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Forms and Checklists

Learning Ecology Checklist

Date: _____

Individuals providing input and title: _____

Instructions: Begin an assessment of a student you wish to support by assuming internal normality (Ortiz, 2008). Difficulties learning academic information, or difficulty with social interactions may be attributed to an internal factor (e.g., low cognitive ability level, lack of understanding) or numerous factors that are environmental (stress, poor nutrition). Evaluators are encouraged to use multiple strategies to develop a picture of a student's learning ecology (e.g., interviews with teachers and parents, review of educational and medical records, curriculum expectations, and observation of instruction). Additionally, the following checklist will help educators review potential extrinsic factors involved when American Indian and African American students are having learning difficulties. When information addressing the issues defined has been collected, use the information to determine what gaps exist in knowledge about the student, and what important information should be collected to develop a full understanding of the needs of the student and types of interventions that would best support the student.

When assessing the potential extrinsic contributing factors to the learning difficulties of American Indian or African American heritage, consider the following questions (elaborate on issues in the space provided):

1. Is there a possible mismatch between the student's overall level of acculturation and the academic/classroom expectations she/he experiences?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
2. Is there a possible mismatch between the student's acculturation and the non-academic (e.g., physical education, recess, school physical environment) expectations she/he experiences?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
3. Is there a possible mismatch between the home, community, and school behavioral expectations she/he experiences?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
4. Are there any concerns that the student's basic needs are not being met properly, relegating academic achievement to a lower level of priority?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
5. Are there factors from the student's family history (e.g., history of childhood trauma, abuse, or neglect, family mobility) that impact learning or social skills?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
6. Is there a possible mismatch between home/community and school linguistic and communication patterns?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
7. Have home-school communication patterns been explored and analyzed?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
8. Has the student's life experiences been explored. Highly unusual or idiosyncratic experiences are considered (i.e., significantly different than middle class U.S. experiences).	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

9. Does the school climate experienced by the student reflect positively on the culture of American Indian and African American students (visual aspects of the environment such as posters, symbols, inclusion of culturally events on a regular basis)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
10. Has the student experienced connectedness or mentoring from at least one important adult in her/his school building?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
11. Has the student's sense of belonging at school been explored and considered?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
12. Has the degree of connectedness between the student's school and cultural community/neighborhood been explored and considered? What are the strengths of the connection? What are the challenges of the connection?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
13. Have assets and strengths for the student/family been identified? What are they?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
14. If available, consultation with cultural liaisons and cultural brokers occurs to facilitate communication and understanding occurs.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

Prioritized Action Steps:

Given the results of the completed Learning Ecology Checklist, teams are encouraged to develop an action plan to increase external supports and identify appropriate interventions. Prioritize goals here (short term goals are immediate strategies (within next 4-6 weeks, while long term goals are more extended) :

1.	<input type="checkbox"/> Short Term <input type="checkbox"/> Long Term
2.	<input type="checkbox"/> Short Term <input type="checkbox"/> Long Term
3.	<input type="checkbox"/> Short Term <input type="checkbox"/> Long Term
4.	<input type="checkbox"/> Short Term <input type="checkbox"/> Long Term
5	<input type="checkbox"/> Short Term <input type="checkbox"/> Long Term

Commentary on Information collected:

Assessment Tool Selection Guide

Name

Date

Agency/School

Instructions for Use: The following checklist should be used to gauge the appropriateness of standardized instruments for individual students. Please note, regardless of student race or ethnicity, norm-referenced tests should only be used when the student's level of acculturation is similar to that of a middle-class group of students. If a student's level of acculturation is deemed significantly different, evaluators are encouraged to consider alternatives to standardized/norm-referenced procedures. For additional information and detail on test bias and acculturation, see the Assessment section of this resource.

The checklist serves as a best practice guide for choosing appropriate assessment tools for diverse learners. Individual evaluators and evaluation teams are encouraged to review this checklist prior to conducting comprehensive assessments of an American Indian or African American student. As new tests are introduced for use by the school, a team within the school performs an audit to understand the strengths and weaknesses of a test with African American and American Indian students. No test can be culture or language-free and no test can be completely culturally fair. Even tests deemed to be low on verbal demand and cultural loading involve interactions between an examiner and a student. Nonverbal exchanges can be influenced by culture.

The following prompts serve as a guide to discussing appropriate use of nationally standardized, norm-referenced assessments. **There is no scoring system, professional judgment is required.**

1. The student's level of acculturation and life experiences were analyzed. YES NO

- NOTES: When the student, regardless of race/ethnicity, is thought to be dissimilar to that of middle class America, evaluators should consider avoiding standardized tests altogether. Evaluators cannot assume it is sufficient for tests to be stratified by race and similar to the U.S. census, as test norms do not include culture as a variable.

2. The specific purpose of the instrument was analyzed. YES NO

- NOTES: Instruments that measure cognitive processing or nonverbal cognitive abilities (as opposed to traditional tests of IQ that measure verbal/performance differences) are often more suitable for use with diverse learners.

3. The degree of language demand of the instrument was analyzed (e.g., frequency of verbal instructions or receptive/expressive verbal response tasks). YES NO

- NOTES: Instruments can be evaluated through the Culture-Language Test Classification process suggested by Ortiz (2004¹). Instruments deemed to be high on verbal demand may not be appropriate for some African American or American Indian students.

4. The degree of cultural loading of the instrument was analyzed (e.g., the cultural references of visually or verbally presented tasks were considered). YES NO

- NOTES: Instruments can be evaluated through the Culture-Language Test Classification process suggested by Ortiz (2004). Instruments deemed to be high on cultural loading may not be appropriate for some African American or American Indian students.

5. The norms of the instrument were collected within the last ten years YES NO

- NOTES: Norms older than 10 years are a poor comparison for students being undergoing a recent evaluation.

6. Any limitations of the instrument for diverse learners are described in the instrument manual. YES NO

- NOTES: Evaluators must analyze and consider those limitations as they apply to the student being evaluated.

¹ Ortiz, S. (2004). Culturally and linguistically diverse students: A systemic, practical approach for non-discriminatory assessment.

7. The test manual describes differences in test performance across racial, cultural, linguistic, and/or socioeconomic groups.

YES NO

- NOTES: Those differences are analyzed and considered when making test use decisions for the specific student being evaluated.

8. Test users have confirmed that an item analysis has been conducted on this instrument from the framework of cultural and communication characteristics of diverse cultural groups.

YES NO

- NOTE: Content validity for diverse students is discussed in the manual (i.e., how biased items were handled). This information was analyzed and considered when making test use decisions of the specific student being evaluated.

9. The instrument clearly describes expected demands of students (e.g., reading level, response type, test-taking behaviors).

YES NO

- NOTE: Those demands are considered when making test use decisions about the specific student being evaluated.

10. The instrument includes flexible features for diverse students (e.g., theoretical options, administration options, scoring that allows for regional language use).

YES NO

- NOTE: Those features are considered when making test use decisions about the specific student being evaluated. Flexible theoretical and administration options are often more appropriate for students of American Indian and African American heritage.

Bias Vulnerability Assessment

Date: _____

Individuals providing input: _____

Instructions: This tool was designed to support school in problem solving and reflecting on issues related to bias through assessment. School assessment teams, leadership teams, or other school professionals responsible for collecting and interpreting student data are encouraged to explore the following prompts collaboratively. Open discussions about identifying factors within the school that support students are recommended. As well, identifying potential barriers and developing an action plan to overcome barriers contributes to the development of a positive school climate. Individual schools or districts can use this checklist to identify areas where their assessment process may be vulnerable to bias (i.e., possible “blind spots” needing improvement).

When assessing the needs of American Indian or African American students:

The setting uses a multi-tiered system of support, involving progressively intense instruction/intervention, as needed, and maintaining the least restrictive approaches for programming for students.	<input type="checkbox"/> Always <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Never
Prevention and supportive services for the student are prioritized (e.g., social-emotional adjustment, academic adjustment, school connection, diversity awareness building)	<input type="checkbox"/> Always <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Never
The influence of school climate as an influential factor on student learning and achievement is considered.	<input type="checkbox"/> Always <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Never
The student’s learning ecology is explored. Data about the student’s home and community environment are given significant emphasis in understanding factors that influence the student’s performance.	<input type="checkbox"/> Always <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Never
Multiple hypotheses for student struggles are considered, analyzed, and a clear process for testing hypothesis is followed. Focus on strengths and capabilities are clearly an emphasis of the problem-solving process used.	<input type="checkbox"/> Always <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Never
The emphasis on gathering data that improve instruction or intervention is given high priority (as opposed to answering Yes/No questions only, such as “Does this student qualify for Special Education?”).	<input type="checkbox"/> Always <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Never
The student’s level of acculturation is explored and understood (i.e., the student’s home and community experiences are compared to that of)	<input type="checkbox"/> Always <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Never
The team, with administrative support, de-emphasizes use of standardized when the student’s level of acculturation is determined to be significantly different than that of middle class students, typical of a standardization group used in norm-referenced assessment.	<input type="checkbox"/> Always <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Never
Qualitative interpretation of standardized test data is considered an option (i.e., de-emphasis on test scores), and included in narrative discussion of tests results interpretation.	<input type="checkbox"/> Always <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Never
The elimination of standardized tests altogether is an option (if deemed a	<input type="checkbox"/> Always

poor match with the student's level of acculturation).	<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Never
Standardized tests, when used, are chosen based on best match for the student (as opposed to a single test or narrow set of tests being available for all students).	<input type="checkbox"/> Always <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Never
Test givers are aware of and knowledgeable about the cultural and linguistic loading of any tests.	<input type="checkbox"/> Always <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Never
The student's language and verbal communication skills are understood, particularly in terms of use of home language or communication styles that differ significantly from communication expectations used in schools. Language proficiency is determined in English and native language (i.e. BICS and CALP), as needed.	<input type="checkbox"/> Always <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Never
The student's internal and external strengths and assets are identified in narrative reports about the student and given significant emphasis in developing interventions.	<input type="checkbox"/> Always <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Never
Educators, school staff, assessment professionals, and administrators have received ongoing professional development addressing the needs of diverse learners. Cultural competency is promoted through continuing education opportunities or in-service training for persons in the school community.	<input type="checkbox"/> Always <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Never
Evaluators have strong knowledge of the student's unique cultural experiences, which can influence assessment responses or behavioral tendencies.	<input type="checkbox"/> Always <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Never
The cultural background (not just race/ethnicity) of the student is reflected in the norm or comparison group of any standardized tests given.	<input type="checkbox"/> Always <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Never
Input from caregivers is gathered and valued.	<input type="checkbox"/> Always <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Never
Cultural brokers or representatives are used to provide input on common or expected behaviors, reactions, and responses to any assessment tools used.	<input type="checkbox"/> Always <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Never
Interventions are designed to consider the relationship between the student's background and the learning environment.	<input type="checkbox"/> Always <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Never

Prioritized Action Steps:

Given the results of the completed vulnerability assessment, teams are encouraged to develop a bias reduction action plan. Prioritize goals here (short term goals are immediate strategies (within next 4-6 weeks, while long term goals are more extended):

1.	<input type="checkbox"/> Short Term <input type="checkbox"/> Long Term
2.	<input type="checkbox"/> Short Term <input type="checkbox"/> Long Term
3.	<input type="checkbox"/> Short Term <input type="checkbox"/> Long Term
4.	<input type="checkbox"/> Short Term <input type="checkbox"/> Long Term
5	<input type="checkbox"/> Short Term <input type="checkbox"/> Long Term

Comments:

Tier 1 Relational or Behavioral Intervention Tracking Form

Student: _____

Teacher: _____ Grade: _____

Date: _____ Parents/Caregivers Consulted Date: _____

Issues of Concern: _____

Please list the following Tier 1 interventions in place:

Date started: _____

Baseline Data: _____

Intervention: _____

Outcome: _____

Date started: _____

Baseline Data: _____

Intervention: _____

Outcome: _____

Date started: _____

Baseline Data: _____

Intervention: _____

Outcome: _____

Introduction to the Sociocultural Checklist and Guide

The *Sociocultural Checklist* is designed to summarize information known about diversity factors including racial and culture information, communication preferences, information of socioeconomic factors, and factors such as life experiences and family issues. The checklist can be completed from information that is gathered through a referral form, record review and other sources.

The *Sociocultural Checklist* is not meant to be used as a family interview device. In Minnesota, many American Indian and African American families are impacted by socioeconomic challenges and language differences. Although many families and students living in difficult circumstances survive and thrive, research has shown that socioeconomic stress can be a risk factor contributing to challenges at school.

When students experience problems in school, sociocultural factors should be investigated and the information used in planning interventions. The checklist is also designed to assist schools in documenting that they systematically gathered information to develop a comprehensive understanding of the needs of a student.

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 Information

Name (optional) _____
Date of Birth: _____ Age: _____ Grade: _____
School: _____

2. Respondent Information

Name: _____
Date: _____ Position: _____
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. It is possible that information for certain questions is not available.** 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. Yes No
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. Yes No
3. The student interacts with peers or staff of other racial/cultural backgrounds or has good relationships with peers and staff of other racial/cultural backgrounds. Yes No
4. The student's culture values support of family or group over individual effort. Yes No
5. The student recently moved from another town, city, state, or country. The student and his/her family are recent immigrants, refugees, or itinerant workers. The student and his/her family reside on a reservation. Yes No
6. The student demonstrates behavior or survival strategies that are culturally appropriate or appropriate to a previous environment but that are different from the expectations of the current environment. Yes No
7. There is support in the home for bicultural development. Yes No

Adjustment Factors

8. The student displays confusion in locus of control. Yes No

9. The student displays heightened stress or anxiety in cross-cultural interactions. Yes No

10. The student expresses or displays sense of isolation or alienation in cross-cultural interactions. Yes No

Cognitive/Learning Factors

11. The student displays few cognitive learning strategies that are appropriate to the classroom/school. Yes No

12. The student's cognitive learning style is different or inappropriate in relation to teacher's instructional style. Yes No

13. The student uses learning strategies that are not appropriate. Yes No

Experiential Factors

14. The student has limited or inconsistent school attendance. Yes No

15. The student has had little exposure to subject or content or is not familiar with material in class. Yes No

16. The student's early childhood development was disrupted. Yes No

17. The student's responses in the classroom show difficulty understanding social or behavioral expectations. Yes No

18. The student uses/knows different terms/concepts for subject areas or materials and content. Yes No

B. Communication Factors

- 19. There is a language, dialect, or communication style other than standard English spoken by family members in the student’s home. Yes No
- 20. The student has a language, dialect or communication style other than standard English. Yes No
- 21. There is support in the home for bilingual development. Yes No
- 22. The student does not speak English. Yes No
- 23. The student has limited academic language in native language. Yes No
- 24. The student has limited social language in English. Yes No
- 25. The student rarely speaks in class. Yes No
- 26. The student only speaks to culturally similar peers. Yes No
- 27. The student has limited academic language in English. Yes No
- 28. The student asks a peer for assistance in understanding. Yes No
- 29. The student appears to know English but cannot follow English directions in class. Yes No

C. Socioeconomic Factors

- 30. The student is currently homeless or lacks adequate clothing, housing, and/or nutrition. Yes No
- 31. The student’s primary caregivers have a high school diploma or GED. Yes No

D. Resiliency Factors

32. The student has special strengths, talents, or interests. Describe: _____

33. The student is involved in school and/or community activities. Describe:

34. The student has a mentor or a positive adult role model. Yes No

35. The family has a support network. Describe: _____

E. Other Factors

36. 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). Yes No
37. The student's previous education has been sporadic, limited, or very different from the current school. Yes No
38. The student's parents or caregivers have had disagreement with educators Yes No
39. The student's primary caregiver has changed within the last year. Yes No
40. The student has recently experienced a crisis or trauma. Yes No
41. The student expresses or displays a sense of stress, anxiety, isolation, or alienation. Yes No

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. Students from diverse backgrounds 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 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 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 adjustment problems the student is encountering may be the by-product of adapting 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, hypervigilance, 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

19. 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.

20. 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

30. 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.

31. The student's parents or caregivers have a high school diploma or GED.

If the parent or caregiver of the student lacks a high school diploma or GED, the family is more likely to live in poverty or encounter socioeconomic stress. 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. It may be a challenge 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 socioeconomic factors have impacted the child.

D. Resiliency Factors

Items 32-35 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 32-35 pertain to student strengths or resiliency factors. Knowledge of strengths, talents, and 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

36. 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.

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

See item 14 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.

38. The student's parents or caregivers have had disagreements with educators.

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. 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.

39. 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.

40. 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.

41. 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.

Minnesota Department of Education

Home Language Questionnaire

ED-01336-08E

The following is to be completed by School District Personnel:

STUDENT IDENTIFICATION INFORMATION

Student's Full Name: _____
Date Of Birth: _____ Age _____ Grade Level: _____

DISTRICT INFORMATION/VERIFICATION INFORMATION

School name: _____ District number: _____

I hereby verify that the above information is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Name (Printed)

Signature – Responsible Authority Title Date

The following is to be completed by Parent/Guardian:

STUDENT LANGUAGE INFORMATION

Dear Parents and Guardians:

In order to help your child learn, your child’s teachers need to determine which language your child uses most.

Please respond to the questions below by checking the appropriate box.

- | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Which language did your child learn first? <input type="checkbox"/> English <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify): _____ |
| 2. Which language is most often spoken in your home? <input type="checkbox"/> English <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify): _____ |
| 3. Which language does your child usually speak? <input type="checkbox"/> English <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify): _____ |

PARENT/GUARDIAN INFORMATION

I hereby verify that the above information is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Name (Printed)

Signature – Parent/Guardian Date