This is a revision. Please replace previous Guideline with this version.

Schools have a long history of assessing the intellectual functioning of students needing special education services. Originally this was the main criteria used to determine if students should be allowed in school. Recently, with the mandate to educate all students, it has been used to determine the type of program within the school. During the build-up years of special education (1970-1990) IQ tests were widely used for eligibility decisions. However, in recent years the widespread use of IQ tests have been criticized. The cost of conducting such assessments, issues of labeling students, and non-discriminatory testing have been catalysts for this criticism. In addition, IQ tests do not provide any relevant information to assist teams in developing appropriate programs for students!

Assessment of intellectual functioning has traditionally been the role of the school psychologist. With the increase in social and behavioral challenges in the student population, school districts have been anxious to use their school psychologists for other more relevant tasks. Therefore, it is the position of SCRED that IQ tests only be used when legally mandated.

RECOMMENDED PRACTICES

1. School psychologists should conduct the assessment for intellectual functioning. Student Support Teams in each building should assist in determining the roles and responsibilities for the assessment of intellectual functioning. The team is in a good position to assess members' skills as well as the allocation of the special education instructional and support services available in that building. The principal in consultation with the Director of Special Education, will make any final decision needed.
2. Staff should not administer any assessment tools for which they have not had proper training. However, staff should be encouraged to receive training for those instruments in which they could reasonably be used as a resource.

3. Current Minnesota special education rules require that a full assessment including intellectual assessment be done in the categories of Developmental Cognitive Disabilities (DCD) and Emotional Behavior Disorder (EBD). Generally an intellectual assessment should not be done in the other categories unless there are grave and serious concerns about the student's cognitive/intellectual functioning.

4. Three year re-evaluation procedures also require re-administering appropriate intellectual assessments. The Department currently allows schools to do file reviews or more functional assessments once two to three formal assessments have established assessments which are similar in result. The school psychologist may use their professional judgment as to when a file review is appropriate.

5. School Psychologists may use their professional judgment about using an abbreviated version of an intellectual test. The Woodcock Johnson Test of Cognitive Ability- 3rd Edition has an abbreviated version that results in a Brief Intellectual Ability (BIA) score. This score has reliability and validity coefficients above .90 and may be used to make important educational decisions.

6. School psychologists must select tests of intellectual ability that have appropriate psychometric characteristics for making important educational decisions. Currently, school psychologists have access to the Woodcock Johnson Tests of Cognitive Ability – 3rd Edition (WJ COG-3) and the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children – 4th Edition (WISC-IV). The SCRED Director of Special Education and/or Unique Learner’s Manager must approve the purchase of any other tests of intellectual ability.

7. School psychologists should only report and interpret broad cluster scores (i.e., Global Intellectual Ability, Verbal Ability, Thinking Ability, and Cognitive Efficiency from the WJ COG – 3). School psychologists should not report or interpret subtest scores due to the low reliability and validity of these scores.
8. The CTIC Agreements entered into between school districts, the county and other related agencies specify the administration of appropriate intellectual assessment tools when students are in high school (11th grade in Pine County and 10th grade in Chisago County) in order that students will be eligible for other state provided services.