Reference the Case Study Activity Handout (Sig Dis) prior to beginning the file reviews.

Questions marked with an \* are specific to English Learners (EL).

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| **Indicator(s):** | **Ethnic Group(s):** |
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| **Question** | **Comments** |
| **GENERAL** | |
| 1. What was the source of the referrals? Parents or guardians? Teachers? Agency staff? |  |
| 2. For initial assessments, at what age/grade level are most referrals for assessment made? |  |
| 3. What factors contributed to the referral? |  |
| 4. What are aspects of the system that would make this student difficult to serve in the general education program? Why? |  |
| 5. Did reports reflect an understanding of the socio-cultural characteristics of students that might affect their performance/adjustment? |  |
| 6. What indications were there that there might be a cultural mismatch that affected students’ adjustment? |  |
| 7. What were possible deficiencies or missing elements in the service delivery system that might have contributed to the students’ referrals? |  |
| 8. Is the home language listed on the demographic page of the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or in Special Education Information System (SEIS)? Is it stated in the psychoeducational report? |  |
| 9. What does your review of the documents tell you about the historical perspective on the student’s attendance records? What does the psychoeducational report tell you about the student’s attendance at the time of the initial referral and subsequent annual reviews? |  |
| \*10. Is the student an English Learner? If so, has the student been reclassified as Fluent English Proficient? |  |

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| **Pre-assessment Interventions** | |
| 1. What indications were there that Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) or Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) strategies were implemented with fidelity? |  |
| 2. Were sufficient general education supports available/exhausted prior to referral for assessment? |  |
| 3. To what extent was there evidence of minor interventions or temporary fixes rather than attempts to identify systemic remedies in the institution? |  |
| 4. What additional resources in the school-community are missing that might be considered to address the disproportionate identification of the identified group(s)? |  |
| 5. Were Behavior Support Plans routinely implemented, monitored, and adjusted as needed? |  |
| 6. Were reports explicit about whether culture, language, family circumstances or socioeconomic factors may be impacting the results of psychoeducational assessments? |  |
| 7. Were students with diagnosed disorders provided with Section 504 Plans? |  |

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| **Assessment** | |
| 1. What evidence was there that assessors took into consideration the socio-cultural nature of the students under examination in their selection of tools or evaluation of data collected? |  |
| 2. Was there evidence of a standard template for choosing assessment instruments and/or for completing reports? |  |
| 3. Did the assessment strategies/instruments appear to be culturally relevant? |  |
| 4. Was there evidence that the assessors understood the cultures of the students being examined? |  |
| 5. To what extent were the characteristics of the family and community taken into consideration in the determination of eligibility? |  |
| 6. Was there evidence of meaningful interaction with the family as part of the assessment process? |  |
| 7. Was there evidence of collaboration among assessors in the determination of eligibility in complex cases? |  |
| 8. Did reports incorporate relevant assessment data from other assessors? |  |
| 9. Was there consideration of positive aspects of the students’ behaviors, (e.g., the circumstances when they are successful), or comments from individuals with whom they had positive relationships? |  |
| 10. Did reports reflect an analysis of environmental and instructional factors that may positively or negatively influence student adjustment? |  |
| 11. How thorough were annual and triennial assessments and how often was possible exiting from special education considered? |  |
| \*12. For English learners, were there any indications that the assessors considered how/if their level of competence in English may be influencing their test performance? |  |
| 13. Were cultural factors considered in the assessment report? |  |

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| **Discipline** | |
| 1. What were the typical behaviors that led to the referrals for discipline? |  |
| 2. What characteristics of the identified population did you note that may have contributed to their overrepresentation in the disciplinary system? |  |
| 3. What indications were there that there may have been substantial documented or undocumented exclusion from instruction because of behavior? |  |
| 4. What evidence did you note that there might not be fairness in the way in which discipline was imposed for the students reviewed? |  |
| 5. How important was the respect/disrespect phenomenon in the negative interactions with staff? |  |
| 6. How might the goal of the school to create a citizenry that will obey the rules of society contribute to the disproportionate overrepresentation of this group in the disciplinary system? |  |
| 7. What information might suggest culturally influenced perceptions of student behavior that may define natural group responses as deviant? |  |
| 8. Is there a history of office referrals, suspension, expulsions? If so, what does that history look like? |  |
| 9. What are the patterns of where student has discipline/behavior issue(s) (class, playground, lunch time, etc.)? |  |

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| **Emotional Disturbance (ED) and Other Health Impaired (OHI)** | |
| 1. What were any commonalities in or recurring characteristics of students that led to their initial referral and continuing placement for Other Health Impaired (OHI) or Emotionally Disturbed (ED)? |  |
| 2. What other factors did you observe that might have affected a number of student referrals for assessment as Emotionally Disturbed? |  |
| 3. What aspects of the students’ behavior would lead staff to believe that these students are Emotionally Disturbed rather than responding to traumatic circumstances in their lives? |  |
| 4. Did most OHI and ED students come to the district with medical diagnoses or was this determination made by district staff? |  |
| 5. Was there clarity about the factors that determined whether students should qualify as OHI or ED? |  |
| 6. Were alternative labels to ED considered and were there explicit explanations of why they were ruled out? |  |
| 7. Are there provisions for systematic reviews of reports by more than one assessor prior to making final recommendations for identification of students as Emotionally Disturbed? |  |

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| **Specific Learning Disability (SLD)**  *Several of the questions below specifically address the Hispanic SLD student population and are marked with \*\*.* | |
| \*\*1. What are your thoughts about some of the possible root causes for the district’s disproportionate overrepresentation for Hispanic students as SLD? |  |
| 2. How often did students qualify automatically based on reports from outside parties (doctors, agency staff, other school district assessors, etc.)? |  |
| 3. How thorough/comprehensive were annual/triennials and were they done with a focus on possibly exiting an inappropriately labeled student from special education? |  |
| \*4. Are bilingual/bicultural assessors routinely assigned to determine eligibility for EL students? |  |
| 5. Was there evidence that exclusionary factors were taken under consideration in the files reviewed, \*particularly related to issues that were characteristic of larger numbers of ELs? |  |
| \*\*6. How comfortable are you that instruments used for the assessment of intelligence for Hispanic students provide accurate information about their intellectual ability? |  |
| \*\*7. What is your impression about how much the degree of linguistic competence in English affected the performance of Hispanic students on the assessment instruments used? |  |
| \*8. How accurate were current assessments in determining EL students’ actual receptive and expressive language skills? |  |
| \*9. How effective were the district’s EL instructional strategies and how skilled were general education teachers in providing language acquisition instruction in addition to academic content? |  |
| \*10. What pre-assessment interventions were routinely available for struggling second language students? |  |

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| **Summarizing the Results and Considerations for Discussion After Reviewing Files** | |
| The reviewers can work in small teams and/ or individually, then tabulate the results from the files they have reviewed onto a summary sheet. A complete summary of the results can be recorded on a summary sheet with all the results to be analyzed for patterns and trends. | |
| Is there a pattern showing different student groups are referred by parents, teachers or SST teams compared to others? |  |
| Are students being referred at different grade levels? |  |
| Are the pre-referral interventions different for some groups of students? |  |
| Are some students more likely to have discipline or attendance issues? |  |
| Is there any evidence of differences based on race or culture in the determination of \_\_\_\_\_? In the history of student discipline? In the prereferral interventions? In the placement or services? |  |
| Were the prereferral interventions used for a sufficient amount of time? Were they modified as needed? |  |
| Were other areas of disability ruled out in the assessment process? |  |
| In reviewing the triennial reviews, were the reviews complete assessments or records reviews? |  |
| Did the IEP team consider exiting the student from special education at any point in time? |  |
| Did any of the students have 504 Plans prior to being found eligible for ED? |  |
| Was there evidence of short-term trauma at the time the student was determined to be eligible? |  |
| What trends did you see? |  |
| Is the system prone to exclusion – use of suspension and/or expulsion, separate schools, etc.? |  |
| What is missing in the system for students who have been identified as \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_? |  |

Source: Adapted from materials developed by Dr. Mary Bacon and presented during the *Using File Reviews as a Vehicle for Qualitative Data Gathering* webinar offered by the State Performance Plan Technical Assistance Project with funding from the California Department of Education. View original source documents: <https://spptap.org/the-file-review-process/>

