**Diagnostician Interview**

**Mrs. Newell (HISD)**

1. **How did you come to be a diagnostician for HISD?**

*I was working as a seventh-grade math teacher in Alief ISD, when I became interested in becoming an Educational Diagnostician. As a general education teacher, I wanted to know how I could have a greater impact on student achievement and the process to get the individualized support needed. I attended graduate school at Prairie View A&M University, where I became certified, first as a counselor and then as a diagnostician.*

1. **What does a diagnostician actually do?**

*Diagnosticians assess and diagnose the learning problems of students. We review academic records and obtain information from teachers as well as parents, and administer various cognitive and achievement tests. Through the assessment process, we determine if a child has a learning disability or other condition that may be impacting learning. A full and individual evaluation (FIE) report is written documenting the results. The FIE is used to determine if a child has a disability and, if so, the nature and extent of the need for special education and related services.*

1. **Who decides which students are evaluated?**

*Referrals can be made by parents, guardians, teachers, counselors, or other school staff members who suspect a child is showing signs of learning difficulties, but generally it’s the teacher who initiates the referral, because the child is not achieving commensurate with his or her peers. In HISD, we have an intervention assistance team (IAT) composed of school staff that problem-solve around students for whom the standard instructional process is not effective. Educational diagnosticians serve on the IAT and help decide if a student needs to be referred for evaluation.*

1. **What happens to a student after he or she is evaluated?**

*That depends on the impact of the disability. If the child’s disability requires very specialized support, the student may spend part of the day or most of the day in a specialized class taught by a special education teacher. In most cases, however, students with disabilities attend classes in general education settings with their peers. In the general education setting, the classroom teacher makes appropriate adaptions and accommodations to instruction, assessments, and other classroom activities so the student with a disability can access the same grade-level curriculum as non-disabled peers. This could include things like text-to-speech capabilities through Kurzweil software, visual aids for memory, math manipulatives, clarification and rephrasing for vocabulary support, or other universally designed accommodations and supports*.

1. **What do you wish someone would have told you about the position, upon entering the field as a new diagnostician?**

*That you had to be extremely organized; especially when you have multiple campuses.*

1. **What do you find the most challenging aspect of the job?**

*Writing sufficient reports to where all involved understand information presented.*

1. **What do you enjoy most about being a diagnostician?**

*Being able to provide a diagnosis to those students whom truly need help.*

1. **What are the most important skills that are necessary to effectively execute the position?**

*Learn the law and the rights of your position and of the students.*

1. **What actions do you take when confronted with legal implications?**

*Go back and refresh my knowledge on the law, not being afraid to state “I don’t know” and asking for assistance to make sure I’m doing the right thing by law and for the student. Standing my ground when I have the law to back me up.*

1. **What advice would give pertaining to documentation and paperwork?**

*Make a copy of everything and stay organized and date when you get curtained documentation. (especially from parents)*

1. **How do you control your emotional stance when relating impactful information to students and their families?**

*Be respectful, professional and empathize with all parents. It is hard for some parents to accept that their child is not “perfect” or not “normal. Remaining profession is key.*

1. **What is your best advice for working with diversity?**

*Be open minded and know that everyone is not the same even though they may come from the same background.*

1. **How do you manage situations with parents/caregivers who refuses to accept your diagnosis?**

*Ask why? See if they need a more in-depth explanation. And remind them it is their right to not accept diagnosis; but their also remind that their child will not be able to get that additional/ more personalized help that they need without the diagnosis (disability label).*

1. **What is your advice for preparing for the interview process?**

*Research position, try your best to understand what the job intels and be able to explain how you would be able to perform those duties.*

The Educational Diagnostician that I worked with during my internship was very open and easy to talk to about her job. She is evaluated by the Director of Special Education from her school district. A large part of her job is writing up detailed reports which are considered legal documents, which many people see and read on a regular basis. If she completed these reports incorrectly, there would be an immediate red flag that she was doing her job wrong. Her job description requires her to work with many other professionals on a regular basis such as: LSSPs, school counselors, nurses, physical therapists, occupational therapists, speech pathologists, special education teachers, general education teachers, school principal and assistant principal, and many others.