Assessing African American Students: An Authentic Assessment Model

Presenter: Renee A. Dawson, Ph.D.
Diagnostic Center of Northern California

About Renée Dawson
- Attended California Public Schools
- Approximately 40 years working in public education
- Teacher – Social Worker – School Psychologist – Special Education Administrator – Secondary Specialist – Assistant Director at DCN
- Worked in urban school districts (Oakland, Hayward, and Riverside Unified)
- For fun, enjoys walking and taking Zumba classes

A few rules...
- Cell phones – off or on vibrate
- Sidebars – mutual respect
- Smile at the presenter...

Diagnostic Centers
http://www.dcn-cde.ca.gov
- Department of Education
- Serve special education students in California ages 3-22 (no charge)
- Assessments, Trainings, and Classroom Consultations
- Online Trainings and Consultations

Agenda
- Why are we still talking about Larry P.?
- Review of DCN's 2005-06 survey findings
- What is happening in the state regarding the assessment of African American students?
- An approach to assessing African American students
- The MATRIX

California Department of Education
Diagnostic Center of Northern California

CASP Presentation: 3/22 & 23, 2012
EXPECTATIONS:
- Participants will have an open mind
- Willingness to change mindset
- Handout available on DCN website after March 26, 2012

In lieu of IQ tests:
- CDE suggested:
  - Assessments of students personal history and development
  - Adaptive behavior
  - Classroom performance
  - Academic achievement
  - Evaluative instruments designed to point out specific information relative to a student’s abilities and inabilities in specific skill areas

Why are we still talking about Larry P.?

The Year:
2006

Larry P. Ruling
- 1979 – Larry P. vs. Riles
- 1984 – State of California went before the US 9th Circuit Court to repeal the Larry P. verdict
- 1986 Larry P. injunction was expanded to prohibit all IQ testing of African American students for any kind of special education services
- 1992 – Challenge to the 1986 extension of the ban on IQ testing for all special education purposes (Crawford v Honig)
- 1992 – CDE issued legal Advisory stating school districts are not to use intelligence tests in the assessment of African American students for any special education services

DCN Survey of School Psychologists
- In 2006:
  - School psychologists in 345 school districts in Northern California were surveyed.
  - Four hundred and four (404) responded
  - Results:
    - Majority dissatisfied with the methods they were using
    - Large majority reported having no guidelines for assessing African American students
    - Many of the psychologists used standardized tests of cognitive ability
What does this tell us?

- Table 1, if Whites are used as the proportional constant of students identified by Special Education Disability, then African Americans are identified at a proportional rate of 1.5 to 2 times more. The only exception is for Speech or Language Impairment.

- Table 2, if Hispanics are used as the proportional constant of students identified by Special Education Disability, African Americans are identified at a proportional rate of 1.5 and up to 5 times more in the case of Emotionally Disturbed. The only exception is for Speech or Language Impairment.

What we know...

- African American students are likely to be disproportionally placed in special education.
- African American students are more likely than any other group to drop out of school.
- The Achievement Gap more significantly impacts African American students (Jack O'Connell and Tom Torlakson).
- Poor academic performance has a direct and serious impact on a student's adult life.
- The achievement gap among students of color is a threat to their future and the future economic health and security of California and this nation.

What does this mean since we have had a ban on using IQ testing of African American students for special education services?
Since Larry P.

- We know IQ tests alone are probably not the only cause of disproportionate representation of African American students in special education.
- Federal Government requires all states to conduct a review of districts to determine if any one group of students is disproportionately placed in special education.
- If so a corrective action has to be put in place.

Larry P. Task Force 2010-11

- Findings:
  - Banned list of tests does not exist
  - Best Practices for Assessment
  - A tool for identifying test validity and reliability

As School Psychologists, what can we do?

- One thing we can do is a better job in our assessment practices of African American students that honors the spirit of the Larry P. ruling.

African American Advisory Committee January 12-14, 2011

- California State Board of Education recognized that some African American students are not performing as well academically as their peers.
- Recommended a committee be formed with a focus on African American students in an attempt to provide equity and to close the achievement gap.
- One recommendation focused on the issue of disproportionality and the issue of equity in education.
Ecological Assessment

"Focus is in the philosophical orientation of the assessor rather than the techniques he/she uses."

- Focus is on the student-in-environment
- Equal attention is given to the student and the environment
- Student's culture influences who that student is and how he/she may (not) interact in the dominant culture
- Consider the match between the child's culture and the school culture is essential


The MATRIX

Theoretical Foundations:
- Cattell-Horn-Carroll (C-H-C)
- Basic nine (9) broad ability areas
- One's acquired knowledge
- Ability to reason, form concepts, problem solve
- Visual processing
- Auditory processing
- Memory
- Etc.
- All-Kinds-of-Minds
- Uses neurodevelopmental framework
- Social cognition
- Problem solving, interpreting concepts
- Visual spatial
- Language
- Etc.
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PROCEDURAL CATEGORIES

OBSERVATIONS
STANDARDIZED ASSESSMENTS
INTERVIEWS
REVIEW OF RECORDS
INFORMAL METHODS

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PROCEDURAL CATEGORIES

Short comings of Standardized Testing vs. the MATRIX

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standardized Testing</th>
<th>MATRIX</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Done in a quiet, distraction free environment to get an optimum score</td>
<td>Happens in the real world that the student functions in and how the real world impacts performance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uses novel situations and props to reduce effects of prior learning</td>
<td>Allows student to demonstrate adaptive skills and how they use prior learning to compensate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provides standard scores compared to age or grade level peers</td>
<td>Provides opportunity to show developmental progress/gains year to year that are lost when comparing standard scores</td>
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PROCESSING THE INFORMATION

DOMAINS

REASONING
SOCIAL COGNITION
EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING
VISUAL SPATIAL
LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION

The MATRIX

| Provides a collaborative format |
| It focuses in on the student in his environment(s) |
| It is culture sensitive (use cultural brokers if necessary) |
| Uses student’s adaptive skills |
| Informal methods are presented in a non-threatening format |

MATRIX

80%

More Information

If you are interested in learning more about the MATRIX contact:

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Diagnostic Center Website
www.dcn.cde.ca.gov

Closing the Achievement Gap
http://www.closingtheachievementgap.org/ctag/print/htdocs/about.htm