are initiated by peers.
- The student's communication has little or no effect on the actions of peers.
- The student does not engage in dialogue with peers.
- The student uses gestures rather than speech to communicate.
- The student's facial expressions, eye contact, and/or other nonverbal aspects of language and culture are inappropriate.
- Facial expressions and/or actions of peers indicate that they may be having difficulty understanding the student.

Some of the listed behaviors are questionable when applied to American Indian students, particularly those involving verbal versus nonverbal responses. Because of differences in degree of acculturation and due to the smaller research base on communication development among American Indian students, teams are advised to consult with a cultural representative when these behaviors are observed

With regard to option c, the *Test Selection Checklist* found in these guidelines should be utilized in choosing technically adequate instruments. Subgroup norms for nonstandard English speakers may be appropriate and should be utilized when available.

As noted above in option d, the team has the option to draw upon additional language samples, observations, or other procedures when there is no technically adequate standardized instrument. A list of additional assessment strategies that can be used for this purpose may be found in the Communication Domain in Chapter 7.

Introduction to the *Speech or Language Summary*

Speech or Language Summary Worksheet

Minnesota Department of Education

Teams need to document their consideration of procedures to reduce bias in the assessment process when assessing American Indian or African American students. This form may be attached to the Assessment Summary Report to provide documentation.

Criteria Area	Data Sources	Interpretation
A. Fluency Disorder 1. Two judgments of behavior interfering with communication; and 2. 5% dysfluency rate on two or more speech samples.	1. Judgment by: ☐ teacher of communication disorders ☐ parent/another adult of similar language or cultural background ☐ child 2. Speech samples Sample #1/rate of_____% Sample #2/rate of_____%	
B. Voice Disorder 1. Two judgments of behavior interfering with communication, and 2. Moderate to severe vocal severity rating on a voice profile administered on two separate occasions, two weeks apart, at different times during the day.	1. Judgment by: ☐ teacher of communication disorders ☐ parent/another adult of similar language or cultural background ☐ child 2. Speech samples Sample #1/rate of_____% Sample #2/rate of_____%	
C. Articulation Disorder 1. Two judgments of behavior interfering with communication; And 2, 3, or 4 Below 2. Test performance falls 2.0 standard deviations below the mean on a technically adequate instrument; 3. Pressure consonant test indicates problem in nasal resonance; 4. A pupil nine years of age or older with a sound consistently in error as documented by two three-minute speech samples; errors are not characteristic of nonstandard English.	1. Judgment by: ☐ teacher of communication disorders ☐ parent/another adult of similar language or cultural background ☐ child 2. Test performance of ___ standard deviation (S.D.) below mean. 3. Test performance indicates problem of nasal resonance is 4. Speech samples Sample #1/rate of_____% Sample #2/rate of_____%	

Criteria Area	Data Sources	Interpretation
D. Language Disorder 1. Two judgments of behavior interfering with communication 2. Student's language development falls below or is different that what would be expected given consideration to chronological age, developmental age, or cognitive levels; *And either 3, or 4* 3. Performance on two tests falls 2.0 standard deviations below the mean on technically adequate, standardized, norm-referenced tests; **OR** 4. Two documented measurement procedures indicates a substantial difference from what would be expected given consideration to chronological age, developmental age, or cognitive level.	1. Judgments by: ☐ teacher of communication disorders ☐ parent/another adult of similar language or cultural background ☐ child 2. Language performance is below or different than that expected for student's ☐ chronological age ☐ developmental age ☐ cognitive level *And either 3, or 4* 3. Test performance of ☐ S.D. below mean on test #1 **AND** ☐ S.D. below mean on test #2 4. Procedures (Describe): Procedure #1 _____ Procedure #2 _____	
Sociocultural Factors Impact of diversity on student school performance: *Race and Culture* *Communication* *Socioeconomic Status* **Other**	Data Sources: ☐ *Sociocultural Checklist* ☐ *Home and Family Interview* ☐ Other	
According to IDEA '97, a student is **NOT** eligible for special education services if one of the following is the determinant (primary) cause for the learning problem. Place a check in the appropriate box below: *Is the primary cause due to a lack of instruction in reading or math*? ☐ Yes ☐ No OR *Is the primary cause due to Limited English Proficiency*? ☐ Yes ☐ No		
Based on the assessment data and other sources of information collected for this student, the team has concluded that: *The student meets criteria*. ☐ Yes ☐ No *The student is in need of special education and related services.* ☐ Yes ☐ No		

Chapter Nine

Background Information—American Indians

Introduction

The 1990 U.S. census indicates that there are approximately 1,878,285 American Indians throughout the United States. This is considered a low estimate, however. There are 550 federally recognized Native American Nations in the United States which represent 1.1 percent of the total U.S. population. Among American Indians there are many cultures, beliefs, and religious practices. American Indians should not be viewed as a homogeneous group because their cultures are so varied.

American Indians have some of the lowest incomes of all residents in Minnesota; many live well below the poverty level. This in itself creates a situation that requires a different approach to assessing the American Indian student. The strong link between socioeconomic status and school success in all populations has been well researched. Another dynamic that affects students are the many American Indian adults who did not have good educational experiences themselves and consequently do not trust the educational system to address their children's needs.

Minnesota has an American Indian population of approximately 50,000. The predominant groups in Minnesota are the Anishinabe (Ojibwe or Chippewa) and the Dakota peoples. In addition, there are Hochunk, Menomonie, and Oneida Indians from Wisconsin who live in Minnesota plus American Indians from tribes throughout the United States. Calculating the exact number of Indian students is difficult, but about 15,500 students were enrolled in districts with federal Title IX programs for Indian Education in the school year 1997-98. It is estimated that the total number of American Indian students in Minnesota is between 17,000 and 18,000. Of these students, 90% attend public schools, while the remainder attend tribal schools.

Detailed information about the current and historical traditions of Indian peoples in Minnesota is beyond the scope of these guidelines but is worthy of study by all educators and students. One excellent source of information about such topics as languages, culture, sovereignty, and treaty rights can be found in *American Indian History, Culture and Language: Curriculum Framework (*Minnesota Department of Children, Families & Learning, 1995).

Nationally, approximately 22 percent of American Indians live full time on reservations and trust lands which are regarded as cultural, linguistic and

spiritual centers of Indian nations. In Minnesota, there are seven Anishinabe or Ojibwe reservations and four Dakota communities:

Anishinabe reservations*: Grand Portage, Boix Forte, Red Lake, White Earth, Leech Lake, Fond du Lac, and Mille Lacs*

Dakota Communities*: Shakopee-Mdewakanton, Prairie Island, Lower Sioux, and Upper Sioux*

The exact percentage of Minnesota Indians who live on these reservations is not known. A portion of the American Indian population moves back and forth between their reservations and towns or cities outside of the reservation. This creates situations where American Indian students are moving frequently between different environments, causing some to experience loss of identity and other problems related to acculturation. Non-Indian special educators often have difficulties in perceiving and understanding the cultural identity of American Indians, whether they live in urban or rural settings.

Understanding American Indian Cultural Identity

For non-Indians, understanding students' cultural identity can be puzzling. If the student is not successful in school, teachers may be uncertain whether this is due to a cultural difference between school and home or if it is indicative of a disability. Special educators who are responsible for selecting and interpreting standardized test results may not be attuned to the influence of race, culture, and language. In a discussion of cultural identity, a Minnesota Indian Home-School Liaison who participated in a focus group about special education services (Minnesota Department of Children, Families & Learning, 1996) stated that American Indian families are "on a continuum, ranging from those who follow a traditional lifestyle to those who are very acculturated." As a result, values and beliefs may not match lifestyle, and individuals who may outwardly appear to be acculturated in terms of dress and employment may still maintain traditional spiritual beliefs and cultural values.

Both "traditional" and "acculturated" American Indian students are at risk in Minnesota schools but the nature of their risk is different. For example, some Indian educators believe that traditional students are more likely to experience academic problems while students from acculturated homes experience behavior problems more often. Among those who serve American Indian students, this phenomenon is often described as the "second generation boarding school" effect (see "Language Loss" in this chapter for more information on boarding schools).

Another important aspect of American Indian culture is the differing concepts of "disability," "impairment," or "handicap." These terms are not easily translated into American Indian languages or conceptual frameworks. Although persons with severe disabilities are recognized as different in Indian communities, a wide range of differences are still accepted, in general, as "normal." Persons with disabilities were not historically excluded or shunned in American Indian communities as they were in many European cultures.

The list of indicators shown on the next page, *Understanding American Indian Identity* was generated by a group of Indian Home-School Liaisons in Minnesota.

Understanding American Indian Cultural Identity

- Indian communities need elders to build their knowledge and sense of identity.
- Where a family lives may be a clue as to their cultural orientation (i.e., families living in traditional communities versus those who have moved to towns and cities).
- Families that are more traditional may have expectations for their children that are different from the expectations of schools.
- Knowing a family's relatives and their background may help to identify a particular family or student's cultural orientation.
- Families who have moved away from their community (e.g., to the suburbs) may wish to leave their Indian identity behind.
- Artifacts in the home may indicate cultural identity (presence of cedar, sage, dream catchers, feathers, Indian artwork).
- Even students who are monolingual English speakers may be influenced by their community's native language in such areas as response time, conversational rules, vocabulary, and syntax.
- A student's activities or hobbies may be indicative of their cultural identity. Students who take part in cultural activities such as drumming groups and pow wows probably have a stronger cultural identity than those who do not.
- A student's knowledge of Indian traditions is indicative of cultural identity. Ask students if they know what tribe they belong to (or what tribes they are descended from), what their home reservation is, if they have an Indian name or nickname.
- Unfortunately, many Indian children are in foster homes. If they are in non-Indian foster homes, this may affect their cultural identity.
- Families moving back to the "res" from the metropolitan area (because of increased availability of jobs) experience culture shock.
- Be aware of cultural clashes between "res kids" and "city kids."

Working With American Indian Families

Approximately two-thirds of the Indian Home-School Liaisons in Minnesota conduct home or family visits. There are many purposes for these visits; liaisons report that they conduct home visits to check in with the student or address family needs. If preferred by the family, some liaisons hold IEP meetings in the home. Indian Home-School Liaisons also help families with a variety of other needs by distributing clothing, household items, food, etc., which helps to build good relations with families. Readers are advised

to review *Tips for Successful Visits and Meetings with American Indian Families* which appears on the following page and which contains a series of tips and recommendations generated by a group of Minnesota's Indian home-liaisons.

Tips for Successful Visits and Meetings with American Indian Families

- Visit frequently. The more often you visit a family, the more comfortable families feel visiting the school in turn.
- Set up the visit ahead of time by phone or in writing. If the family does not have a phone, send a note home with the student and also mail a letter to the home. Stopping by at a time when the parents are known not to be home and leaving a letter in the door is also suggested.
- Give parents a choice of meeting places: the school, their home, or a neutral place such as a coffee shop or community center.
- Be aware of transportation issues if you are trying to visit with a family at school or at a community center.
- On the first family visit, include someone who already has a relationship with the family. Go with the Indian Home-School Liaison if, as a special educator, you wish to visit the home, but don't have a relationship with the family.
- Be prepared not to be invited inside when you go to a home. Be persistent. Go again.
- Don't wear a "power suit" or carry a briefcase. Dress casually and carry a knapsack or bag if needed.
- Begin every visit or meeting by visiting with the family socially.
- Use formal terms of address with family members (Mr. and Mrs.) to show respect. Use Mr. and Mrs. to address a couple that shares a home.
- Always accept refreshments if offered when visiting the home. Offer refreshments to the parents when meeting in school or other locations.
- Bring a small gift, especially on the first visit. Food such as cookies or snacks, books and activities for children, or educational materials about the tribe's history and culture are suggested.
- Play and interact with the children while in the home; this will help to establish rapport and build trust with the parents.
- Don't use formal interview or observation forms during the home visit. Review the questions before the visit, and then record information afterward.
- Don't be judgmental about people's homes (neatness, style of dress, etc.).
- Hold IEP meetings in the home or a neutral site if parents agree; school staff should offer to bring refreshments if the whole team is going to the home.
- Listen and observe carefully when visiting homes.

Special education teams are advised to be particularly sensitive when meeting with families to discuss touchy subjects such as behavior problems. The conversation about the student's behavior should be limited to the parents and the Indian Home-School Liaison or another person that the family trusts. Don't confront the family in a large group (e.g., principal, counselor, school social worker, and teacher).

Team members should also take time to build a relationship with families without being "pushy." Ask parents what the team can do to help them. Making personal contacts with parents in the community also helps to build a relationship, create trust, and break down the barriers between the "system" and American Indian families. For students who are in foster home, school personnel can try to establish a relationship with extended family members when possible as well as with the foster parents.

Families may be very cautious about revealing sensitive information because of privacy concerns. Share information about sensitive topics with other team members on a "need to know" basis. Sometimes, information needs to be discussed at team meetings but should not be recorded in detail on the Assessment Summary Report (ASR) or a similar document. If needed, brief notes can be included in the record such as the fact that a student is seeing a private counselor or that the family is involved with county social services without giving details.

In working with Indian families, teamwork and consensus are important. The emphasis is on process rather than product. Establishing harmonious, trusting relationships may take priority over completing paperwork or following an agenda.

American Indian Languages and Communication Styles

American Indian culture relies on the oral traditions of the elders for the preservation of storytelling, events, the different ceremonies, songs, dances, legends, creation, and history of the people. Maintaining the language means cultural survival for the younger generation. One common misperception is that American Indian languages had no written form prior to European contact. This is not true. Maya, Olmec, and Zapotec languages spoken in Mexico and Central America were written languages based on hieroglyphic recording. Other written forms included picture writing in which each picture stood for an idea in the language. The Anishinabe (Ojibwe) people of Minnesota used a combination of picture writing with other devices to make maps, send messages, and record information about songs, ceremonies, and historical events. The Dakota used a similar picture writing system to communicate information.

Language variation is one of the most significant differences among American Indian tribes. From over 300 distinct languages spoken by tribes north of Mexico, 150 to 200 of these languages survive today. Each tribe speaks a different native language. Groups of languages, however, are historically related and have been grouped in 18 language families. In Minnesota, Dakota is a dialect of a single language which includes three dialects: Dakota, Nakota, and Lakota. The Dakota communities of Minnesota use the Dakota dialect. The Nakota dialect is used by the Yankton and Yanktonai and can also be heard on the Sissiton Reservation of South Dakota, while the Lakota dialect is spoken by tribal members who live at Pine Ridge in the same state.

Ojibwe (Ojibwemowin) is a single language with many dialects. Ojibwe is part of the Algonkian language family. The Eastern branch of the Algonkian language family includes languages such as Abnaki Narragansett, Delaware and several others. The Western branch includes Arapaho, Blackfoot, Cheyenne, Gros Ventre, and Sutaio. The Central branch, of which Ojibwe is a part, also includes languages such as Cree, Potawatomi, Menominee, and many others. Ojibwe is a highly complex and very descriptive language. According to the *Guiness Book of World Records,* Ojibwe is one of the hardest languages in the world for non-native speakers to learn. The language includes over 6000 verb forms.

Both Ojibwe and Dakota:

- are extremely complex in terms of grammar, morphology, and phonology;
- are difficult to learn as a second language;
- have a strong oral tradition for transmitting information from one generation to the next;
- had systems of written communication prior to contact with Europeans; and
- are currently being restored as living languages using phonetic writing systems;

In addition to cultural differences in communication style, the communication patterns of American Indian students enrolled in Minnesota public schools may be affected by three issues: language loss, language influence, and health factors.

Language Loss

Language loss occurs when proficiency in a native language is lost over time (voluntarily or involuntarily), but speakers of that language do not

become fully proficient in another language. Language loss was hastened by U.S. government policies for the repression of Indian cultures and languages and forced assimilation.

By the late 1800's and into the early years of the 20th century, a great many American Indian languages were no longer spoken. The loss of language was partly a result of federal government policies which forced American Indian children to attend government and mission run boarding schools.

The major goal of the boarding schools became the total assimilation of American Indians into American culture and the eradication of distinct American Indian cultures. One method of eradicating American Indian cultures took the form of eliminating use of Indian languages. These quotations from the 19th century illustrate the U.S. government's systematic efforts to repress the use of Indian languages and to substitute the use of English (St. Clair & Leap, 1982):

> *"... you will please inform the authorities of this school that the English language only must be taught the Indian youth placed there for educational and industrial training..."*
>
> *"The only way the Indian children can be taught successfully...is to take them entirely away from their parents so that they will not hear their native tongue spoken."*

In many, if not most of the boarding schools, American Indian children were forbidden to speak their own language, and when caught speaking their language, they were severely punished by boarding school authorities. This assault on American Indian languages is bitterly remembered in American Indian communities today. As a result of the "English only" policies of boarding schools and other influences, almost 150 American Indian languages were lost.

Due to these policies, some Indians did not speak either their native language or English well. This affected the way American Indian parents spoke with their children and resulted in a pattern of language loss across several generations. Most American Indian students in Minnesota now speak English as their only language or primary language but may still be impacted by cross-generational language loss as well as by residual native language influence.

Language Influence

American Indians sometimes use the terms "Res English" or "Red English" to describe the speech of Indians who speak English that is influenced by their ancestral tribal language. Indian educators in Minnesota have

commented that they can observe the influence of Ojibwe on students' speech and can also observe differences in speech across different reservations. This language influence is thought to affect deep structure (thinking patterns) of language as well as surface features (morphology, syntax, phonology). However, these differences have not been extensively researched or described.

Health factors

The rate of otitis media (ear infections) is higher in American Indian reservation communities than in the population as a whole. Otitis media during early childhood can affect language development, whether or not it results in permanent hearing loss. Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) and Fetal Alcohol Effect (FAE) are also issues for the American Indian communities in Minnesota, as are many other environmental risk factors related to poverty. Because of these multiple health factors, some researchers feel that American Indians are at greater risk for communication disorders than the general population.

Incorporation of American Indian Words into English Language

Even as American Indians suffered language loss, American Indian languages were contributing significantly to English and other world languages. In the United States, many cities, towns, states, rivers, lakes, and natural landscape features retain their ancient, although sometimes slightly altered, American Indian names. Twenty four states have names derived from American Indian languages. Minnesota, for example, is a Dakota word meaning "clouded waters." Numerous words of American Indian origin have also been incorporated into English.

Language Renewal…

Analysis has shown that many English varieties characteristically found in American Indian and Alaska Native speech communities contain phonological and grammatical rules that in no way replicate the conventions of standard or vernacular English. In some surprising ways, however, the rules appear to parallel the grammatical details of the ancestral Indian language of the speaker's home community... This language-specific grammatical uniqueness means that there are as many different forms of Indian English as there are different Indian languages and language traditions. Indian English speakers acknowledge this fact frequently–as, for example, when they identify a person's tribal affiliation merely by calling attention to some specific features in the person's spoken English.

William Leap, *Semilingualism as a Form of Linguistic Proficiency,* p. 150, Language Renewal Among American Indian Tribes (1982)

Some Characteristics of American Indian Culture and Communication Style

American Indian students' use of the English language may be influenced by language loss as well as by influence from historic native languages. In 1998, the University of Minnesota-Duluth assisted the Department of Children, Families & Learning by gathering information on language issues from American Indian educators. This report concluded that differences in pronunciation and syntax are intertwined with differences in cultural values. Students raised in traditional American Indian settings display communication traits that are often viewed as

disrespectful or noncompliant by teachers who are not familiar with American Indian culture. Non-Indian teachers and assessors may unknowingly misinterpret these traditional behaviors. Some of the major areas of difference in communication style are language development, eye contact, class participation, and latency of response. Each communication style is described below:

Language development–Older tribal members may not attempt to elicit sounds or words with babies and may not engage in reciprocal verbal exchanges with infants. Families may not engage in question/answer exchanges to elicit language from young children.

Eye contact–Many American Indian students will not make eye contact with the teacher when spoken to; this is a traditional way to show respect for teachers and others who offer to speak. These students are brought up to interact smoothly within a group rather than "stand out" in a crowd.

Class participation–Some American Indian students do not volunteer or raise their hands to participate for fear of "standing out" or "appearing to know more" than their peers. If one student gives an incorrect response when called on by a teacher, other students may be reluctant to give the correct answer because they do not want their classmate to feel badly. Many American Indian students are not comfortable with individual praise.

Group interactions–Many American Indian students work well in cooperative groups and need private recognition. Learning is enhanced when lessons presented in fable-story form and are consistent with traditional teaching methods.

Latency of response–Some American Indian students demonstrate latency or slowness of response. This may be interpreted to mean that the student does not know the answer or that he/she has an information processing problem.

Other characteristics of American Indian culture and communication style include the following:

- Valuing humor.
- Perceiving words and thought as having power to heal and power to do harm.
- Addressing elders with great respect.
- Taking time to think before speaking.

- Speaking softly when responding.
- Feeling that it is improper and intrusive to ask "personal questions" of someone in an initial meeting.
- Feeling comfortable with silence. Waiting until someone is finished speaking before responding. Pausing often to reflect while speaking. Expecting listeners to wait during pauses until the speaker is ready to continue.
- Waiting and listening when joining a group that is engaged in conversation, rather than starting to talk immediately.
- Valuing the ability to wait and be patient.
- Valuing cooperation and avoiding competition.
- Giving verbal greetings, accompanied by waves or nods of the head.
- Feeling comfortable with physical contact in public such as touching someone's arms or shoulders.
- Not volunteering advice unless asked.
- Avoiding certain topics of conversation such as traditional ceremonies, medicine, and spirits.
- Communicating criticism indirectly through another family member. Viewing direct criticism as rude and disrespectful.
- Preferring realistic language environments to abstract contexts. Preferring to observe an activity or task repeatedly before attempting performance. American Indian students may be reluctant to display their performance skills on demand in either the classroom or in testing situations.
- Feeling uncomfortable with punishment, contingent rewards, and openly manipulative behavior of others.

In a study conducted by the University of Minnesota-Duluth, information was also gathered through a survey disseminated at the 1998 Title IX Johnson O'Malley Workshop for Indian Education program staff. Survey participants were asked a variety of questions pertaining to communication. There was general consensus among Indian educators attending the conference that American Indian students do exhibit unique communication patterns.

- Do you feel that American Indian students have their own way of talking or acting? 71.6% *Definitely*, 23% *A Little*, 5.2% *Not Really*

- Do non-Indian teachers ever misunderstand what Indian students are saying or how they are acting? 72.5% *Often*, 27.5% *Sometimes*, 0% *No*
- Do native languages–Ojibwe/Dakota/Lakota–have an effect on Indian students' use of English? 27% *Noticeable*, 56.8% *Some*, 15% *Not Really*
- Are there silent ways of communicating (besides pointing with the lips) that non-Indian teachers and administrators don't understand? 41.6% *A Lot*, 55.% *Some*, 2.8% *Not Really*
- Do American Indian students ever allow themselves to "look bad" or "look dumb" to keep another Indian student from "looking dumb?" 68% *Yes*, 21% *I Don't Know*, 11% *No*
- Do American Indian students ever cause "trouble" to distract attention away from another student who is about to be "embarrassed" or "singled out?" 33.33% *Often*, 44.5% *Sometimes*, 19% *I Don't Know*
- Do American Indian students feel pressure not to do well in school? 40.5% *A Lot*, 48.7% *Some*, 10.8% *Not Really*
- If there is pressure to not do well in school, where does it come from? 36.3% *Other Indian Students*, 38% Community, 18% *Some Homes*, 7% *School/Faculty*

While relatively few non-Indians attended the conference and completed the survey, those non-Indians who responded seemed less aware of the differences that were perceived by American Indian respondents. On items where American Indian respondents indicated significant differences, non-Indian participants were more likely to indicate moderate or no differences.

Current Status of Ojibwe and Dakota Languages

Today, many more American Indian languages are being transcribed into written forms. These languages are being taught at tribal schools, American Indian alternative schools, a number of public schools in Minnesota, tribal community colleges and some major universities in the United States and Canada. In Minnesota, American Indian languages are accepted as second languages in universities. Converting spoken languages into written form is not an easy process. Some languages, such as Ojibwe, include several dialects. Deciding which dialect to record and teach is often a difficult choice. In addition, sounds exist in Indian languages which have no comparable sound value in English and vice versa. The community of native language speakers cannot always agree on what kind of written recording method best captures these sound

differences. Some prefer recording in syllabary, others in accordance with the international phonetic system, and still others prefer the double vowel system.

Structure and Pronunciation

American Indian languages have a reputation for complexity of structure. English speakers who truly wish to learn an American Indian language need to understand that they will have to devote a great deal of time to this effort. Grammars can be very complicated, offering different ways to look at tense, gender, and animate/inanimate categories. One may have to hold one's breath to pronounce consonants such as *k, p,* or *t* properly. Other consonants may be whispered or even unpronounced. Vowels may change the meaning of words or phrases depending on whether high or low tones are used. In some languages, words beginning with *ts* or *tl* are those which English speakers find hard to pronounce. Still other Indian languages use words that are so long they look more like phrases. The Ojibwe word for *berry pie* is a classic example:

mini bashkiminisijigan ↓	ombisijigan ↓	bakwezhigan bitosijigan ↓
"berry sauce"	"baking powder"	"bread pie"

Phonological and Grammatical Characteristics of Ojibwe

The following information on Ojibwe language was drawn from *A Concise Dictionary of Minnesota Ojibwe* (Nichols & Nyholm, 1995). According to this resource, Ojibwe words can be alphabetized in the following order:

a, aa, b, c, d, e, g, h, ', l, ii, j, k, m, n, o, oo, p, s, t, w, y, z

Note that the double vowels are treated as standing for unit sounds and are alphabetized after the corresponding single words. The digraphs *ch, sh, and zh*, although standing for unit sounds, are alphabetized as sequences of two letters. The character ' stands for a glottal stop which is a significant speech sound in Minnesota Ojibwe.

Basic Vowels

There are three short vowels: a, i, and o.

	Short Vowels	
	Front	Back
High	i	o

Low	o

The four long vowels take more time to say than the short vowels. Three of them are paired with corresponding short vowels and so are written double: *aa, ii, oo*. The fourth long vowel is not paired with any short vowel and so it is written without doubling: *e*.

	Long Vowels	
	Front	Back
High	ii	oo
Low	e	aa

Each basic vowel is shown in Table 9.1 along with a phonetic transcription, Ojibwe words containing it, and one or more English words containing roughly equivalent sounds. The letters standing for the sounds focused on are also presented in the examples.

Table 9.1:Sounds and Orthography

	Phonetic	Ojibwe examples	English equivalents
a	[ə]~[ʌ]	*agim* "count someone!" *namadabi* "sits down" *baashkizigan* "gun"	about
aa	[a:]	*aagim* "snowshoe" *maajaa* "goes away"	father
e	[c:}~[ɛ:]	*emikwaan* "spoon" *anishinaabe* "person, Indian, Ojibwe"	café
i	[i]	*inini* "man" *niawi* "cries"	pin
ii	[j:]	*niin* "I"	seen
o	[o]~[U]	*ozid* "someone's foot" *anokii* "works	obey, book
oo	[o:]~[u:]	*oodena* "town" *anookii* "hires *goon* "snow" *bimibatoo* "runs along"	boat, boot

Note: Nasal vowels are indicated by writing the appropriate basic vowel followed by *nh*. Before a *y* or a glottal stop ' the *h* may be omitted in writing. In some earlier versions of this orthography, they were written with a hook underneath or underlined. There are no direct English equivalents.

	Phonetic	Ojibwe examples
aanh	[à:]	*banajaanh* "nestling
enh	[è:]~[ɘ̀	*nisayenh* "my older brother"
iinh	ì	*awesiinh* "wild animal" *agaashiinyi*, *agaashiinhyi* "(someone) is small"
oonh	[ò:]~[ù;}	*giigoonh*

Nasalized Vowels. Vowels are nasalized before *ns, nz, and nzh*. The *n* is then omitted in pronunciation. A few examples are:

gaawiin ingikendanziin "I don't know it"
jiimaanens "small boat"

oshkanzhiin "someone's fingernail(s)"

Long vowels after a nasal consonant *m* or *n* are often nasalized, especially before *s, sh, z, or zh*. It is often difficult to decide whether or not to write these as nasalized vowels or not. For example, while the word for "moose" can be written without indicating phonetic nasalization, many prefer to write it with an *n*: *mooz or moonz,* "moose." Consonants and other sounds can be seen in Table 9.2., while phonetic examples and consonant clusters of the Ojibwe language are presented in Tables 9.3. and 9.4, respectively.

Table 9.2: Consonants and Other Sounds: Ojibwe Language

		Consonants and other sounds*				
		Labial	**Aveolar**	**Palatal**	**Velar**	**Glottal**
Stops and Affricates	Strong	p	t	ch	k	
	Weak	b	d	j	g	
Sibilants	Strong		s	sh		
	Weak		z	zh		
Nasals		m	n			
Other Sounds		w		y		h,'

* Note: The non-nasal consonants occur in pairs with one member of the pair a strong or *fortis* consonant and the other member of the pair a weak or *lenis* consonant. The strong consonants do not occur at the beginning of words (unless a vowel is left off), may sound long or double, and are voiceless. The weak consonants can occur at the beginning of words and are often voiced, especially in the middle of words.

Table 9.3: Ojibwe Phonetic Examples

	Phonetic	Ojibwe examples	English equivalents
b	[b]~[p]	*bakade* "is hungry" *nibi* "water"	big, spin
ch	[č]	*michaa* "it is big" *miigwech* "thanks"	stitch
d	[d]~[t]	*debwe* "tells the truth" *biildoon* "bring it!" *waagaakwad* "ax"	do, stop
g	[g]~[k]	*giin* "you" *waagosh* "fox" *ikwewag* "women"	geese, ski
h	[h]	*hay'*	hi
'	[ʔ]	*bakite'an* "hit it!" *ode'* "someone's heart"	
j	[j]~[č]	*jiimaan* "boat, canoe" *ojina* "a little while" *ingiikaj* "I'm cold"	jump
k	[k:]	*makizin* "moccasin, shoe" *amik* "beaver"	pick
m	[m]	*miinan* "blueberries" jiimaan "boat, canoe" *miijim* "food"	man
n	[n]	*naanan* "five"	name
	[ŋ]	*bangii* "a little bit"	hunger
p	[p:]	*opin* "potato" *imbaap* "I laugh"	rip
s	[s:]	*asin* "stone, rock" *wiiyaas* "meat"	miss
sh	[š]	*ashigan* "bass" *animosh* "dog"	bush
t	[t:]	*ate* "(something) is there" *anit* "fish spear"	pit
w	[w]	*waabang* "tomorrow" *giisve* "goes home"	way
y	[y]	*wiiyaw* "someone's body" *inday* "my dog"	yellow
z	[z]~[s]	*ziibi* "river" *ozid* "someone's foot" *indaakoz* "I am sick"	zebra
zh	[ž]~[š]	*zhaabonigau* "needle" *azhigan* "sock" *biizh* "bring someone!"	measure

Table 9.4: Ojibwe Consonant Clusters

	Phonetic	Ojibwe example
sk	[sk]	*miskozi* “is red”
shp	[šp]	*ishpiming* “up above, in heaven”
sht	[št]	*mishtgwaan* “my head”
shk	[šk]	*ishkode* “fire” *gayaashk* “gull”
mb	[mb]	*wiimbea* “is hollow”
nd	[nd]	*aandi* “where” *aanind* “some”
nj	[nj]	*biinjise* “flies in” *mininj* “my hand”
ng	[ŋg]	*bangii* “a little bit” *waabang* “tomorrow"

The Dakota Alphabet

As noted previously, Dakota is one dialect of the language which also includes the Lakota and Nakota dialects. These dialects have phonological differences. The description of the Dakota sound system shown in Table 9.5 is taken from *The English-Dakota Dictionary (*Williamson, 1992) and *The Dakota-English Dictionary* (Riggs, 1992).

Table 9.5: The Dakota Alphabet

a	(ah)	sound of *a* in *far*	n	(ne)	same as English
b	(be)	same as English	ȷ	(in)	a nasal sound nearly similar to *n* in *ink*. In Dakota it is only used at the end of a syllable.
c	(che)	sound of *ch* in *chin*	o	(oh)	sound of *o* in *go*
ċ		an exploded c not in English	p	(pe)	same as English
d	(de)	same as English	ṗ		an exploded p not in English
e	(e)	sound of *e* in *they*	s	(see)	same as English
ġ		a guttural not in English	ṡ	(she)	sound of *sh* in *she*
h	(he)	same as English	t	(te)	same as English
ḥ		sound of *ch* in German *ach*	ṭ		an exploded t not in English
i	(e)	sound of *i* in *machine*	u	(oo)	sound of *oo* in *ooze*
k	(ke)	same as English	w	(we)	same as English
ḳ		an exploded k not in English	y	(ye)	same as English
l	(le)	same as English	z	(ze)	same as English
m	(me)	same as English	ż		sound of *z* in *azure*

A few letters are sometimes followed by a short hiatus. Such are marked thus *s'*.

The following information is *American Indian History, Culture and Language: Curriculum Framework* (Minnesota Department of Children, Families & Learning, 1995).

Accent

As a rule, in the Dakota language, the accent falls on the second syllable of a word. There are, however, exceptions to this rule and the placement of the accent can affect the meaning. In the following example, the accented syllable is given in capital letters.

WO-wax-te field

Wo-WAX-te goose

Word Order

Word order in Dakota is generally the reverse of English:

Noun (subject or object) + qualifying word (adjective or adverb) + verb.

This pattern can be seen in the following phrases and sentence:

marpiy lute
cloud red = "red cloud"

wakpa ska
river white = "white river"

kin hokxidan cistina kin yartaka
wolf big the boy little the bit = "The big wolf bit the little boy."

Everyday Lakota: An English-Sioux Dictionary for Beginners provides additional information about Lakota sentence structure and grammar. As noted, a form of Lakota spoken in South Dakota is closely related to the Dakota dialect spoken in Minnesota. In general, the following rules apply:

- Articles are also placed after nouns, as are prepositions. Time expressions go at the beginning of sentences.

  Anpetu iyohila winyan kin le otonwahe ta ye.
  Day each woman this one town to goes. = "The woman goes to town each day."

- Plurals are shown by changing the modifiers and verbs rather than inflecting the noun, as in this example:

  Sunka hena kokolahanla hena tebwiayab.
  Dog those chicken those ate. = "The dogs ate the chickens."

- Negatives are indicated by adding the suffix "sni" to verbs:

  Wicahcala kin le omakiyesni.
  Old man this me-help-not. = "The old man did not help me."

- The English linking verb "be" is omitted from Dakota:

  Peji hanska.
  Grass tall = "The grass is tall."

- Finally, word order in questions is generally the same in Dakota and English, but questions in Dakota include a participle that

indicates the gender of the speaker as well as signaling that the utterance is a question.

Further Readings About American Indians

Following is a sampling of materials that are available to help teachers and students learn more about American Indians:

American Indian Associates (1993). *Workbook for language teachers* (Revised Edition). Learning Research and Curriculum Materials Laboratory, 1305 London Road Duluth, MN 55805.

Anoka-Hennepin Public Schools Indian Education Program. Basic Ojibwe Words. *Seven lessons in the Ojibwe language*. (Numbers, commands, people and pronouns, animals and birds, food and beverages, cultural terms, days of the week). Anoka, MN: Author. (612) 422-5784.

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Cass Lake Indian Education Program. *Ojibwe language and culture curriculum Unit. K-6.* (Lesson plans, pre-post tests, worksheets, flashcards, cassette tapes of Ojibwe-English words with Ojibwe legends.) Cass Lake, MN. Author. Telephone: (218) 335-2214.

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Ebbott, E., Rosenblatt, J. (Ed.), (1985). *Indians in Minnesota (4th ed.)*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press (for League of Women Voters of Minnesota).

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Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning. (1995). *American Indian history, culture and language: Curriculum framework*. St. Paul, MN: Author.

Available from Minnesota Educational Services, Catalog #E750, 1-800-652-9024 within MN; 1-800-848-4912 nationally.

Reyhner, J. (Ed.), (1988). *Teaching American Indian students.* Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press.

Riggs, S. R. (1992) *A Dakota-English dictionary.* Minneapolis, MN: Borealis Books.

St. Clair, R. & Leap, W. (1982). *Language renewal among American Indian tribes*. Rosslyn, VA: National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education.

St. Paul Public Schools Indian Education Program. *Lakotiya Wicoie-Lakota language.* (Includes nations, seven council fires, vowels, conversations, foods, body parts; twenty-seven lesson areas). St. Paul, MN: Author. Telephone: (612) 293-5191.

Williamson, J. P. (1992). *An English-Dakota dictionary*. Minneapolis, MN: Borealis Books.

Chapter Ten

Background Information–African Americans

Introduction

According to Taylor (1981), African Americans have had a presence in Minnesota even before statehood was established. Early records show that Pierre Bonga, for whom Bonga Township in Cass County was named, was an African American "free trader" born in Duluth in 1802 who conducted a thriving trade business in the Leech Lake area. As late as 1900, more than 100 of Mr. Bonga's descendants resided in that region of Minnesota. Most African Americans living in Minnesota during that same period of time, however, were slaves who were owned by military officers serving at Fort Snelling. The most well-known of these slaves was Dred Scott, whose later efforts to sue for his freedom led to the famous Supreme Court decision that helped set the stage for the Civil War. Until the onset of the war, the population of African Americans residing in the state was very low, never exceeding more than 200, including slaves, fugitive slaves, and those who had obtained their freedom.

Based on Taylor's account, early African Americans who migrated to Minnesota did so for the very same reasons European immigrants did–to take advantage of the state's growing economy and the job opportunities which resulted from that growth. Even though many had hoped that the promise afforded by these opportunities would help raise living standards and increase their chances to more fully participate in a society, the period of migration beginning from about 1910 posed many challenges. One of the greatest challenges was having to compete with other European immigrants who were quickly developing a socioeconomic class structure in which wage levels and job availability were controlled and which limited access to African Americans. Even during the period of nationwide prosperity experienced throughout most of the 1920's, the median income of an African American male, head of household, was about half that of the average worker.

Taylor (1981) suggests that manpower shortages created by World War II helped many African Americans gain a foothold in the job market in manufacturing and other types of industries. However, once Minnesota veterans returned home from the war, many African Americans once again found themselves without employment. As late as 1950, many of the only job opportunities available to African Americans living in the

metropolitan area were in department stores where they were employed as porters, matrons, elevator operators, or stock clerks.

In addition to the adverse employment conditions that existed, African Americans seeking a higher standard of living were faced with housing discrimination and *de facto* segregation due largely to restrictive housing covenants intended to discourage integrated housing opportunities. As a result, a number of neighborhoods emerged throughout the metropolitan area consisting of churches, social clubs, and civic organizations that catered to the needs of African Americans. Because hotels did not rent space for dances and social activities to African American groups, another phenomenon seen throughout much of the first half of this century was the rise of neighborhood social clubs to address the recreational, social, intellectual, cultural, and religious needs of African Americans. The earliest of these clubs, the Neighborhood House, was established in 1897. By 1935, it was estimated that at least three dozen such clubs were in existence in Minnesota. With the advent of urban renewal programs and similar initiatives during the 1950's and 1960's, however, many of the African Americans who lived in these neighborhoods were displaced, leading Taylor to observe that "in their attempts to revitalize the inner cities, urban planners altered socioeconomic and political bases, irrevocably damaging certain institutions and compounding the housing problem."

Although social and economic strides have been documented for many African Americans since the period of the middle 1960's when the Civil Rights Act was enacted, there nevertheless remains a number of issues that need to be addressed. One of the highest priorities for educators is to find ways of improving the school experiences for African American youth. For example, even in the decade of the 1990's fewer than half of the Minnesota's African American students graduate from high school on time. Also, of particular concern are the increasing rates in which African American students have been placed into programs for learning and behavioral problems. Challenges of this nature and others like it will become more important in the future as increasing numbers of Minnesota African American families look to the schools to play a greater role in addressing the educational needs of youth.

African American Cultural Characteristics

The culture of African Americans has been shaped by their shared history in the United States as well as by the transmission of African traditions across time and distance. African Americans are not a homogeneous group–there are cultural variations related to religious

Table 10.1: African American and European American Characteristics

African American	European American
■ Collective orientation	■ Individual orientation
■ Kinship and extended family bonds	■ Nuclear and immediate family bonds
■ High-context ("here and now") communication	■ Low-context ("abstract") communication
■ Religious, spiritual orientation	■ More secular orientation
■ More authoritarian childrearing practices	■ More permissive childrearing practices
■ Greater respect for elderly and their role in the family	■ Less respect for the role of elderly in the family
■ More oriented to situation than time	■ More oriented to time than situation

Hanson & Lynch (1992)

beliefs, geographic location, educational background and socioeconomic status as well as many other factors. To the extent that it is possible to generalize about such a diverse group, the list shown in Table 10.1 contrasts African American beliefs, values and practices with those of European Americans. Assessors should be aware that cultural differences can be reflected in the communication styles of individuals as well. In addition to the characteristics indicated in Table 10.1, readers should also review the list of behaviors included in the *Some Communication Styles of African Americans* on the following page to examine the various ways in which culture and communication can sometimes be viewed as an interactive process.

Based upon these characteristics, following are several recommendations for education staff included in *Developing Cross-Cultural Competence: A Guide to Working with Young Children and Their Families* (Hanson & Lynch, 1992):

- Capitalize on kinship bonds, and focus on family strengths rather than on weaknesses in developing and implementing interventions. If extended family members are primary caregivers or highly involved with the student and family, include them in the intervention.
- Use informal support networks such as the church, neighbors, or friends whenever possible.

- Address family members formally, using titles and last names, until given permission to be more informal.
- Become familiar with the resources in the African American community in your area and use those resources.
- Critically assess the effects of poverty on families and determine which issues are related to culture and which are related to socioeconomic status.
- Avoid stereotyping all African Americans based on the behavior or lifestyles of a subset.

African American Language and Communication Styles

Some–but by no means all–African Americans speak a variation of standard English that is referred to by several names such as Black English, Ebonics, African American English and African American Vernacular English (AAVE). African American English reflects the complex racial and economic history of African Americans, including their origins in western Africa as well as more recent migrations from the rural south to the urban north. The term African American English, or AAE, will be used in these guidelines.

Language Definitions…

Pidgin–a language based on another language, but with a smaller vocabulary (often 700-2,000 words). Native to none of its speakers but used as a common language in a region where different peoples mix but have no common language.

Creole–a special language developed in situations where two or more languages mix. The vocabulary from one language is intermingled with grammatical forms adapted from another. Creoles are more complex and formalized developments of pidgins.

The most widely accepted theory on the origin and development of African American English is the "Creole Hypothesis." When West Africans were brought to the United States and Caribbean as slaves, slave owners deliberately separated groups of Africans who spoke the same language to prevent them from easily communicating with each other. Speakers of different African languages were mixed together to minimize their cohesiveness and unity and disrupt the transmission of their cultures. According to the Creole Hypothesis, these slaves first developed a pidgin to communicate with each other and with the slave masters. This Pidgin evolved into a more formal Creole.

Creole was fairly widespread during slavery and persisted to some extent in the antebellum South as well. Researchers who adhere to the Creole Hypothesis note that American Creole was not a unique development that arose in the mainland south, but that is shows continuity

with other well-known Creoles of the African Diaspora such as Krio, spoken today along the coast of West Africa (e.g., Sierra Leone), and the English-based Creoles of the Caribbean such as that spoken in Jamaica. The vestiges of this early Creole are still found in Gullah which is still spoken by a small number of African Americans in the Sea Islands off the coast of South Carolina and Georgia.

It is maintained that American Creole was fairly widespread among African Americans on southern plantations but was not spoken to any extent by European Americans. Over time, through contact with surrounding dialects, this Creole language was modified to become more like other varieties of English, including that spoken by European American southerners. This process is known as "decreolization." Because the decreolization process is gradual and not necessarily complete in all its phases, the Creole predecessor is cited as the basis for some present-day characteristics of African American English. For example, the absence of the copula (e.g., "You ugly") is a well-known trait found in Creole languages. Adherents of the Creole Hypothesis maintain that the present version of copula absence in AAE is a vestige of its Creole origin.

Another theory as to the origins of African American English, the "Niger-Congo Hypothesis," places more emphasis on the elements of African languages still existing in the speech of many African Americans. This theory compares the evolution of AAE to the development of modern, standard English from its Anglo-Saxon and Germanic roots. Based upon comparative analyses of West African languages, AAE, and standard English, researchers believe that West African linguistic characteristics account for the current differences between African American English and standard English.

Both of these theories point out that African American English evolved over time from contact and convergence among various languages. Educators should keep in mind that AAE and standard English have influenced each other over time. Some words used in Standard American English are derived from western African languages, such as "OK" which is derived from "wa kay." In Minnesota today, it is easy to observe how youth of many races eagerly adopt vocabulary and slang expressions from African American English. Key principles to keep in mind are that African American English is a complete and distinct linguistic system which has:

- unique pronunciation rules;

- unique syntactic patterns; and
- the capability of performing all communication tasks.

Educators should keep in mind that not all members of the African American community speak AAE. In discussing the issue of communication disorders and diverse populations, there has been a great deal of public debate in recent years concerning language diversity among African Americans. Some linguists feel that AAE is a separate language while others feel it is a regional or social dialect. Regardless of the term that is applied, the language used by many—though not all—African Americans has a unique history and definite characteristics which relate to cultural values.

Code-Switching

Code-switching refers to the ability to change linguistic codes, or manner of speaking, based upon the situation and speaking partners. African Americans may use AAE while among group members but use standard language with members of other racial groups. The use of AAE is perceived by many African American educators as important for maintaining social bonds, as stated by Payne (1986):

Some Characteristics of African American Communication Styles

- Asking "personal questions" of someone one has met for the first time is seen as improper and intrusive.
- Preference for indirect eye contact during listening, direct eye contact during speaking as signs of attentiveness. (Rolling one's eyes is considered offensive).
- Public behavior may be emotionally intense, dynamic, and demonstrative.
- Verbal abuse not necessarily precursor to violence–there is a clear distinction between "argument" and "fight".
- Use of direct questions is sometimes seen as harassment, e.g., asking when something will be finished is seen as rushing that person to finish.
- Interruption during conversation is usually tolerated. Access to the floor is granted to the person who is most assertive.
- Touching of one's hair by another person is often considered offensive.
- Conversations are regarded as private between recognized participants. "Butting in" is seen as eavesdropping and is not tolerated.
- Use of the expression "you people" is seen as racist.
- Silence denotes refutation of accusation. To state that you feel accused is regarded as an admission of guilt.

Among many urban and working-class Blacks, the language is an element of culture that is used to denote solidarity. Many educated and middle class Blacks consider themselves to be bidialectical, using standard English as required for formal situations or communication with non-Blacks and Black English vernacular as an in-group linguistic code. One reason why Black English vernacular has been so resistant to eradication is its function within the culture as a unifying device.

The use of standard English, however, is generally seen by the African American community as a necessary step for educational, professional and financial advancement.

Language Recommendation…

More research is needed in the instructional needs of Black English speakers; however, one fact is clear: speaking standard English is a skill needed by Black children for upward mobility in American society and should be taught in early childhood.

Janice E. Hale-Benson, *Black Children:*

One approach to instruction of standard English can be described as bilingual or bidialectical. It involves the recognition of African American English as a valid form of communication, identifying how it differs from standard English, and using it as the basis for learning standard English. This approach was part of an instructional plan adopted by the Oakland, California, School Board in 1996 which engendered a great deal of publicity. In response to this publicity, the Linguistic Society of America adopted the resolution which can be seen on the following page. In short, this organization supports the plan adopted by the Oakland School Board by indicating that "the decision to recognize the vernacular of African Americans in teaching them Standard English is pedagogically sound."

Position Adopted by the Linguistic Society of America...

There has been a great deal of discussion in the media and among the American public about the December 18, 1996, decision of the Oakland School Board to recognize the language variety spoken by many African American students and to take it into account in teaching Standard English. The Linguistic Society of America, as a society of scholars engaged in the scientific study of language, hereby resolves to make it known that:

a. The variety known as "Ebonics," "African American Vernacular English," (AAVE), and "Vernacular Black English" and by other names is systematic and rule-governed like all natural speech varieties. In fact, all human linguistic systems spoken, signed, and written are fundamentally regular. The systematic and expressive nature of the grammar and pronunciation patterns of the African American vernacular has been established by numerous scientific studies over the past thirty years. Characterizations of Ebonics as "slang," "mutant," "lazy," "defective," "ungrammatical," or "broken English" are incorrect and demeaning.

b. The distinction between "languages" and "dialects" is usually made more on social and political grounds than on purely linguistic ones. For example, different varieties of Chinese are popularly regarded as "dialects," though their speakers cannot understand each other, but speakers of Swedish and Norwegian, which are regarded as separate "languages," generally understand each other. What is important from a linguistic and educational point of view is not whether AAVE is called a "language" or a "dialect" but rather that its systematicity be recognized.

c. As affirmed in the SLA Statement of Language Rights (June,1996), there are individual and group benefits to maintaining vernacular speech varieties and there are scientific and human advantages to linguistic diversity. For those living in the United States there are also benefits in acquiring Standard English and resources should be made available to all who aspire to mastery of Standard English. The Oakland School Board's commitment to helping students master Standard English is commendable.

d. There is evidence from Sweden, the U.S., and other countries that speakers of other varieties can be aided in their learning of the standard variety by pedagogical approaches which recognize the legitimacy of the other varieties of a language. From this perspective, the Oakland School Board's decision to recognize the vernacular of African American students in teaching them Standard English is linguistically and pedagogically sound.

Early Language Development of Black English

In her article *Language Acquisition: The Black Child*, Stockman (1986) offers the following information on language development among young children who are speakers of African American English:

1. Language development of 18-month-old African American children is well under way as evidenced by the use of one- and two-word utterances. Language continues to develop over time.
2. African American children acquire language for expressing the same early semantic relations as children who speak standard English. The number of semantic categories represented increased with age; action and existence are acquired early, and coordination and causality are among those acquired last.
3. Before age three, children who speak African American English use language to accomplish a broad range of pragmatic functions, including comments or informatives, directives, and requestives as well as social interactions.
4. The mean length of utterance (MLU) of children who speak African American English increases with age up to at least two years and six months with increments similar to those of children who speak standard English. Also similar to children who speak standard English, children who speak African American English are able to use well-formed multi-word constructions that have a subject, a verb, and object compliments. The construction of their sentences are primarily simple, but a few complex constructions are also in evidence.
5. The features of African American vernacular are not prominent before the child is three years of age. Between the age of 3 and 7 years, the features of African American vernacular develop sequentially. Particular rules emerge for plural, possessive, tense, third person singular, indefinite article, and pronominalization, in addition to the rules for copula deletion and final consonant deletion.
6. The age at which features of African American English emerge varies according to social class. Although considerable variation exists with socioeconomic groups, after the age of 4 years children from low socioeconomic groups show more marked use of African American English than those from middle socioeconomic groups. General developmental levels at which African American English emerge are as follows:

   At the 3 year level:
   - Regular past (ex: *She spill the milk)*
   - Present copula/auxiliary verb (ex: *The cat in the box*)
   - Remote past aspectual verb (ex: *She been had this*)

   At the 4 year level:
   - Indefinite article (ex: *a apple*)
   - Multiple negation (ex: *She don't have none*)

At the 5 year level:

- Reflexive pronoun (ex: *He sees hisself*)
- Demonstrative pronoun (ex: *Don't eat them cookies*)

7. Some African American children, most often those who speak African American English, are likely to score poorly on tests of vocabulary and other standardized measures of language. This may be related to poverty as well as to use of nonstandard English. To do well on such procedures, children's vocabulary must have both breadth (the number of words known) and depth (the number of word meanings attached to words).

Phonological and Grammatical Contrasts

Be aware of phonological and grammatical differences between Black English and Standard American English that may have an impact on the learner's performance on a variety of assessments used to assess language skills. Based on research, Owens (1991) developed the information included in Table 10.2 to help educators develop an awareness of phonological contrasts.

Table 10.2: Phonemic Contrasts Between Black and Standard American English

	Position in Word		
SAE Phoneme	**Initial**	**Medial**	**Final**
/p/		Unaspirated /p/	Unaspirated /p/
/n/			Reliance on preceding nasalized vowel
/w/	Omitted in specific words (I, as, too!)		
/b/		Unreleased /b/	Unreleased /b/
/g/		Unreleased /g/	Unreleased /g/
/k/		Unaspirated /k/	Unaspirated /k/
/d/	Omitted in specific words (I 'on't know)	Unreleased /d/	Unreleased /d/
/t/		Unaspirated /t/	Unaspirated /t/
/l/		Omitted before labial consonants (help-hep)	uh" following a vowel (Bill - Biuh)
/t/		Omitted or /ʔ/	Omitted or prolonged vowel or glide
/ɵ/	Unaspirated /t/ or /f/	Unaspirated /t/ or /f/ between vowels	Unaspirated /t/ or /f/ (bath - baf)
/v/	Sometimes /b/	/b/ before /m/ and /n/	Sometimes /b/
/ô/	/d/	/d/ or /v/ between vowels	/d/, /v/, /f/
/z/		Omitted or replaced by /d/ before nasal sound (wasn't-wud'n)	

Note weakening of final consonants.

Blends

/str/becomes /skr
/ʃr/ becomes /str/
/pr/ becomes /p/
/br/ becomes /b/
/kr/ becomes /k/
/gr/ becomes /g/

Final Consonant Clusters

Second consonant omitted when these clusters occur near the end of a word:

/sk/ /nd/ /sp/
/st/ /sd/ /nt/

To describe the differences between Black English and Standard American English, Owens (1991) developed the information provided in Table 10.3, a table which describes grammatical contrasts found in the language.

Table 10.3: Grammatical Contrasts Between Black and Standard American English

Black English Grammatical Structure	SAE Grammatical Structure
Possessive -'s	
Nonobligatory where word position expresses possession. Get *mother* coat. It be mother's.	Obligatory regardless of position. Get mother's coat. It's mother's.
Plural –s	
Nonobligatory with numerical quantifier. He got ten *dollar*. Look at the *cat*.	Obligatory regardless of numerical quantifier. He has ten dollars. Look at the cats.
Regular past *-ed*	
Nonobligatory. Yesterday, I *walk* to school	Obligatory. Yesterday, I *walked* to school.
Irregular past	
Case by case, some verbs inflected, others not. I *see* him last week.	All irregular verbs inflected. I *saw* him last week.
Regular present tense third person singular *-s*	
Nonobligatory. She *eat* too much.	Obligatory. She *eats* too much.
Irregular present tense third person singular *-s*	
Nonobligatory. He *do* my job.	Obligatory. He *does* my job.
Indefinite *an*	
Use of indefinite *a*. He ride in *a* airplane.	Use of *an* before nouns beginning with a vowel. He rode in *an* airplane.

Black English Grammatical Structure	SAE Grammatical Structure
Pronouns	
Pronominal apposition; pronoun immediately follows noun. Mamma *she* mad. She...	Pronoun used elsewhere in sentence or in other sentence; not in apposition. Mamma is mad. *She*...
Future tense.	
More frequent use of be *going to* (gonna) I be *going to* dance tonight. I *gonna* dance tonight. Omit *will* preceding be. I *be* home later.	More frequent use of *will*. I *will* dance tonight. I am going to dance tonight. Obligatory use of *will*. I *will (I'll)* be home later.
Negation	
Triple negative. *Nobody don't never* like me. Use of ain't I *ain't* going.	Absence of triple negative. *No* one ever likes me. Ain't is unacceptable form. *I'm* not going.
Modals	
Double modals for such forms as might, could, and *should*. I *might* could go.	Single modal use. I *might* be able to go.
Questions	
Same form for direct and indirect. What it is? Do you know what *it is*?	Different forms for direct and indirect. What is *it*? Do you know what *it* is
Relative pronouns	
Nonobligatory in most cases. He the one stole it. It the one you like.	Nonobligatory with *that* only. He's the one *who* stole it. It's the one (that) you like.
Conditional *if*	
Use of *do* for conditional if. I ask *did* she go.	Use of *if*. I asked *if* she went.
Perfect construction	
Been used for action in the distant past. He *been* gone.	*Been* not used. He left a long time ago.
Copula	
Nonobligatory when contractible. He sick.	Obligatory in contractible and uncontractible forms. He's sick.
Habitual or general state	
Marked with uninflected be. She *be* workin'.	Nonuse of *be*; verb inflected. She's *working* now.

Reference Notes

Information about the African American historical perspective presented at the beginning of this chapter was taken from Chapter Four *The Blacks* by David Vassar Taylor. *They Chose Minnesota; A Survey of the State's Ethnic Groups* edited by June Drenning Holmquist. Other references and endnotes cited in this introduction include:

> Estimates of slaves imported as well as information on their areas of origin on the West Coast of Africa between the Senegal and Niger Rivers appear in Philip D. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census*, 150-158, 231 (Madison, WI, 1969). Here and below, see also Florette Henri, *Black Migration: Movement North, 1900-1920* (Garden City, N.Y., 1976); John Hope Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom* (New York, 1947).
>
> George Bonga, "Letters of George Bonga," and Kenneth W. Porter, "Relations Between Negroes and Indians Within the Present Limits of the United States," in *Journal of Negro History*, 12:53, 17:361 (January, 1927, July, 1932); Porter, "Negroes and the Fur Trade," in *Minnesota History*, 15:423, 425 (December, 1934); Earl Spangler, "The Negro in Minnesota, 1800-1865,: in Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba, *Papers*, 3rd series, 20:15 (1963-64); Warren Upham, *Minnesota Geographic Names*, 88 (Reprinted ed., St. Paul, 1969).
>
> L[ivia] A[ppel], "Slavery in Minnesota," in *Minnesota History*, 5:40-43 (February, 1923); Jeffrey A. Hess, *Dred Scott: From Fort Snelling to Freedom*, 2-6 (*Historic Fort Snelling Chronicles*, no. 2-St. Paul, 1975); Helen T. Catterall, "Some Antecedents of the Dred Scott Case," in *American Historical Review*, 30:67 (October, 1924); Earl Spangler, *The Negro in Minnesota*, 19-21, 29-31 (Minneapolis, 1961).

Further Reading About African Americans

Following is a sampling of resources available to help teachers learn more about African Americans in Minnesota.

Brooks, C. (1985). *Tapping potential: English and language arts for the Black learner.* Urbana, IL: Black Caucus of the National Council of Teachers of English.

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Wyatt, T. *(1995). Nonbiased assessment of the African American child.* (videotape). Available from Singular Publishing Group, Inc., http://www.singpub.com/video/wvatt.html

Chapter Eleven

Background Information—Poverty

Introduction

The racial, cultural, and linguistic differences that students experience in school are compounded by their socioeconomic status. The 1990 census clearly demonstrates the disparate impact of poverty on certain racial groups in the United States. According to statistics, the percentage of children ages 5 to 17 who are poor by demographic group are shown below (U.S. General Accounting Office, 1993):

White.....10.14
Hispanic.....31.15
African American 37.70
Asian 16.40
American Indian 34.36

According to additional census statistics available for 1996, African American children are more than twice as likely as the total population to be living in poverty (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1996):

Table 11.1: African American Children In Poverty

Age	Percent of Total Population Below Poverty	Percent of African American Below Poverty
Under 6 Years	23.2	44.8
6 to 17 Years	18.6	37.1

Children enrolling in public schools in Minnesota come from homes that represent all socioeconomic levels. Although some American Indian and African American families living in Minnesota are economically successful, a high proportion of children age birth through 17 live in poverty (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990).

All children.....10.14
African American 49.50
American Indian 54.80

Data from the 1990 U.S. Census also reveals that the total poverty rate among children between the ages of 5 and 17 in Minnesota increased by

15% between 1980 and 1990, moving from 9.5% to 11.4% of the total school-aged population.

Poverty affects children in many ways that can be linked to decreased likelihood of academic success and increased likelihood of special education placement. These risk factors include:

- Poor prenatal health care and nutrition, low birth weight.
- Poor nutrition and health care for children.
- Exposure to lead and other environmental toxins.

Children living in poverty who are exposed to these and other risk factors are more likely to experience some or all of the following:

- Frequent illnesses and chronic illnesses such as asthma
- Growth stunting (in fifth percentile for height for age)
- Developmental delays
- Specific learning disabilities
- Interrupted schooling (absenteeism, retention, suspension, expulsion, dropping-out)
- Emotional/behavioral problems

About poverty…

Poverty is closely linked with negative outcomes in children and affects all areas of their lives. It has a devastating impact on their physical, emotional, and mental well-being. Poverty places children at greater risk for hunger, homelessness, physical and mental disabilities, sickness, life-long disabilities, violence, nutritional deficiencies, stunted growth, and death. Poor children are also less likely to do well in school. They have lower test scores, more learning disabilities, more special education needs, and face a greater risk for dropping out.

Minnesota Kids: A Closer Look. 1998 Data Book

The socioeconomic status of African Americans and American Indian families in Minnesota overlaps with other cultural characteristics and can compound the challenges children face in school. As noted previously in these guidelines, it is difficult to separate the effects of race from poverty when examining educational issues in the American Indian and African American communities.

Socioeconomic differences also shape group affiliations and individual identities. Socioeconomic classes can be thought of as "cultures" in and of themselves. Educators should be aware of the possibility of attributing certain behaviors to a student's racial background when the behavior may in fact be linked to poverty.

Framework for Understanding Poverty

Payne (1995) differentiates between situational and generational poverty. Situational poverty is of relatively short duration and may result from job loss, divorce, or other family crises. Generational poverty, as the name implies, crosses from one generation to another: children raised in poverty by parents who also grew up in poverty. Generational poverty is thought to engender values, beliefs, and behavior patterns that are distinctly different from middle-class culture. In addition, Payne identified some cultural characteristics of children growing up in multi-generational poverty. These characteristics can be seen in *Cultural Characteristics of Multigenerational Poverty* which appears on the following page.

Many families have acquired specific knowledge and skills to survive in poverty, although these skills might not be recognized or valued by schools. In her article *Families with African American Roots*, Winnie Willis suggests special educators ask themselves the following questions:

- How many months could your family endure unemployment without going under?
- What things would you have to do without if your monthly family income was cut in half?
- Where would you go if you had a problem with substance abuse?

Other questions for school personnel include:

- How do I get food from a foodshelf?
- Where do I go to apply for public assistance?
- How can I access public transportation if my car isn't running?
- How can I locate affordable housing?
- Where can I get free or low-cost medical and dental care?

Poverty affects students in many ways. Students growing up in poverty may not have the range of experiences and knowledge that is expected in order for them to do well in school and standardized tests. They may also have a smaller vocabulary and limited exposure to abstract, academic language. Students faced with serious economic problems may also experience a great deal of stress and anxiety. It is difficult for students to focus on lessons and learning when they are homeless or lack food and clothing.

While it is important to respect a family's privacy and dignity, understanding the student's situation is important to the prereferral and assessment

process. In a sense, poverty is both an exclusionary factor that rules out a disability (such as the student who learns at a normal rate but hasn't had a wide range of experiences) and a causative factor of disabilities (such as the link between lead exposure and mental retardation).

Readers who wish to think more about how their schools meet the needs of students living in poverty are invited to use the *Poverty Checklist*, reprinted with permission from Dr. Judith Greenbaum. The *Poverty Checklist* can be seen at the end of this section.

Cultural Characteristics of Multigenerational Poverty	
Background Noise	Almost always, the TV is on, no matter what the circumstance. Conversation is participatory and more than one person talks at a time.
Personality and Entertainment	Individual personality is what one brings to the setting because money is not brought. The ability to entertain, tell stories, and have a sense of humor is highly valued.
Sense of Humor	A sense of humor is highly valued as entertainment. Humor is almost always about people – either situations that people encounter or things people do to other people.
Relationships	One only has people upon which to rely and those relationships are important to survival.
Matriarchal Structure	The mother has the most powerful position in the society if she functions as a caretaker.
Oral Language Tradition	Casual register is used for everything.
Nonverbal Communication	Touch is used to communicate a great deal as is space and nonverbal emotional information.
Survival Orientation	Discussion of academic topics is generally not prized. There is little room for the abstract. Discussions center around people and relationships. A job is about making enough money to survive—a job is not about a career.
Negative Orientation	Failure at anything is the source of stories and numerous belittling comments. Children may think of failure as "normal".
Discipline Strategies	Punishment is about penance and forgiveness, without an expectation for change in behavior.
Belief in Fate	Destiny and fate are the major tenants of the belief system and choice is not considered. Options are not examined. Everything is polarized -- it is one way or the other. These kinds of statements are common: "I quit." "I can't do it."
Time	Time occurs only in the present. The future does not exist except as a word. Time is flexible and not measured. Time is often assigned on the basis of the emotional significance and not the actual measured time.
Lives in the Moment	Does not consider future ramifications. Being proactive, setting goals, planning ahead are not a part of generational poverty. Most of what occurs is reactive and in the moment. Future ramifications of present actions are not considered.
Lack of Organization	Many homes lack furniture and other devices to store possessions and information. Homes may seem disorganized and cluttered.

Payne, 1995

Introduction to the *Poverty Checklist*…

The purpose of the *Poverty Checklist* is to initiate a discussion about how schools can address the needs of poor children more effectively. Many of the questions are compound questions and may be difficult to answer. You may find yourself answering "yes" to part of a question and "no" to other parts of the same question. If you can answer "yes" to any part of a question, count that question as "Yes." Consider the remaining parts of each question as future objectives for your schools.

The checklist has been divided into two major sections for scoring. The first contains questions important for all schools, regardless of the number of students living in poverty. These questions deal with some of the more familiar educational elements of effective schools as seen through the prism of poverty. The second major section expands on the importance of interagency collaboration and the school's role in facilitating the delivery of comprehensive services to children and their families.

Further Reading on Poverty

Annie E. Casey Foundation (1998). *Kids count data book.* Baltimore, MD: Author.

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Brown, J. L., & Pollitt, E. (1996). Malnutrition , poverty and intellectual development. *Scientific American*. Vol.274 (2), 38-43.

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Connell, R. (I994). Poverty and education. *Harvard Educational Review*, 64(2),125-149.

Minnesota State Planning Agency (1990). *Minnesota children: Indicators and trends.* St. Paul, MN: Author.

Payne, R. K. (1995). *Poverty: A framework for understanding and working with students and adults from poverty*. Baytown, TX: RFT Publishing.

Chapter Twelve

Forms and Worksheets

The following black line masters for duplication are included in this section:

School Environment Survey

Practitioner Diversity Awareness Scale

Referral Data Form

Home and Family Interview

Sociocultural Checklist

Test Selection Checklist

Emotional/Behavioral Disorders Summary Worksheet

Mild to Moderate Mentally Impaired (MMI) Summary Worksheet

Specific Learning Disability (SLD) Summary Worksheet

Speech or Language Summary Worksheet

Poverty Checklist

Minnesota Department of Education

Test Selection Checklist

Name	Instrument .....
Date ..... Position	Publication Date .....
Agency/School	Agency/School .....

Instructions for Use: The following checklist should be used to gauge the appropriateness of standardized instruments for individual students. If there are questions regarding the appropriateness of items for diverse students, consult with a cultural representative. In districts with large numbers of diverse students, practitioners are recommended to utilize this checklist on a periodic basis to review all instruments in current use, thus generating a list of recommended instruments for American Indian and African American students in the district. Practitioners are also recommended to utilize this checklist when selecting new instruments for purchase.

Indicate the status of this instrument based on the following items.	Characteristic of this Instrument	Not a Characteristic of this Instrument	Need More Information
1. The specific purposes of this instrument are clearly defined.	☐	☐	☐
2. The instrument has been validated for the purposes for which it was designed.	☐	☐	☐
3. The limitations of the instrument are described in the manual.	☐	☐	☐
4. This instrument is the most current edition which includes the most recent normative sample.	☐	☐	☐
5. The test manual describes differences in test performance across, racial, cultural, linguistic, or socioeconomic groups.	☐	☐	☐
6. An item-by-item analysis has been made of the instrument from the framework of cultural and communication characteristics of diverse cultural groups.	☐	☐	☐
7. The instrument does not rely on vocabulary or visual materials that are culturally specific, regional, colloquial or archaic.	☐	☐	☐
8. The instrument does not rely on receptive and expressive standard English to measure nonlanguage abilities.	☐	☐	☐
9. An equivalent form of this test is available in another language.	☐	☐	☐
10. The instrument does not penalize students with physical or sensory disabilities.	☐	☐	☐
11. The norms for this instrument were developed within the last ten years.	☐	☐	☐
12. The normative sample characteristics reflect the general characteristics of students who will be administered this instrument.	☐	☐	☐
13. The instrument takes differences in cultural values and adaptive behaviors into account.	☐	☐	☐

14.	The instrument clearly describes expected demands of students (e.g., reading level, response type, test-taking behaviors).	☐	☐	☐
15.	The instrument clearly describes the response type expected of students (e.g., oral, paper-and-pencil).	☐	☐	☐

Emotional/Behavioral Disorders Summary Worksheet

Minnesota Department of Education

Learner's Name: ..... Date of Staffing: .....

School: ..... Grade: .....

Assessment Team Members: .....

Instructions: This worksheet must be completed on all assessments for possible E/BD placements. The Assessment Team Members are the individuals specified on the *Notice of An Educational Assessment/Reassessment Plan*. This summary is to be completed only after those individuals have finished their assessments. Refer to this form when completing the *Assessment Team Summary Report*. Please note Minnesota Rules state that in order for a learner to be eligible for special education and related services under the label of E/BD, the following criteria must be met in the four areas described in the following sections. For more detailed information, please refer to the state rule which outlines the four criteria areas.

AREA 1

Indicate sources of information used for Area 1:

.....

.....

An established pattern must exist that is characterized by one or more of the following behavior clusters and is not due to cultural, language or socioeconomic differences:

Severely Aggressive

____ Kicking, biting, hitting, spitting, pinching
____ Developmentally inappropriate-hurtful
____ Physically or verbally abusive Impulsive or violent
____ Destructive of property
____ Intimidating
____ Becoming hysterical or extremely angry when things do not go their way
____ Threatening to others or excessively antagonistic
____ Being cruel to animals

Anxious Behaviors

___ Intense fears of school-school phobia
___ Overly perfectionistic
___ Developing physical symptoms related to stress
___ Frequent crying for no obvious reasons
___ Adjustment disorders
___ Child acts very happy, then very sad, in a very short period of time
___ Toileting, sleeping or eating problems
___ Fearful to try new things-fearful of failure
___ Difficulties separating from caregivers
___ Excessive physical complaints

Severely Withdrawn

____ Pervasive unhappiness or a sad disposition
____ Depression
____ Wide mood swings
____ Isolation from peers
____ Consistently prefers solitary activities
____ Loss of interest in activities
____ Feelings of worthlessness
____ Not liked by others
____ Changes in sleeping and/or eating patterns
____ Difficulties attaching to others
____ Affective disorders

Impulsive Behaviors

____ Easily distractible, unable to pay attention
____ Difficulty staying with one task
____ Difficulty staying in one place or position
____ Difficulty waiting

Severely Disordered Thought Processes and Atypical Communication

___ Atypical communication styles such as lacking meaningful language or the use of abstract languages
___ Frequently talking out loud to self
___ Reality distortion beyond normal developmental play and fantasy
___ Situationally inappropriate laughter, crying, sounds or language
___ Hallucinations or delusions of grandeur
___ Schizophrenia

Unusual Behavior Patterns

____ Continual self-stimulation
____ Overly affectionate behaviors towards unfamiliar persons
____ Self-mutilation such as pinching one self, biting oneself, or head banging
____ Rigid or ritualistic patterns
____ Perseveration or obsession with specific objects
____ Stereotypical movements such as spinning, tapping or rubbing

AREA 2

Indicate sources of information used for Area 2:

1. The established pattern(s) that have been targeted from Area 1 must be supported by multiple data sources to show that it adversely affects educational performance. There must be a demonstrable causal relationship between the student's behavior and a decrease in his/her educational performance.

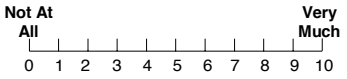
   A. Is the student's educational performance within a reasonable range of chronological age and ability level? ☐ Yes ☐ No

   B. If the student is performing below reasonable academic expectations, does the search for a cause point strongly to an emotional or behavioral disorder? ☐ Yes ☐ No

   C. Does the behavior impact student's pattern of school attendance? ☐ Yes ☐ No

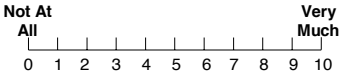
   D. Has the behavior impacted student's pattern of school performance in the past? ☐ Yes ☐ No

   E. Mark the extent to which the established pattern(s) from Area 1 interferes with a successful level of educational functioning.

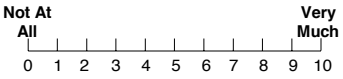


2. There is a pattern of inability to build or maintain satisfactory or interpersonal relations with peers, parent, teachers, and other significant adults necessary to the learning process. This means that the behavior must exist at unacceptable levels across settings. Mark the extent to which a pattern of inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relations interferes with successful school functioning:

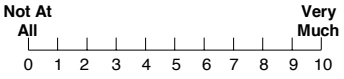
A. **Peers**



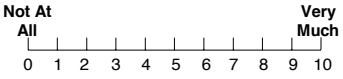
B. **Parent**



C. **Teachers**

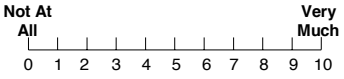


D. **Other Adults**

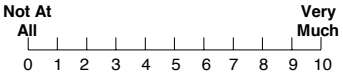


3. A pattern of failure to attain or maintain a satisfactory rate of educational progress refers to a difference between the student's potential to learn, and how much is being learned. There must be documentation of an established significant impairment in personal, social, vocational or academic skills that is not due to an inconsistent education. Appropriate data sources to establish these factors are imperative. The team must verify if a significant impairment exists in any of the following:

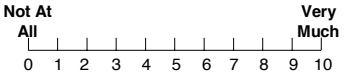
A. **Academic Skills:** The skills to apply information to age and ability appropriate tasks, to meet expectations for processing information and learning.



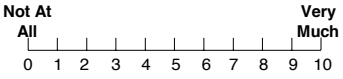
B. **Social Skills:** The skills to engage with peers and adults in both formal and informal manners. The skills to initiate and build relationships. The ability to manage one's behavior in a variety of environments.



C. **Vocational Skills:** The skills to arrive on time and prepared to follow directions and complete assigned tasks. The ability to manage personal needs in a work setting.



D. **Personal Skills:** The skills to effectively manage personal care skills, personal hygiene skills, communication change, and stress without verbal or physical harm to self or others.



AREA 3

Indicate sources of information used for Area 3:

The data must establish that the impairment affects items 1 and 2 and 3 or 4 listed below:

1. Severely interferes with the student's or others educational performance exhibited by:
   - Extremely negative attitudes toward learning ..... ☐ Yes ☐ No
   - Demonstrating difficulties with abstract or logical thinking ..... ☐ Yes ☐ No
   - Behavior which severely disrupts learning climate of others ..... ☐ Yes ☐ No

AND

2. Is pervasive as evidenced by occurrences across educational settings, the home, or in community settings; the condition is pervasive and is evidenced in the following settings:
   - More than one teacher's class, recess or lunch ..... ☐ Yes ☐ No
   - With parents, relatives or guardians ..... ☐ Yes ☐ No
   - With neighbors, at church, social gatherings or while shopping ..... ☐ Yes ☐ No

AND

3. Duration; evidence must show that:
   - The impairment has been in evidence for six months ..... ☐ Yes ☐ No

OR

4. A crisis of such intensity that the student is considered a danger to self and others; evidence much show that:
   - The behavior places the student or others in imminent danger* ..... ☐ Yes ☐ No

* *The team may use this criteria in place of item three (i.e., six-month duration)*

AREA 4

Indicate sources of information used for Area 4:

The assessment team is responsible for verifying a large amount of information. Specifically, there are five major areas.

1. The behavior may occur with, but is not primarily the result of, intellectual, sensory, health, cultural, linguistic factors; the team concludes the following:
   - A. The behavior is *not* primarily due to these factors ..... ☐ Yes ☐ No
2. The team must verify that the behavior is not primarily the result of a mismatch between the teacher, curriculum, classroom or learning environment and when suspected, interventions were tried but were unsuccessful.
   - A. The behavior is *not* primarily due to educational factors..... ☐ Yes ☐ No
3. The team must verify that the behavior is not primarily the result of stressors such as transient medical or psychosocial events, chemical use and/or drug addiction.
   - A. There is evidence or anecdotal records of a transient event..... ☐ Yes ☐ No
   - B. The transient event has led to an intense disruption of behavior..... ☐ Yes ☐ No
   - C. The behavior is *not* primarily the result of chemical use or abuse..... ☐ Yes ☐ No

4. The established behavioral pattern may occur with but is not primarily the result of a history of an inconsistent educational program. The whole student must be looked at, not as a single factor in isolation. Items which are checked "Yes" warrant further investigation.

   A. The student has attended more than three schools in one year ..... ☐ Yes ☐ No

   B. The family's primary income source is seasonal or very inconsistent ..... ☐ Yes ☐ No

   C. The child has not completed an entire year at a single school ..... ☐ Yes ☐ No

5. The team must verify that identification is not based solely on a conflict between the individual and political governmental entity or that it is the result of a disciplinary action. This verification is necessary to provide clear documentation that an eligibility decision was not reached because the student may have had a conflict with authority systems or for disciplinary actions. The team must verify the following:

   A. The eligibility decision was not based on a conflict with the system .. ☐ Yes ☐ No

   B. The eligibility decision was not the result of a disciplinary action..... ☐ Yes ☐ No

   C. The child has not completed an entire year at a single school..... ☐ Yes ☐ No

Sociocultural Factors Impact of diversity on student school performance: *Race and Culture* *Communication* *Socioeconomic Status* *Other*	Data Sources: ☐ *Sociocultural Checklist* ☐ *Home and Family Interview* ☐ Other	

According to IDEA '97, a student is **NOT** eligible for special education services if one of the following is the determinant (primary) cause for the learning problem. Place a check in the appropriate box below:

Is the primary cause due to a lack of instruction in reading or math ? ☐ Yes ☐ No

OR

Is the primary cause due to Limited English Proficiency ? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Based on the assessment data and other sources of information collected for this student, the team has concluded that:

The student meets criteria. ☐ Yes ☐ No

The student is in need of special education and related services. ☐ Yes ☐ No

Notes:

Minnesota Department of Education

Home and Family Interview

Dear Family Member,

Please complete the *Home and Family Interview* so we can learn more about your child. Because this information will be used as part of the assessment process, your ideas and concerns are important in helping to obtain assessment information that accurately reflects your child's skills and abilities.

I. General Information

1. Information about your child	2. Information about you
Name	Name .....
Date of Birth ..... Age .....Grade	Relationship to child .....
School	Date when completed .....
Parent(s)	

3. Child currently lives with (check one)…

☐ Parent ☐ Relatives ☐ Foster Parent ☐ Independent/Self

☐ Peers/Friends ☐ Other (describe): .....

4. List all members of the child's family

Name	Age	Relationship to Child	Primary Language and Dialect	Currently living with child?
			☐ English ☐ Other	☐ Yes ☐ No
			☐ English ☐ Other	☐ Yes ☐ No
			☐ English ☐ Other	☐ Yes ☐ No
			☐ English ☐ Other	☐ Yes ☐ No
			☐ English ☐ Other	☐ Yes ☐ No
			☐ English ☐ Other	☐ Yes ☐ No
			☐ English ☐ Other	☐ Yes ☐ No
			☐ English ☐ Other	☐ Yes ☐ No
			☐ English ☐ Other	☐ Yes ☐ No

Is anyone else living in the home? If so, please indicate: .....

School Use Only Provide details of the interview below:

Name of Interviewer ..... Interview format (check): ☐ In-home ☐ Telephone

II. Health and Early Development

5. Does your child have any medical, physical, or psychological conditions which can impact learning? If so, please check all that apply.

☐ Vision	☐ Attention deficit	☐ Allergies	☐ Cerebral Palsy
☐ Hearing/hearing loss	☐ Head injury	☐ Diabetes	☐ Sleep disorder
☐ History of ear infections	☐ Asthma	☐ Depression	☐ Other

If you checked any of the categories listed above, including "other," provide a brief explanation about the present status of the condition(s):

6. Does anyone in your family have a history of medical or physical problems? ☐ Yes ☐ No
If yes, explain:

7. What was the birth weight of your child _____ lb._____oz. Were there any unusual complications during pregnancy and birth? If so, please describe below:

8. Were the developmental stages such as speaking, walking, sitting, etc., for this child within the normal ranges? Yes ☐ No ☐
If no, explain:

III. School and Learning

9. Please rate how you see your child on various learning and behavior characteristics listed below. Place a check in the box that best describes your child, ranging from *Very Much Like My Child* to *Not Like My Child At All*. If you are not sure about an item, just use your best judgment. The purpose of this activity is to help us determine what areas you see as a problem.

My child…	Very much like my child	Somewhat like my child	Not very much like my child	Not like my child at all
A. Thinks that school is important	☐	☐	☐	☐
B. Spends enough time on homework assignments	☐	☐	☐	☐
C. Needs help with homework assessments	☐	☐	☐	☐
D. Has difficulty completing school assignments	☐	☐	☐	☐
E. Has trouble making and keeping friends	☐	☐	☐	☐
F. Is someone who willingly cooperates with others	☐	☐	☐	☐
G. Is often hurtful to others	☐	☐	☐	☐
H. Is often hurtful to self	☐	☐	☐	☐
I. Respects the property of others	☐	☐	☐	☐
J. Is moody and uncooperative	☐	☐	☐	☐
K. Gets in trouble in the neighborhood	☐	☐	☐	☐
L. Is liked by other adults living in the neighborhood	☐	☐	☐	☐
M. Cares about doing well in school	☐	☐	☐	☐

10. Sometimes, learning problems are temporary and brought on by changes in the life of a child and the family. From the list below, indicate which school related events that may impact learning.

☐ Change of school ☐ Attendance problems ☐ Repeating a grade ☐ School suspension
☐ Negative peer influence ☐ Drug/alcohol abuse ☐ Safety issues at school ☐ Other (explain below)

If you checked one or more items indicated above or "other," please explain:

11. Has anyone in your immediate or extended family had academic or educational problems? If yes, explain:

12. Has your child had any previous placements in a special education program? If yes, explain:

13. Please describe what you have done to help your child with problems at school:

14. Describe some of your child's strengths and weaknesses which school staff should know about that could impact learning within the classroom:

15. Please rate how you see your child on various learning style characteristics listed below. Place a check in the box that best describes your child, ranging from *Good* to *Poor*. If you are not sure about an item, just use your best judgment. The purpose of this activity is to help us determine what areas, if any, you see as a problem.

My child's…	Good	Adequate	Poor	Not Applicable
A. Ability to follow two three step directions (S)	☐	☐	☐	☐
B. Remembers (S)	☐	☐	☐	☐
C. Organizational skills (O)	☐	☐	☐	☐
D. Planning skills (O)	☐	☐	☐	☐
E. Understands what he/she reads (A)	☐	☐	☐	☐
F. Understands what he/she sees (A)	☐	☐	☐	☐
G. Understands what he/she hears (A)	☐	☐	☐	☐
H. Learns a new game (A)	☐	☐	☐	☐
I. Recalls events from the school day (R)	☐	☐	☐	☐
J. Recalls details from a special event (R)	☐	☐	☐	☐
K. Reads aloud (R)	☐	☐	☐	☐
L. Carries on a conversation (E)	☐	☐	☐	☐
M. Handwrites well(E)	☐	☐	☐	☐
N. Problem solves (M)	☐	☐	☐	☐
O. Explains something he/she has learned (M)	☐	☐	☐	☐
P. Assembles or repairs things (M)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Q. Artistic ability (M)	☐	☐	☐	☐
R. Knows basic math facts (R)	☐	☐	☐	☐

S = Storage, O = Organization, A = Acquisition, R = Retrieval, E = Expression, M = Manipulation of Information

IV. Family and Cultural Issues

16. Quite often, childhood learning problems are temporary, brought on by changes in the life of a child and the family. From the list below, indicate which events have occurred in your family.

Family related events…

- ☐ Divorce/separation
- ☐ Death in family
- ☐ Job loss/layoff
- ☐ Drugs/alcohol abuse
- ☐ Family member in treatment
- ☐ Parent started working
- ☐ New person in family
- ☐ Neighborhood concerns
- ☐ Law/legal problems
- ☐ Child trauma/abuse
- ☐ Sibling leaving home
- ☐ Illness in family
- ☐ Housing concerns
- ☐ Foster home placement
- ☐ Catastrophic event in family (e.g., fire, flood)
- ☐ Sibling getting married
- ☐ Clothing concerns
- ☐ Homelessness
- ☐ Residential placement
- ☐ Other (explain below)

If you checked one or more items indicated above or "other," please explain:

17. As you think about your family's cultural background and heritage (language, traditions), what would you like school staff to know about your child that might make a difference in the assessment of learning and/or behavior? Explain below:

18. Do you feel your child's school problem(s) could be the result of a cultural or racial misunderstanding. If so, please explain:

19. Do you feel that your child's problem(s) in school could be related to language barriers? If so, explain below:

20. What sort of disciplinary strategies do you use with your child?

21. Describe how your family gets along and completes tasks.

22. Describe family routines when your child has to do homework. Specifically address how long your child spends on homework and who provides help and support whenever it is needed.

Thank you very much for completing this survey. Please return it to the person and address below:

Return to: ..... Return by Date: .....

Mild to Moderate Mentally Impaired (MMI) Summary Worksheet

Minnesota Department of Education

Teams must document their consideration of procedures used to reduce bias in the assessment process with American Indian or African American students. This form may be attached to the Assessment Summary Report (ASR) to provide documentation.

Criteria Area	Data Sources	Interpretation
Intellectual Functioning ☐ Standardized instrument ☐ Supplemental procedures ☐ Other data sources		
Adaptive Behavior ☐ Personal or Independent Functioning ☐ Personal or Social Functioning ☐ Functional Academic Competencies ☐ Vocational or Occupational Competencies	☐ Documented systematic observations ☐ Classroom work samples ☐ Interviews ☐ Sociometric measures ☐ Criterion-referenced measures ☐ Educational history	
Sociocultural Factors Impact of diversity on student school performance: ☐ *Race and Culture* ☐ *Communication* ☐ *Socioeconomic Status* ☐ *Other*_____	Data Sources: ☐ *Sociocultural Checklist* ☐ *Home and Family Interview* ☐ Other	

According to IDEA '97, a student is **NOT** eligible for special education services if one of the following is the determinant (primary) cause for the learning problem. Place a check in the appropriate box below:

Is the primary cause due to a lack of instruction in reading or math ? ☐ Yes ☐ No

OR

Is the primary cause due to Limited English Proficiency ? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Based on the assessment data and other sources of information collected for this student, the team has concluded that:

- *The student meets criteria.* ☐ Yes ☐ No
- *The student is in need of special education and related services.* ☐ Yes ☐ No

Poverty Checklist

Name (optional): ..... Date: ..... School/Agency .....

Instructions for Use: The purpose of the *Poverty Checklist* is to initiate discussion about how schools can address the needs of poor children more effectively. Many of the questions are compound questions, with several examples. They may be difficult to answer. You may find yourself answering "Yes" to part of a question and "No" to other parts of the same question. If you can answer "Yes" to **any** part of a question, count that question as a "Yes". Consider the remaining parts of each question as future objectives for your schools.

The checklist has been divided into two major sections for scoring. The first contains questions important for all schools, regardless of the number of students living in poverty. These questions deal with some of the more familiar educational elements of effective schools as seen through the prism of poverty. The second major section expands on the notion that schooling is about interagency collaboration and the school's role in facilitating the delivery of comprehensive services to children and their families in order to support and enhance their education. A scoring guide is provided at the end of the checklist.

Section I

A. Awareness and Information	Yes	No
Is staff aware of their own privileged status and how that influences their attitudes toward poor children and their families?	☐	☐
Is staff aware of the detrimental effects of the prevalent myths about poverty, for example, that people are poor because they are stupid, that people are poor because they are lazy, and that most poor people are members of minority groups?	☐	☐
Does staff recognize the strengths of individual poor children and their families and build upon them in school programming?	☐	☐
Does staff serve as role models by communicating respect for all children and their families?	☐	☐
Are school-wide family needs assessments conducted yearly and at initial enrollment to determine the needs of children and families?	☐	☐
Is staff provided with information and training relevant to the social, emotional, health and educational needs of children in poverty?	☐	☐
Do teachers know who are the poor children in their classes?	☐	☐
Are school data collected which identify children in poverty by race, gender and national origin as well as their academic achievement, participation in extra-curricular activities, and referral to gifted programs, special educational services or disciplinary procedures?	☐	☐
Are the privacy rights of all children and their families scrupulously protected?	☐	☐

B. Curriculum and Involvement	Yes	No
Are the issues of poverty, unemployment and related social policy discussed with students during social studies class time?	☐	☐
Are life experiences of poor children included in the curriculum without negative connotations?	☐	☐

Are career education and vocational education infused into the curriculum from kindergarten through the twelfth grade?	☐	☐
Are instructional support services available for children who need them, such as tutoring and mentoring?	☐	☐
Are instructional strategies such as cooperative learning and activity-based learning regularly employed in the classroom?	☐	☐
Has ability grouping and tracking been eliminated for the most part?	☐	☐
Are educationally sound alternatives to suspension and expulsion available?	☐	☐

C. Parent Involvement	**Yes**	**No**
Is a staff member or parent designated as a parent involvement coordinator?	☐	☐
Is the parent involvement coordinator trained to work with parents of different cultural, linguistic and social groups?	☐	☐
Is special outreach made to parents of children in poverty by offering support, parent education programs, referral to social service agencies, and employment opportunities?	☐	☐
Are community liaisons or interpreters available from different national origin groups to help families participate in school activities and access social services if needed?	☐	☐
Do parent-staff advisory groups represent all segments of the school community (e.g. race, gender, national origin, social class)?	☐	☐

Section II

D. Comprehensive Service for Students and Families	**Yes**	**No**
Are free or reduced-cost breakfast and lunch available in school for children who are poor?	☐	☐
Are teen parenting programs available for student parents to enable them to stay in school after the birth of a child and continue their education?	☐	☐
Does the school arrange for annual hearing and vision screening from the state department of public health for all students and refer students for additional services when necessary?	☐	☐
Are all activities, textbooks, school pictures, uniforms and snacks freely accessible to poor children without stigma?	☐	☐
Are social workers, counselors, nurses, and psychologists available to all children who need them, regardless of their eligibility for specific programs?	☐	☐
Does the school maintain a list of community agencies and programs that serve poor children, including eligibility requirements and the particular services provided and are these regularly disseminated to parents and staff?	☐	☐
Is one staff member responsible for the coordination of school and community-based social services for students and their families?	☐	☐
In an emergency is the staff able to refer students and their families to community organizations that supply food, clothing, shelter or health care?	☐	☐
Is a comprehensive early childhood program, such as Head Start, available for low-income families in the school district?	☐	☐
Are flexible opportunities and support available to adult students who want to complete high school requirements or get a General Educational Development (GED) degree?	☐	☐
Have linkages been developed with local business and industry to fund innovative programs aimed at increasing the achievement and employability of low-income students?	☐	☐
Does the school have a health clinic or provide health services to students who need them?	☐	☐
Are adult volunteers such as Big Brothers and Sisters or foster grandparents sought from the community to serve as role models or supporters for low-income children and their families?	☐	☐

Are staff, parents and the community informed about how their local schools are funded and possible strategies for increasing funding?	☐	☐

Scoring: Total number for each section "Yes" and interpret using criteria below:

Section I

10-21	You have the basic components of an effective program. See Section II of the checklist to determine additional program goals.
0-9	Administrative leadership and staff training are needed to address the educational needs of poor children more effectively.

Section II

9-14	Your responses show evidence of high commitment to the education of low-income children.
4-8	You appear to be working hard to provide educational support for low-income children. However, additional school-based services might be needed.
0-3	You need to take a second look at your school, your students, their families, and the community to make sure there are no unknown or unmet needs related to poverty.

Practitioner Diversity Awareness Scale

Name (optional)	Comments .....
Date ..... Position	.....
Agency/School	.....

Instructions for Use: The purpose of this scale is to help you assess your current training needs with regard to the development of knowledge and skills pertinent to the provision of quality services to diverse student populations. Please rate your training needs and professional growth objectives based on the following three criteria:

1. *High Training Need* Checking this category indicates that you recognize your knowledge and skills are limited in this area, but you tend to see this as essential to your professional growth. You would suggest that this area should be a priority for staff development.
2. *Moderate Training Need* Checking this category indicates that this is an area in which you have some knowledge of and may have received some training, but feel that additional staff development or experiential opportunities would help supplement the skills you already have. You would *not,* however, consider this to be a high priority training need for yourself.
3. *Low Training Need* Checking this category indicates that you are generally satisfied with your knowledge and skills in a particular area. This would suggest that you either on your own or through formal training have obtained the necessary knowledge and skills which you have been able to apply in your professional practice.

Indicate your training needs by rating the following areas	High Training Need	Moderate Training Need	Low Training Need
1. Awareness of research about how one's own cultural background can often impact professional practice.	☐	☐	☐
2. The racial, cultural, socioeconomic and linguistic background of the students that I serve.	☐	☐	☐
3. The manner in which ethnicity, culture and communication impact learning and behavior.	☐	☐	☐
4. The structure and roles of family members in the student's culture.	☐	☐	☐
5. The indigenous beliefs and practices of the cultures of the wider community of my school.	☐	☐	☐
6. The process of cultural change and adaptation in general.	☐	☐	☐
7. How individual students are experiencing cultural change (such as knowledge of the traditional culture, involvement with the traditional culture, and degree of acculturation or assimilation).	☐	☐	☐
8. The language(s) preferred by the student and his/her family.	☐	☐	☐
9. Ways of enhancing communication with diverse students and families.	☐	☐	☐

10.	The impact of race and culture, socioeconomic status, and communication differences on school success.	☐	☐	☐
11.	The impact of race and culture, socioeconomic status, and communication background on the special education referral and assessment process.	☐	☐	☐
12.	Ways of incorporating consideration of student's race and culture, socioeconomic status, and communication background into special education assessment and eligibility determination.	☐	☐	☐

Scale items were adapted from APA's *Guidelines for Providers of Psychological Services to Ethnic Linguistic, and Culturally Diverse Populations* (1993).

Minnesota Department of Education

Referral Data Form

Student Information

Name ....
School..... Grade..... .....
MARSS# .....

Referral Information

1. Origin of Referral (check all that apply):

- ☐ Parent
- ☐ Teacher–Subject .....
- ☐ Counselor
- ☐ Administrator
- ☐ Physician
- ☐ Non-Public
- ☐ Out-of-District
- ☐ Out-of-State
- ☐ Outside Agency
- ☐ Other (specify) .....

2. Reason for Referral (check all that apply):

- ☐ Developmental Delays (Early Childhood, 3-5)
- ☐ Intellectual/Cognitive Functioning
- ☐ Motor Skills
- ☐ Functional/Self-Help Skills
- ☐ Academic Performance
- ☐ Sensory Status (Vision/Hearing)
- ☐ Emotional, Social and Behavioral Development
- ☐ Communication
- ☐ Health/Physical/Medical
- ☐ Attendance

k. ☐ Other reason for referral: .....

3. If you selected *Academic Performance* from the above, indicate area (check all that apply):

- ☐ Readiness
- ☐ Reading
- ☐ Math
- ☐ Spelling
- ☐ Written Language
- ☐ Test Taking Skills
- ☐ Organizational Skills
- ☐ Task Completion

☐ Other Academic Performance reasons: .....

4. If you selected *Emotional, Social, and Behavioral Development* from the above, indicate area (check all that apply):

- ☐ Mental Health Diagnosis
- ☐ Non-Compliance
- ☐ Aggressiveness
- ☐ Withdrawn
- ☐ Activity Level
- ☐ Attention
- ☐ Peer Relationships

☐ Other emotional and behavioral reasons: .....

5. If you selected *Communication* from the above, indicate area (check all that apply):

- ☐ Articulation
- ☐ Voice
- ☐ Fluency
- ☐ Oral Expression
- ☐ Receptive Language
- ☐ Non-Standard English
- ☐ Limited English Proficiency
- ☐ Non-English Speaking

☐ Other communication and language reasons: .....

6. If you selected *Attendance* from the above, indicate area (check all that apply):

☐ Other attendance related reasons: .....

Results of Referral

7. Indicate results of referral:
   - ☐ Assessed
   - ☐ Not assessed
   - ☐ Assessment in progress
   - ☐ No longer served by district
8. Special Education Placement: ☐ Yes ☐ No
9. Indicate race of student:
   - ☐ American Indian or Alaskan Native
   - ☐ Asian or Pacific Islander
   - ☐ Hispanic
   - ☐ Black, not of Hispanic origin
   - ☐ White, not of Hispanic origin
   - ☐ Other .....
10. Indicate gender of student: ☐ Male ☐ Female
11. Indicate lunch status of student:
    - ☐ Free
    - ☐ Reduced
    - ☐ N/A

Minnesota Department of Education

School Environment Survey

Name (optional) .....
Date ..... Position .....
Agency/School.....

Comments .....
.....
.....

Instructions for Use: The purpose of this scale is to help you assess your current training needs with regard to the development of knowledge and skills pertinent to the provision of quality services to diverse student populations. Please rate your training needs and professional growth objectives based on the following three criteria:

1. *Very Descriptive* Checking this category indicates the statement describes the norms and general school environment very well. You generally feel that efforts on behalf of the school to address issues in this area have been successful and you expect that progress will continue in the future.
2. *Somewhat Descriptive* Checking this category indicates that this is an area in which you feel that school personnel have recognized a problem exists and either a plan has been developed or efforts are currently underway to address the problem through the training of staff or the instruction of students. You might consider this as "a work in progress" in which you feel a positive outcome is considered likely.
3. *Not Descriptive At All* Checking this category indicates that you feel that a problem exists in this area and you feel that (a) other school personnel may not be aware of it, or (b) others have recognized a problem exists but little or nothing has been done to address it. You generally see this as a priority area in which staff and/or student instructional development efforts are needed in the future.

Indicate how well each of the following describe your school	Very Descriptive	Somewhat Descriptive	Not Descriptive At All
1. The student population in this building is diverse, but student activities and norms are not dominated by any one race, culture or socioeconomic group.	☐	☐	☐
2. Staff and students in this school make conscious efforts to welcome people of all backgrounds and abilities.		☐	
3. Students who are culturally and linguistically different graduate from high school at the same rate as majority group members.	☐	☐	☐
4. The teaming and professional staff in this building/ district reflects the diversity of the student population.		☐	
5. Diverse parents and/or community role models are involved in the school.	☐	☐	☐
6. The school and curriculum support a multicultural environment.		☐	
7. Teachers in this school are experienced and equitable in working with students of diverse sociocultural backgrounds.	☐	☐	☐
8. The teachers in this school use a variety of instructional styles to accommodate students with a range of learning styles.		☐	
9. Teachers and diverse students interact positively in academic and nonacademic settings.	☐	☐	☐
10. Class size is such that teachers can individualize instruction or try alternative methods of instruction for students experiencing problems.		☐	
11. Students of different backgrounds have positive attitudes toward one another and positive relationships with each other.	☐	☐	☐
12. Students of different backgrounds are proportionately represented in special education, gifted education and other school programs.	☐	☐	☐

SLD Summary Worksheet

Minnesota Department of Education

■ When evaluating American Indian or African American students, it is recommended the Team gather and consider information from a variety of sources, including observations, adaptive rating scales and other types of data-collection strategies. Teams must document their consideration of procedures used to reduce bias in the assessment process with American Indian or African American students. This form may be attached to the Assessment Summary Report to provide documentation.

Criteria Area	Data Sources	Interpretation
Severe Underachievement	*(Check all that apply)* ☐ cumulative record reviews ☐ classwork samples ☐ anecdotal teacher records ☐ formal and informal tests ☐ curriculum-based assessment results ☐ results from instructional support programs such as Title I, etc. *Parent Information relative to severe underachievement:*	
Observation(s)		
Severe Discrepancy **General Intellectual Ability** ☐ Standardized instruments ☐ Supplemental procedures ☐ Other data sources ***Achievement*** ☐ basic reading skills ☐ reading comprehension ☐ mathematical calculation ☐ mathematical reasoning ☐ written expression ☐ oral expression ☐ listening comprehension *Was a severe discrepancy verified through observation(s)?* ☐ Yes ☐ No	*Parent Information relative to severe discrepancy:* Other sources:	

Criteria Area	Data Sources	Interpretation
Information Processing *(Check all that apply)* ☐ Storage ☐ Organization ☐ Acquisition ☐ Retrieval ☐ Expression ☐ Manipulation	*Parent Information relative to information processing:* Other sources:	
Does the information processing problem exist in a variety of settings? ☐ Yes ☐ No	Indicate setting(s) where information processing problem is observed: *(Check all that apply)* ☐ Home ☐ School ☐ Community ☐ Work site	
Exclusionary Factors Must be ruled out as primary cause of the student's underachievement. Note that there is some overlap with the sociocultural factors. *(Check all that apply)* ☐ vision, hearing, or motor impairment ☐ mental impairment ☐ emotional or behavioral disorders ☐ environmental, cultural, or economic influence ☐ history of an inconsistent educational program	*Parent Information relative to exclusionary factors:* Other sources:	

Sociocultural Factors Impact of diversity on student school performance: ☐ *Race and Culture* ☐ *Communication* ☐ *Socioeconomic Status* ☐ *Other*	Data Sources: ☐ *Sociocultural Checklist* ☐ *Home and Family Interview* ☐ Other	

According to 1997 IDEA , a student is **NOT** eligible for special education services if one of the following is the determinant (primary) cause for the learning problem. Place a check in the appropriate box below:

Is the primary cause due to a lack of instruction in reading or math ? ☐ Yes ☐ No

OR

Is the primary cause due to Limited English Proficiency ? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Based on the assessment data and other sources of information collected for this student, the team has concluded that:

The student meets criteria. ☐ Yes ☐ No

The student is in need of special education and related services. ☐ Yes ☐ No

Speech or Language Summary Worksheet

Minnesota Department of Education

Teams need to document their consideration of procedures to reduce bias in the assessment process when assessing American Indian or African American students. This form may be attached to the Assessment Summary Report to provide documentation.

Criteria Area	Data Sources	Interpretation
A. Fluency Disorder 1. Two judgments of behavior interfering with communication; and 2. Five percent dysfluency rate on two or more speech samples.	1. Judgment by: ☐ teacher of communication disorders ☐ parent/another adult of similar language or cultural background ☐ child 2. Speech samples _____ Sample # 1/rate of __% _____ Sample # 2/rate of __%	
B. Voice Disorder 1. Two judgments of behavior interfering with communication, and 2. Moderate to severe vocal severity rating on a voice profile administered on two separate occasions, two weeks apart, at different times during the day.	1. Judgment by: ☐ teacher of communication disorders ☐ parent/another adult of similar language or cultural background ☐ child 2. Speech samples _____ Sample # 1/rate of __% _____ Sample # 2/rate of __%	

Criteria Area	Data Sources	Interpretation
C. Articulation Disorder 1. Two judgments of behavior interfering with communication; *And 2, 3, or 4 Below* 2. Test performance falls 2.0 standard deviations below the mean on a technically adequate instrument; 3. Pressure consonant test indicates problem in nasal resonance; 4. A pupil nine years of age or older with a sound consistently in error as documented by two three-minute speech samples; errors are not characteristic of nonstandard English.	1. Judgment by: ☐ teacher of communication disorders ☐ parent/another adult of similar language or cultural background ☐ child 2. Test performance of standard deviation (S.D.) below mean. 3. Test performance indicates problem of nasal resonance is __ 4. Speech samples _____ Sample # 1/rate of _____% _____ Sample # 2/rate of _____%	

Criteria Area	Data Sources	Interpretation
D. Language Disorder 1. Two judgments of behavior interfering with communication 2. Student's language development falls below or is different than what would be expected given consideration to chronological age, developmental age, or cognitive levels; *And either 3, or 4* 3. Performance on two tests falls 2.0 standard deviations below the mean on technically adequate, standardized, norm-referenced tests; **OR** 4. Two documented measurement procedures indicates a substantial difference from what would be expected given consideration to chronological age, developmental age, or cognitive level.	1. Judgments by: ☐ teacher of communication disorders ☐ parent/another adult of similar language or cultural background ☐ child 2. Language performance is below or different than that expected for student's ☐ chronological age ☐ developmental age ☐ cognitive level *And either 3, or 4* 3. Test performance of ☐ S.D. below mean on test # 1 **AND** ☐ S.D. below mean on test #2 4. Procedures (Describe): Procedure # 1 _____ Procedure #2 _____	

Sociocultural Factors Impact of diversity on student school performance: ☐ *Race and Culture* ☐ *Communication* ☐ *Socioeconomic Status* ☐ *Other*	Data Sources: ☐ *Sociocultural Checklist* ☐ *Home and Family Interview* ☐ Other	

According to IDEA '97, a student is **NOT** eligible for special education services if one of the following is the determinant (primary) cause for the learning problem. Place a check in the appropriate box below:

Is the primary cause due to a lack of instruction in reading or math ? ☐ Yes ☐ No

OR

Is the primary cause due to Limited English Proficiency ? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Based on the assessment data and other sources of information collected for this student, the team has concluded that:

The student meets criteria. ☐ Yes ☐ No

The student is in need of special education and related services. ☐ Yes ☐ No

Minnesota Department of Education

Sociocultural Checklist

1. Student Information	2. Respondent Information
Name (optional)	Name .....
Date of Birth ..... Age ..... Grade	Date ..... Position .....
School	Agency/School .....

Instructions for Use: Using your knowledge of this student obtained through observations, record review and parent contacts, complete the Sociocultural Checklist by placing a check by **all statements that apply.** When completed, refer to the *Sociocultural Guide* to review pertinent information and/or research with regard to each statement checked.

A. Racial/Cultural Factors

- ☐ The student is racially different from the majority of peers and staff in this school.
- ☐ The student's family participates regularly in events or social groups within their race/cultural group and/or the family is an enrolled member of a recognized American Indian tribe.
- ☐ The student seldom interacts with peers or staff of other racial/cultural backgrounds or has poor relations with peers and staff of other racial/cultural backgrounds.
- ☐ The student's culture values support of family or group over individual effort.
- ☐ The student recently moved from another town, city or state.
- ☐ The student and his/her family recently moved from another area but retains behavior or survival strategies that are not adapted to the current environment.

B. Communication Factors

- ☐ There is a language, dialect, or communication style other than standard English spoken by family members in the student's home.
- ☐ The student has a language, dialect or communication style other than standard English.

C. Socioeconomic Factors

- ☐ The student is currently homeless or lacks adequate clothing, housing and/or nutrition
- ☐ The student's parents or caregivers do not have a high school diploma or GED.

D. Resiliency Factors

- ☐ The student has special strengths, talents or interests. Describe:.....
- ☐ The student is involved in school and/or community activities. Describe: .....
- ☐ The student has a mentor or a positive adult role model.
- ☐ The family has a support network. Describe: .....

E. Other Factors

- ☐ The student's family is very mobile (has moved more than once during the current school year or has a pattern of moving at least once a year over several years).
- ☐ The student's previous education has been sporadic, limited, or very different from the current school.
- ☐ The school and the student's family have a history of negative communication or interactions.
- ☐ The student's primary caregiver has changed within the last year.
- ☐ The student has recently experienced a crisis or trauma.
- ☐ The student expresses or displays a sense of stress, anxiety, isolation, or alienation.

Appendix A: Professional Standards for Assessment

Excerpts from the *Standards for the Provision of School Psychological Services*

Approved by the Delegate Assembly of the National Association of School Psychologists on July 26, 1997.

School psychologists respect all persons and are sensitive to physical, mental, emotional, political, economic, social, cultural, ethnic, and racial characteristics, gender and sexual orientation, and religion.

School psychologists in all settings maintain professional relationships with students, parents, the school and community. Consequently, parents and students are to be fully informed about all relevant aspects of school psychological services in advance. The explanation should take into account language and cultural differences, cognitive capabilities, developmental level, and age so that the explanation may be understood by the students, parent, or guardian.

As employees or employers, in public or private domains, school psychologists do not engage in or condone practices that discriminate against clients based on race, handicap, age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, national origin, economic status, or native language.

3.5 Non-Biased Assessment and Program Planning

3.5.1 General Principles: School psychologists use assessment techniques to provide information which is helpful in maximizing student achievement, educational success, psychological adjustment, and behavioral adaptation.

3.5.1.4 Whenever possible, school psychologists use assessment techniques and instruments which have established validity and reliability for the purposes and populations for which the procedures are intended. In addition, certain clinical procedures and measures at the "research" stage of development may be used by practitioners trained in their use provided the reliability and validity of the procedures are reported and clearly distinguished from those techniques which meet standards.

3.5.3 Non-Biased Assessment Techniques

3.5.3.1 Assessment procedures and program recommendations are chosen to maximize the student's opportunities to be successful in the general culture, while respecting the student's ethnic background.

3.5.3.2 Multifaceted assessment batteries are used which include a focus on the student's strengths.

3.5.3.3 Communications are held and assessments are conducted in the client's dominant spoken language or alternative communication system. All student information is interpreted in the context of the student's sociocultural background and the setting which she/he is functioning.

3.5.3.4 Assessment techniques (including computerized techniques) are used only by personnel professionally trained in their use and in a manner consistent with these standards.

3.5.3.5 School psychologists promote the development of objective, valid, and reliable assessment techniques.

3.5.3.6 Interpretation of assessment results is based upon empirically validated research.

4.3.2 Psychological and Psychoeducational Assessment

4.3.2.5 School psychologists adhere to the NASP resolutions non-biased assessment and programming for all students (see Section 3.5.3). They are also familiar with and consider the Standards for Educational and Psychological Tests (developed by APA, AERA, and NCME) and other related publications in the use of assessment techniques.

Excerpts from the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing*

The following excerpted standards were adopted by the American Educational Research Association (AERA), the American Psychological Association (APA), and the National Council on Measurement in Education (NCME).

Standard 1.10	Construct-related evidence of validity should demonstrate that the test scores are more closely associated with variables of theoretical interest than they are with variables not included in the theoretical network.
Standard 2.1	For each total score, subscore, or combination of scores that is reported, estimates of relevant reliabilities and standard errors of measurement should be provided in adequate detail to enable the test user to judge whether scores are sufficiently accurate for the intended use of the test.
Standard 2.2	The procedures that are used to obtain samples of individuals, groups of observation for the purpose of estimating reliabilities and standard errors of measurement, as well as the nature of the populations involved, should be described. The numbers of individuals in each sample that are used to obtain the estimates, score means, and standard deviations should also be reported.
Standard 2.9	Where there are generally accepted theoretical or empirical reasons for expecting the reliabilities or standard errors of measurement to differ substantially for different populations, estimates should be presented for each major population for which the test is recommended.
Standard 4.3	Norms that are presented should refer to clearly described groups. These groups should be the ones with whom users of the test will ordinarily wish to compare the people who are tested. Test publishers

should also encourage the development of local norms by test users when the published norms are insufficient for particular test users. Comment: When tests are developed for uses other than local use, the user needs to know the applicability of the test to different groups. Differentiated norms or summary information about differences between gender, ethnic, grade, or age groups, for example, may be useful. Users also need to be made alert to situations in which norms are less appropriate for one group than for another.

Standard 6.2 When a test user makes a substantial change in test format, mode of administration, instructions, language, or content, the user should revalidate the use of the test for the changed conditions or have a rationale supporting the claim that additional validation is not necessary or possible.

Standard 6.7 Test users should verify periodically that changes in populations of test takers, objectives of the testing process, or changes in available techniques have not made their current procedures inappropriate.

Standard 6.10 In educational, clinical, and counseling applications, test administrators and users should not attempt to evaluate test takers whose special characteristics–ages, handicapping conditions, or linguistic, generational, or cultural backgrounds–are outside the range of their academic training or supervised experience. A test user faced with a request to evaluate a test taker whose special characteristics are not within his or her range of professional experience should seek consultation regarding test selection, necessary modifications of testing procedures, and score interpretation from a professional who has had relevant experience.

Standard 6.12 In school, clinical, and counseling applications, a test taker's score should not be accepted as a reflection of lack of ability with respect to the characteristic being tested for without consideration of alternate explanations for the test taker's inability to perform on that test at that time.

Standard 8.12 In elementary or secondary education, a decision or characterization that will have a major impact on a test taker should not automatically be made on the basis of a single test score. Other relevant information for the decision should also be taken into account by the professionals making the decision.

Standard 13.1 For non-native English speakers or for speakers of some dialects of English, testing should be designed to minimize threats to test reliability and validity that may arise from language differences. Comment: Careful professional judgment is required to determine when language differences are relevant. Furthermore, the means by which test users meet this standard will vary with different testing situations. In individual assessments, the test administrator may also need to be able to take into account language behavior that is considered socially appropriate in the culture of the test taker. For example, slowness or rapidity of response is influenced by culturally learned speech patterns that are known to vary across linguistic groups.

Standard 15.1 In typical applications, test administrators should follow carefully the standardized procedures for administration and scoring specified by the test publisher. Specifications regarding instructions to test takers, time limits, the form of item presentation or response, and test materials or equipment should be strictly observed. Exceptions should be made only on the basis of carefully considered professional judgment, primarily in clinical applications.

Standard 15.4 In school situations not involving admissions and in clinical and counseling applications, any modification of standard test administration

procedures or scoring should be described in the testing reports with appropriate cautions regarding the possible effects of such modifications on validity.

Appendix B: Test Scoring and Testing-of-Limits

Introduction

Occasionally, skilled and trained assessors may find it necessary to employ "testing-of-limits" procedures in order to expand the scope of assessment. Testing-of-limits involves the practice of modifying or adapting the assessment to test the "limits" of a students skills and abilities. In doing so, the assessor is often more interested in obtaining qualitative or "clinical" information about certain aspects of an individual's functioning rather than obtaining a performance estimate relative to a norm group. Because this technique requires variation from normal standardization procedures, the results derived from its use are often unknown with regard to reliability and validity. Because the usefulness of this procedure is directly related to one's knowledge of the test and clinical skills of the examiner, it is recommended that testing-of-limits procedures only be done by highly trained examiners who are prepared to support their findings with supplemental information.

Testing of Limits

The following section is from Sattler's (1988) *Assessment of Children.*

Generally, the only modifications made to standard administrative procedures should be those discussed in the test manuals (for example, changing the order of the tests or eliminating spoiled tests) or those necessary to test handicapped children. However, there may be times when you want to go beyond the standard test procedures in order to gain additional information about the child's abilities. The information from testing-of-limits procedures can occasionally be helpful, especially in clinical or psychoeducational settings. Any successes obtained during testing-of-limits, of course, cannot be credited to the child's scores.

The testing-of-limits techniques should be used only after the entire test has been administered using standard procedures. Otherwise additional cues may facilitate the child's performance on the remaining items of a test. Such score increases have been reported for the Block Design and Picture Arrangement subtests of the WISC and Wechsler-Bellevue Intelligence Scale (Sattler, 1969).

The following procedures may be used in testing-of-limits:

I. *Providing additional cues.* To determine how much help is necessary for the child to solve a problem, you may want to provide a series of cues to the child. One approach is simply to readminister failed items, telling the examinee that there is another solution or arrangement and asking him or

her to try to find it. Or you might reproduce the examinee's construction (for example, a block design pattern or picture arrangement layout), tell the examinee that there is an error, and ask him or her to find it and correct it. If this procedure does not lead to a correct solution, you can show the child the first step in solving the problem, after which you can provide a series of additional steps if needed.

A second approach is to begin by asking the child how he or she went about trying to solve the problem (for example, "How did you get that answer?"). Before suggesting that the item be attempted again, you might want to provide the first step in reaching the correct solution or tell the child which part of the original method was incorrect.

Another approach is to provide additional structure (for example, if the child becomes disoriented when asked to throw a ball, you might put a line on the floor to better orient the child). Overall, you can break down and simplify the tasks until it becomes clear to you what the child can and cannot do with help and under what conditions.

The above procedures will help you to determine the extent to which the examinee can benefit from additional cues. The more cues that are needed before success is achieved, the greater the possible degree of learning disorder or cognitive deficit. This information will be helpful in planning remedial efforts.

2. *Changing modality*. To determine the influence of the modality, you may want to change it. For example, if the child fails problems in oral form, you might see if he or she can solve them in written form.

3. *Establishing methods used by the examinee*. There are many different ways of solving the test questions. On Digit Span memory tests, for example, the task can be solved by grouping the digits in sets of two, three, or more digit sequences: by recalling them as a number (4-1-3 as four hundred and thirteen) or by recalling them as distinct digits in sequence. The method used may be related to learning efficiency or to personality features, or it may have no particular import. Learning how the child solved the problem may give you additional insight into how well the task was understood and the particular memory strategy used by the child.

To learn how the child went about solving the problem, you may simply ask what method was used. Some children will be able to verbalize their method, but others will not, even though they have answered correctly.

4. *Eliminating time limits.* When the child does not complete a test because of time limits, you can readminister the test (after the examination) without time limits and delete references to speed or time limits in the directions. This will help you determine whether the child can solve the problem.

5. *Asking probing questions*. Occasionally examinees will give responses or make constructions with blocks or other materials that are vague or idiosyncratic. If you want to, you can go back to these items, repeating the item and response and then saying "Tell me more about what you mean." or reconstructing the design and saying "Tell me about what you assembled (or made); explain it to me." Such probing questions may give you insight into how the examinee approaches tasks.

As a result of the help provided during the testing-of-limits phase, the child may pass tests. During the test proper, too, the child may solve a problem after the time limit has been reached. In such cases, you can include in your report that the child benefited from additional help or time, but do not change the test scores.

One of the problems associated with helping procedures introduced during the testing-of-limits phase is that these procedures may invalidate the results of retesting occurring at a later date. Therefore, you must carefully consider the benefits and costs of testing limits. If retesting with the same test may be needed in the near future, then testing-of-limits procedures probably should not be used. However, if the goal is to evaluate the limits of the child's abilities on the test or determine problem-solving approaches and there is no reason to plan on a retest in the near future (say within the next 12 to 24 months), testing-of-limits may be quite useful.

Remember…

The knowledge, sensitivity and care of the person giving an instrument and interpreting the result is ultimately more important than the specific tool that is used. Technical adequacy does not assure an unbiased assessment and it is possible for educators to draw biased conclusions from instruments that have excellent validity and reliability for a given population.

School psychologists should also refer to the professional standards for testing and assessment outlined in Appendix A for recommended practices regarding intellectual assessment. Following are testing-of-limits procedures suitable for assessing the domains of achievement and communication (adapted from Collier, 1988).

- Examine each item and illustration before administering the test to determine whether the student has had access to the information or item. If uncertain, consult with a cultural representative.

- Prepare a parallel modification for inappropriate items or illustrations.
- First administer the test according to the manual, recording the student's complete response.
- If the student misses items previously identified as possibly inappropriate, reword your instructions, use the modified item or illustration, and provide additional time for the student to respond.
- Continue testing beyond the ceiling unless the student is clearly at his/her threshold.
- Record all of the student's responses and allow him/her to change his/her mind it clearly demonstrates that he/she knows the answer.
- Give credit for very similar responses.
- First score the test as directed in the manual.
- When items are found to be incorrect according to the manual, compare them with reported dialect and linguistic features of the student's language. If the responses are correct according to the linguistic rules of his/her language, record a second set of scores with the items marked correct.
- Rescore each item allowing credit for those items that are considered correct in the student's language and culture, or have been modified to a more appropriate form.
- Compare both sets of scores with the norms. The modified scores will probably be higher than those scored by the manual. However, students who are truly handicapped in the area being assessed will score low no matter how the test is scored. If the modified score is significantly higher than the other, the student is likely to have the knowledge or skill being tested, but may need instruction in transferring that knowledge or skill to English.
- When reporting the results of this test, indicate where the adjustments were made in the protocol, content, and scoring. Be sure to describe what was done and the differences in the student's responses after each modification.
- Define group of culturally similar peers for purposes of comparison on measures of achievement. In other words, compare newly arrived students from Chicago with comparable peers, not with age group peers who have been in the same Minnesota district for their entire school experience.

In addition to the strategies outlined above, the following procedures can help to minimize potential bias in standardized, norm-referenced instruments:

- Examine the test manual and stimuli for forms of test bias. Determine whether the student has had access to the information or skills required by the test.
- Allow extra time for responses.
- Increase the number of practice items.
- Remove potentially culturally incorrect responses.
- Reword test instructions.
- Ask the student to explain responses that are incorrect according to scoring guidelines.
- Record all responses, particularly when the student changes an answer, explains it, comments, or demonstrates.
- Continue the test even if a basal level is not established or go beyond the normal ceiling.
- Utilize a dynamic assessment approach (test-teach-test) to evaluate the student's learning potential.

Appendix C: American Indian and Bilingual Home-School Liaisons

Introduction

Special education programs for children with disabilities can be confusing for American Indians and those with limited English proficiency. The Division of Special Education and the Division of Indian Education therefore created the "Indian Social Worker Aide" program almost 20 years ago to help improve communication between American Indian parents and schools. Because of the success of the American Indian program, it was expanded to include bilingual staff in 1993. In 1995, the program name was changed to "home-school liaison." These staff help schools to:

- Understand cultural and language differences.
- Carry out appropriate assessments that are respectful of language and cultural differences.
- Communicate with families and carry out due process requirements.

Primary Responsibilities, Qualifications and Training

A list of appropriate activities and functions for home-school liaisons is attached. This list is based upon those originally identified for American Indian home-school liaisons. This list is not intended to be a job description; an individual home-school liaison may not perform all of the activities listed. The primary goal of the home-school liaison program is to help form a link between parents, communities, and schools with regard to special education needs and concerns. While home-school liaisons will be involved with many students, their primary role is not to function as a classroom aide, tutor, pupil support assistant or program support assistant in order to implement IEPs.

There is considerable diversity within communities. If there are parents from different tribes, different ethnic backgrounds or different languages within a single district, that district may need to hire more than one home-school liaison on a full or part time basis. The Division of Special Education's intent is that persons hired in this capacity will be members of the same racial/ethnic group as the parents whenever possible. The Division does not intend that districts hire a home-school liaison of one racial/ethnic group and require them to serve parents of a different racial/ethnic group.

In order to carry out the responsibilities described, it is anticipated that home-school liaisons need to bring certain knowledge and skills to the job. At a minimum, they would need to have oral and written skills in English

and the language(s) spoken by parents. They also need to be familiar with the culture and customs of the community. In addition, they need excellent interpersonal skills. In a sense, they need to be both bilingual and "bicultural." Home-school liaisons also need skills in interpreting and need to possess knowledge of the Minnesota school system. These latter skills, however, may be learned on the job through workshops and other types of staff development activities. Staff development workshops for American Indian home-school liaisons are provided in cooperation with the Division of Indian Education for the past 20 years. Staff development opportunities for bilingual home-school liaisons are also offered by the Division of Special Education.

Funding Home-School Liaisons

Schools who employ an Indian or bilingual home-school liaison to carry out the duties described on the attached list may be reimbursed for part of the person's salary. This reimbursement is handled in the same manner and at the same percentage as the salaries of a speech/language clinician, SLD teacher, pupil support assistant, psychologist or any other special education staff person. If a district does not need a full-time home-school liaison, they may pro-rate the position and claim partial reimbursement. For example, a small district may employ only one bilingual worker who fills a variety of roles. Depending on the number of LEP students enrolled and the number of students with current or potential IEPs, a school might determine that the bilingual worker spends 20% of his/her time carrying out the listed activities. Special education state aids could be applied toward 20% of that person's salary.

If a district employs two or more bilingual or Indian Education workers, it is recommended that at least one person be designated as the special education home-school liaison and then take part in staff development opportunities. This person will be able to develop more expertise in special education, thus assuring consistency in interpreting and parent communication. This is particularly important for assessments.

In general, the non-reimbursed portion of a home-school liaison's salary must be paid through local funds. In some cases, however, other funding sources may be utilized for the match. In addition to flowing state aid reimbursement for salaries, the Division of Special Education utilizes staff support and federal special education discretionary funds to provide training for home-school liaisons.

"Indian home-school liaison" and "bilingual home school liaison" are the job titles used for funding and reporting purposes through special education's Electronic Data Reporting System (EDRS personnel types 12 and 39 respectively). Districts may choose to adopt another working title that is more descriptive of the role the person plays. Some examples of possible

job titles are Indian student advocate, community outreach worker, educational interpreter, Hmong special education liaison, Latino parent involvement worker, cultural resource staff, and so on.

For Further Information

For further information about the bilingual home-school liaison program, contact the Division of Special Education or the Division of Indian Education.

Note: At the time of publication, the Division of Special Education is considering expansion of the home-school liaison program to include African American personnel.

Home-School Liaisons Roles and Responsibilities

I. Information Dissemination

A. Provide information and training to special education staff to help them better work with parents, including such topics as:

1. Language and culture, such as attitudes toward school, child rearing, attitudes toward disabilities, general customs and beliefs.
2. Cultural differences between home and school that should be considered when planning and implementing educational programs.
3. Cultural differences affecting relationships between students, parents, and staff.
4. Native language patterns and educational history that affect how students use English and master academic skills.

B. Provide information to bilingual communities in general and to parents in particular regarding:

1. The history and purpose of education and special education in the U.S.
2. Euro-American attitudes toward disabilities.
3. Definitions of disabilities and eligibility.
4. Descriptions of special education programs and services.
5. The rights of parents to be involved in making decisions affecting the education of their child with disabilities.
6. Ways of working with schools to resolve problems relating to education in general and to special education in particular.

II. Prereferral, referral, and assessment

A. Prereferral: Facilitate communication between school staff and parents when a child is identified as having problems and is being considered for referral for special education.

1. Help to gather information and clarify the problem (including information on home language use and proficiency, parent perception of the child's behavior, health and developmental information, observations of the student's relationships and functioning in the community and home).
2. Help to develop appropriate interventions.
3. Help to determine whether or not referral for formal assessment is warranted.
4. Assist in child find activities to identify infants and preschool children who may have disabilities.

B. Referral: Facilitate communication between parents and schools related to the referral process.

1. Explain to parents and the student, when appropriate, the legal

requirements of schools regarding due process and the provision of instruction and services to students with disabilities.

2. Obtain parent consent to assess a student suspected of having a disability.

C. Assessment: Assist special education staff in planning and carrying out assessment procedures that are culturally and linguistically appropriate.

1. Participate in planning the assessment.
2. Review standardized instruments for appropriateness and bias.
3. Serve as interpreter in administering assessment procedures when appropriate.
4. Gather language samples and assist in evaluating native language proficiency relative to experience and education when appropriate.
5. Assist in gathering observational data regarding behavior, socialization, and academics.
6. Participate in team meetings to interpret data and determine eligibility.

III. Team meetings and IEP Development

A. Facilitate parent involvement in team meetings.

1. Serve as liaison and interpreter in setting up and holding meetings with parents so as to enhance school/parent communication.
2. Provide information relative to the student's functioning and relationships in the home and community that should be considered in developing goals and objectives.
3. Facilitate parent involvement in making decisions affecting their children.

B. Facilitate parent involvement in developing appropriate IEPs:

1. Articulate cultural differences that need to be considered as the IEP is being developed.
2. Assist in identifying areas of need where native language instruction and/or support is needed in order for the student to benefit from special education and in developing strategies to meet native language needs.
3. Assist in identifying appropriate ways for parents to be involved in and supportive of their child's educational goals.
4. Obtain parent consent to provide the special education services specified in the IEP.

IV. Overall Due Process and Parent Involvement

A. Assure that parents understand their rights to approve or disapprove school plans and to make specific requests regarding the special education

needs of their child.

B. Assure that parents understand the procedures that must be followed in order to provide the most appropriate education for their child.

C. Assure that parents are aware of resources and agencies that can assist them in meeting the needs of their children who have disabilities.

D. Facilitate communications between parents and the school to assist in meeting timelines and to reduce potential misunderstandings and conflict.

E. Assure that legal notices are provided in the language and mode that the parent prefers and is best able to comprehend.

V. Program Implementation

A. Assist the student at the onset of special education services and at times of program changes to ensure their understanding.

B. Act as a contact point for parents and/or students to answer questions that arise regarding the special education program.

C. Facilitate communication with parents regarding periodic and annual reviews of the child's IEP.

D. Make ongoing, periodic contacts with parents and students to foster communication, answer questions as they arise, and to foster parent involvement in the special education program.

E. Facilitate communication between the school and other service agencies, particularly those that serve a bilingual community.

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