Impact

Monica Sanjur (center back) and her family have traveled a long road to finding the right education setting for Patxi (center front), a multilingual child with Down syndrome. See story below. Photo courtesy of Rachel Whitson/Rachel Whitson Photography.

Following Patxi's Lead: A Child-Centered Journey of Learning and Language

by Monica Sanjur

My son, Patxi, was diagnosed with Down syndrome two days after his birth. He confused the medical staff by passing his Apgar tests and breastfeeding right after birth. It wouldn't be the first time he was underestimated. Our family's journey to find the right educational setting that would nurture Patxi's abilities has been a long road. In addition, the external limitations that he has faced as a child with a disability growing up in a multilingual environment has had its challenges. Fortuitously, our path led to a public charter school in Washington D.C. that meets his needs and more.

My husband and I are immigrants. We negotiated two languages and served as interpreters while our parents learned English. My children are growing up in a multi-ethnic home. They hear Spanish, Tagalog, and English on a daily basis, however, Spanish was their first language. And, in the case of my son, he learned it simultaneously with basic American Sign Language to convey his needs.

Patxi received early intervention speech therapy and immediately we faced resistance to the use of two languages. Based on his perceived cognitive limitations, professionals felt it was "too much" or "too confusing," and that we should create an "environment for success." This reasoning did not concur with information I had based on current research that emphasized an inclusive attitude in the home as key to creating an environment for success. The child with Down syndrome should not be excluded from activities and habits typical to the family. Our expectations were very clear. We

From the Editors

English language learners (ELLs) with disabilities are a growing part of the K-12 school population nationwide. According to one calculation, over 500,000 students with disabilities in U.S. schools have limited English proficiency. These are students whose first language is not English, and in school they have the dual challenges of learning in a new language while navigating the education system as students with disabilities.

The available knowledge on how to effectively educate K-12 English language learners with disabilities, and measure their progress, is small but growing. However, many educators and families have pressing questions. How can educators distinguish between language-related needs and disability-related needs when evaluating and teaching these students? How do these students fit into and benefit from current teaching approaches? How can schools create more collaboration between language-related and disability-related services in meeting the complex needs of ELLs with disabilities? And, for their parents, how do the special education and English as a second language systems work, what are their child's options and rights, and what is the family's role in Individualized Education Programs and other aspects of their child's education? In this Impact we offer some responses to these questions and others from people around the country who are helping our education system respond to the needs of this growing student population.

What's Inside

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UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Who Are English Language Learners with Disabilities?

by Elizabeth Watkins and Kristin Kline Liu

English language learners (ELLs) with disabilities represent an increasingly larger segment of the K-12 student population in the U.S. Because of the interaction of their disability and second-language learning processes these students may have unique learning needs that affect teaching and also affect the way students show what they have learned. This article will explore what is

If you serve English language learners or students with disabilities, you most likely serve English language learners with disabilities.

known about the prevalence of disabilities among ELLs and the characteristics of ELLs with disabilities. It will conclude with recommendations for schools and organizations serving these students.

Definition of an ELL with a Disability

Generally speaking, an ELL with a disability is a student who is eligible for both special education and English as a second language (ESL) or bilingual education services. There are different identification issues associated with each service, creating variability in the definition of an ELL with a disability across the country. Educators in different locales must be aware that they may not always be considering the same students when they refer to ELLs with disabilities.

Students who are identified for special education may receive services for any one of the 14 federally recognized disability categories. Some variation in the primary disability categories occurs

across states. Federal legislation requires that ELLs with suspected disabilities be assessed in both their native language and English to ensure that any difficulties with learning are evident in both languages and are not solely the result of natural second-language learning processes. Educators and schools report that providing appropriate assessments in two languages and differentiating language learning from language-related disabilities is extremely challenging. For this reason, there is a national concern with the accuracy of special education identification rates for ELLs. This concerned is heightened for ELLs in some racial or ethnic groups.

Students who are ELLs are not proficient in English and are eligible for English language support services.[1] Schools commonly provide ESL and/or bilingual education to identified ELLs. ESL prioritizes language instruction while bilingual programs include content instruction in the native language as well as instruction in English. The goal of both types of programs is to increase students' English proficiency so that they can succeed in English-only content classrooms. Typically, children are identified as ELLs through a multistep process that includes a home language questionnaire parents complete when children are enrolled in school. If parents report that another language is used in the home, students are then given an English language proficiency screening test to determine whether or not they are eligible for ESL or bilingual education. Parent consent for language screening is not required, but parents have the right to refuse ELL services.

While the ELL identification process may appear straightforward, the accuracy of the information gathered may be compromised at several points (Bailey & Kelly, 2010). For example, parents may provide different answers to the

home language questionnaire if a child moves to a new district or language use patterns in the home change. Individual states and school districts may ask different questions on the questionnaire, use a different screening assessment, and set different score ranges to be identified as an ELL. There may also be inconsistencies in administering the home language questionnaire to parents whose children have known disabilities.

Variations in the special education or ELL identification process may result in different groups of students being included in the group of ELLs with disabilities in different places. An educator in California and a disability advocacy organization in West Virginia may not be talking about exactly the same type of student when they refer to an ELL with a disability.

Numbers Nationwide

Determining the exact number of ELLs with disabilities nationwide is a challenge because there is a limited amount of publicly-available information on students who are *both* ELLs and have an identified disability. Estimates may differ depending on the purpose for which the information was collected, and the way in which the information was collected. For example, the Office of Special Education Programs reports on the number of students in special education for ages birth through 21 who were also limited English proficient (LEP).[2] This information is included in federally mandated child count data provided annually by schools. However, it is reported by school special education staff and not by ESL or bilingual education departments, and thus may not reflect the total number of enrolled ELLs. In addition, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) data identify the number of students of various racial/

ethnic groups in each disability category, but do not break out the data for ELLs. It is possible to find national data on the number of Hispanic students with Autism Spectrum Disorders, for example, but not on the number of Hispanic ELLs in this disability category.

We get the most comprehensive picture of the population by piecing together information from multiple sources and making some general inferences about ELLs with disabilities based on what we know about ELLs and about students with disabilities overall. However, this type of approach must be interpreted with some caution. Some estimates of the population size are provided below based on a combination of information from multiple U.S. Department of Education sources for the 2009-2010 school year:

- About 9.3% of K-12 students in U.S. schools were identified as ELLs (roughly 4,647,016 out of 49,788,000).[3]

- According to IDEA child count data for the 2009-10 school year, 518,088 students with disabilities were classified as limited English proficient (LEP). This represents approximately 8.5% of all students with disabilities (Data Accountability Center, 2013a).

- Of the 518,088 LEP students reported as receiving special education services, 200,347 were in California, representing 39% of the national total. Only 2% of all ELLs in the state are identified as having disabilities, however, compared with 4.8% of English proficient students. Among all states, California identified the highest percentage of ELLs with disabilities. More than half of all states report that they provide special education services to less than 0.5% of the ELL population.

Service-Related Characteristics

ELLs with disabilities have a number of characteristics that vary across students. By definition they are all limited in their English proficiency, but students may vary greatly in the amount of time they have spent in the country, their previous educational experiences, their actual levels of English proficiency, the other languages that they speak, and the type of primary disability that they have.

Nationwide, the majority of ELLs speak, or have exposure in the home, to some form of Spanish. However, there may be as many as 400 different language groups represented in the ELL population across the country (Boyle, Taylor, Hurlburt, & Soga, 2010). Common language groups for ELLs with disabilities most likely reflect the common languages spoken by ELLs overall. For the 2009-2010 school year, the largest language groups reported by states included speakers of Arabic (29 states), Chinese (32 states), Hmong (7 states), Russian (7 states), Somali (10 states), and Vietnamese (31 states).[4] Different areas of the country had concentrations of different language groups represented in that year. For example, Somali was among the largest language groups in the ELL populations of 10 states. Schools and advocacy organizations in these states could expect to serve Somali ELLs with disabilities and could anticipate the need for Somali-speaking staff, as well as the need for materials in Somali. However, Somali was not one of the largest language groups in the other states, perhaps due to different patterns of Somali refugee resettlement and migration. Global events are also a factor in predicting what groups will require services as a result of trends in immigration and refugee resettlement.

National data on students in special education do provide data on primary disabilities for all students (Data Accountability Center, 2013b). From the data on all students with disabilities we can make some inferences about ELLs with disabilities. In 2009-2010 approximately two-thirds of all students with disabilities ages 3-21 were identified with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD), Speech/Language Impairments (SLI), Mental Retardation (MR), and Emotional Disturbance (ED). The largest group of students had specific learning disabilities, followed by those with speech or language impairments. It is likely, then, that the largest groups of ELLs with disabilities could have these same primary disabilities. Evidence provided in 2001-2002 by ESL departments in K-12 schools (Zehler et al., 2003) and by a 2006 Office for Civil Rights data collection (Office for Civil Rights, 2013) verified that these disability categories were, in fact, common among ELLs.

Services Received

In 2006, the Office for Civil Rights reported that, nationwide, only about 88% of students with disabilities who were in need of ESL or bilingual instruction actually received it (Office for Civil Rights, 2013). State level data can show variations among ELLs with disabilities who received language support services across racial and ethnic groups. For example, in one Midwestern state 60% of students with disabilities in the Hispanic ethnic group reported that their home language was Spanish. However, only 58% of these Spanish-speaking students were classified as ELLs and the remaining 42% were classified as English proficient. Of the students who were classified as being eligible for ELL services, 7% did not receive them. This information raises questions regarding the accuracy of the disability identification, the accuracy of procedures to determine English proficiency, and whether students were being denied services for which they were eligible.

Program and Service Considerations

The information presented in this article shows the diversity of ELLs with disabilities and some of the variation in this student population across states and across types of organizations serving the students and their families. It is important for educators and others who work with ELLs with disabilities to ensure they understand the characteristics of students in general and specifically of the population in the area they serve. Several recommendations are provided here to consider in developing programs

The Present and Future of Bilingual/ESL Special Education

by Roberto Figueroa, Janette Klingner, and Leonard Baca

Over the past 45 years, educators have come to recognize the unique needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students with exceptionalities (CLDE). This awareness helped establish the field of bilingual/ESL special education. This interface between bilingual, English as a second language (ESL), and special education has attempted to address the educational needs of these CLDE students. This article focuses on students learning a second language with a disability, the present state of practice, and recommendations for future practice.

What is Bilingual/ESL Special Education?

Bilingual/ESL special education may be defined as "...the use of the home language and the home culture along with ESL in an individually designed program of special instruction for the student" (Baca, n.d.). Its theoretical framework is based on three fundamental perspectives:

- *Sociocultural theory*: The manner in which learning is connected to students' cultures and communities.

- *Cultural capital and funds of knowledge of the community*: The resources that come from the students' cultures and communities.

- *Principles of effective learning*: The principles that include teachers and students producing work together, developing language and literacy across the curriculum, connecting school to students' lives, teaching complex thinking, and teaching through instructional conversations.

The collaborative consultative model has become a central tenet of bilingual/ESL special education. Rather than special educators being responsible for direct provision of services to students with special needs, these specialists work as consultants to general educators. This idea stems from the realization that unless the special education intervention actually eliminates the students' academic problems, they will still experience difficulties during that part of the day when special help is not available. Therefore, consultation seeks to modify the students' classroom experiences on a full-time basis by collaboration between specialists and classroom teachers. Ideally, this helps not only the students with special needs in particular, but also provides indirect assistance for other students who are not officially eligible for special services, and provides direct support for the teacher. Language/ESL specialists are part of this collaborative model as they support classroom teachers and special educators.

Current Issues in Practice

The educational landscape has changed a great deal since the passage of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA, 2004). More and more states are following a Response to Intervention (RTI) process to decide which students qualify for special education. No longer is eligibility determined by establishing a discrepancy between students' potential, as measured by an intelligence test, and their achievement. Thus, RTI addresses some of the long-standing concerns about biased assessment procedures with ELLs (English language learners). Yet RTI tends to be implemented in one-size-fits-all ways that do not adequately take into account the diverse needs of these students (Klingner & Edwards, 2006). And although intelligence tests are not administered with the same frequency as in the past, some problematic assessment procedures continue.

One reason for moving to RTI was to address overrepresentation of culturally and linguistically diverse students in high-incidence special education categories (i.e., learning disabilities, intellectual disabilities, and emotional disturbance). Though overrepresentation had been a concern for more than three decades (Dunn, 1968), the phenomenon came under increased scrutiny with the publication of a National Research Council report in 2002 (Donovan & Cross, 2002). The report showed dramatic overrepresentation among African American students in the intellectual disabilities and emotional disturbance categories, and wide variability across and within states in placement rates among Latino students in the learning disabilities category. Since the publication of that report, additional research has pointed to important differences in special education placement rates among different subpopulations of ELLs. In their investigation of special education placement rates among ELLs in several school districts, Artiles, Rueda, Salazar, and Higareda (2005) found that older ELLs were overrepresented in special education, but younger students were not. ELLs in English-only programs were more likely to be overrepresented than students in programs with some native language instruction. Sullivan (2011) recently examined placement patterns in Arizona and found that ELLs were more likely to be identified as having learning or intellectual disabilities than in previous years (prior to English-only legislation) and less likely to be served in the least restrictive educational environments relative to White peers.

The majority of students in special education have reading disabilities. Although they are still in the process of acquiring English as a second or additional language, they are more frequently taught in English than other CLDE students, typically without support for their English language development (Zehler et al., 2003). There are multiple reasons for this. One is that too few special education teachers have been trained in

English language acquisition and lack the skills needed to help their ELL students. Another is the misguided belief by some that once CLDE students receive assistance in special education, all of their needs can be met by special educators. Rarely are the special education services they receive optimal.

The Future of Bilingual/ESL Special Education

Looking forward, special education for CLDE learners requires reforms to better meet their needs. The focus of reforms should be on assessment as well as on instruction and support services, with the goal of creating a more equitable system for all students in education by making sure students' needs are accurately identified and that those needs are addressed through high quality instruction. The first facet of reforming the way educational systems address CLDE students in special education is the accurate assessment of disabilities that takes into account the process by which a second language is acquired. A reason for the overrepresentation of bilingual students in special education is that the traditional assessment process cannot adequately distinguish between language acquisition and learning disabilities. Evaluations for learning disabilities give insufficient consideration to the effects of language acquisition on learning or on the assessment process (e.g., Figueroa & Newsome, 2006; Klingner & Harry, 2006).

Secondly, creating valid assessments of bilingual academic proficiency is integral to halting the overrepresentation of bilingual students in special education (Klingner & Artiles, 2003). A common misconception is that a bilingual student is a combination of two languages operating independently in the student, rather than recognizing the dynamic interplay of different languages (Grosjean, 1985). Instead of evaluating the entirely unique system of bilingual language acquisition, bilingual students are measured in terms of their proficiency in one language only in comparison with monolingual peers. According to traditional

assessments, a monolingual student is considered to be at the correct developmental level if, for example, she can name five colors in English. However, the bilingual student who knows three colors in English and three colors in Spanish would be considered as lacking or behind when looking at her knowledge in only one language, when in fact she has a more extensive vocabulary (six colors altogether). By improving assessment practices, hopefully fewer bilingual students will be placed in special education for needs they do not have.

Also important is the manner in which CLDE learners' needs are supported in the classroom. When ELLs are identified as having disabilities, their need for instruction in English language development does not end. In other words, ELLs with disabilities need the services entitled to students with disabilities as well as the services designed to support ELLs. They benefit from: (a) culturally and linguistically responsive teachers, (b) culturally and linguistically responsive and relevant instruction, (c) a supportive learning environment, (d) assistance with English language acquisition (such as oral language, vocabulary, and academic language development), (e) support in the general education classroom to help them access the general education curriculum, and (f) intensive research-based interventions designed to help them improve their academic skills in targeted areas.

English language learners without disabilities, on average, require three to five years in order to become orally fluent in English as a second or additional language, and four to seven years to become academically proficient in the language (Hakuta, Butler, & Witt, 2000). This highlights the need for instruction in a student's primary language to support their learning while they are acquiring English, especially for students with disabilities who may require more time to become proficient in a second language.

These examples present a clear direction for bilingual/ESL special education. Revised assessment practices are needed to make sure that bilingual students are

not being misdiagnosed with disabilities and placed into special education. Once a student is found to have a disability, a different approach from "business as usual" is needed. Teachers must be trained in language issues so that they can support CLDE students in the acquisition of English though a variety of culturally and linguistically responsive teaching methods. And, more research is needed on high level teaching practices that are effective for CLDE students. As educational practices shift, special education for bilingual students can become more supportive of the challenges they face and more cognizant of the many strengths and rich potential they bring to the classroom.

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The Legal Obligations of Education Systems to Serve English Learners with Disabilities

by Joanne Karger

The number of English learners (ELs) enrolled in the public schools has been increasing rapidly over the past decades. Along with this increase, more ELs are being identified for special education. The relationship between language development and disability is complex. In some instances, ELs may be improperly labeled as having a disability. In other instances, these students may not receive the special education and related services that they need.

There are two types of laws that address the education of ELs with disabilities – those that pertain to language learning, and those that pertain to the provision of special education services. The first part of this article discusses

> *It is important for educators to be aware of their legal obligations and to work collaboratively with families in implementing these obligations.*

obligations with respect to all ELs, including ELs with disabilities, under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Equal Educational Opportunities Act, and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. That is followed by a discussion of specific obligations pertaining to ELs with disabilities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Requirements of Title VI and the Equal Educational Opportunities Act

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI) is a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin in programs that receive federal funding.[1] The Office of Civil Rights of the U.S. Department of Education is the federal agency that enforces Title VI.[2] In investigating complaints under Title VI, the office has noted that Title VI does not require a particular program of instruction such as English as a Second Language. However, once a district offers a bilingual program, at a minimum, the teachers should be able to speak, read, and write both languages and should have received adequate instruction in bilingual education.[3]

The Equal Educational Opportunities Act (EEOA) is another civil rights law that requires states and school districts to take appropriate action to overcome language barriers that impede the equal participation of ELs in instructional programs.[4] This law was originally passed in 1974, the same year as the Supreme Court's decision in the *Lau v. Nichols* case. In this case, the Supreme Court concluded that the San Francisco school system had failed to provide non-English speaking Chinese students with equal educational opportunities under Title VI.[5]

The Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice enforces the EEOA and investigates complaints that states or districts are not providing appropriate services to ELs.[6] The Department of Justice has pointed out that the EEOA does not require educational agencies to use a particular type of language program such as English as a Second Language. Rather, courts typically use three factors to determine whether the educational agency acted appropriately:

- Is the program based on sound educational theory?
- Is the program reasonably calculated to carry out this educational theory effectively?
- After a sufficient time, does the program show that the language barriers facing ELs are actually being overcome?[7]

The Office of Civil Rights has applied these same three factors to the investigation of complaints under Title VI.[8]

Responsibilities Under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act

Originally passed in 1965 as part of President Johnson's War on Poverty, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) is the major federal education statute that focuses on the education of all students in grades K-12. It emphasizes high standards and accountability.

Under Title I of the ESEA, as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, states are required to adopt challenging academic content and achievement standards for all children in the state.[9] Title I also requires states to conduct yearly academic assessments that are aligned with these standards[10] and report on the progress of students in certain subgroups, including race/ethnicity and limited English proficiency.[11] English learners (referred to in the ESEA as "limited English proficient children") must be assessed in a valid and reliable manner with reasonable accommodations, including (to the extent practicable) assessments in the language and form most likely to yield accurate data on what these students know and can do until they have achieved English language proficiency.[12] ESEA regulations also permit states to exclude from the reading/language arts assessment an EL who has attended school in the United States for less than 12 months.[13]

Title III of the ESEA focuses on ensuring that ELs, including immigrant children and youth, attain English proficiency and meet the same challenging

academic content and achievement standards that other students are expected to meet.[14] Title III provides grants to states, which award subgrants to districts and other eligible entities to improve the education of ELs.[15] The law does not specify what type of instructional program a district must use, as long as the program is "based on scientifically based research." [16]

Under Title III, states must establish English language proficiency standards that are based on the four language domains (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) and that are aligned with the state's content and achievement standards for all students.[17] States must also assess the English proficiency of students served under Title III on an annual basis.[18] Moreover, states are required to establish annual measurable achievement objectives that include:

- Annual increases in the number or percentage of children making progress in learning English.

- Annual increases in the number or percentage of children attaining English proficiency by the end of each school year.

- Progress for ELs in reading/language arts and mathematics.[19]

Beginning in 2011, the U.S. Department of Education has offered states the opportunity to request flexibility to waive certain requirements of the ESEA. To receive flexibility, each state must submit a waiver request that addresses several principles for improving academic achievement and increasing the quality of instruction. In providing guidance on what states must include in their waiver requests, the department has noted that "English Learners are covered by all the principles of this flexibility." The guidance also included ways in which states could address ELs in their waiver requests, including potential changes concerning the third objective identified above on progress in reading/language arts and mathematics.[20]

Rights Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is the federal special education statute. IDEA is both a funding statute and a civil rights statute that was enacted under the Fourteenth Amendment. IDEA includes several provisions that pertain to the evaluation and identification of ELs with disabilities. These provisions are intended to ensure that ELs are not identified inappropriately for special education. In conducting special education evaluations, school districts must ensure that assessments and other evaluation materials are selected and administered in a manner that is not discriminatory on a racial or cultural basis.[21] In addition, these assessments must be administered in the language and form that is most likely to provide accurate information about what the child knows and can do, unless it is not feasible to do so.[22] Moreover, trained and knowledgeable personnel must administer the assessments.[23] The Act further specifies that a child must not be found eligible for special education services under IDEA if the determining factor is limited English proficiency.[24]

Several IDEA provisions relevant to ELs with disabilities pertain to the development of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). IDEA requires that, in the development of an IEP for a student with limited English proficiency, the IEP team consider the language needs of the child.[25] In addition, districts must take whatever action is necessary to ensure that the child's parents understand what is happening at the IEP meeting, including arranging for an interpreter if the parents' native language is not English.[26]

Additional requirements pertain to communication with parents of ELs with disabilities. Districts must provide parents prior written notice when the district proposes to initiate or change (or refuses to initiate or change) the identification, evaluation, educational placement, or provision of a free appropriate public education. IDEA specifies that this notice must be provided in the parents' native language, unless it clearly

is not feasible to do so.[27] Similarly, when the district provides parents with a notice of procedural safeguards, this notice must be written in the parents' native language, unless it clearly is not feasible to do so. [28]

Conclusion

All of the above requirements are intended to help improve the provision of services to ELs with disabilities. In order to address the needs of this population more effectively, it is important for educators to be aware of their legal obligations and to work collaboratively with families in implementing these obligations.

Notes
1. 42 U.S.C. § 2000d et seq.
2. See http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/eeolep/index.html
3. See http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/lau1991.html
4. 20 U.S.C. § 1703(f).
5. 414 U.S. 563 (1974).
6. See http://www.justice.gov/crt/about/edu/types.php
7. *Castaneda v. Pickard,* 648 F.2d 989 (5th Cir. 1981).
8. See http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/lau1991.html
9. 20 U.S.C. §§ 6311(b)(1)(A)–(B).
10. 20 U.S.C. § 6311(b)(3)(A).
11. 20 U.S.C. §§ 6311(b)(2)(C)(v), (G).
12. 20 U.S.C. §§ 6311(b)(3)(C)(ix), (III).
13. 34 C.F.R. § 200.6(b)(4)(iv).
14. 20 U.S.C. § 6812(1).
15. 20 U.S.C. §§ 6821, 6825.
16. 20 U.S.C. § 6812(9).
17. 20 U.S.C. § 6823(b)(2).
18. 20 U.S.C. § 6823(b)(3)(D).
19. 20 U.S.C. § 6842(a)(3)(A).
20. U.S. Department of Education (2011), *ESEA Flexibility: Frequently Asked Questions.* Available at http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/esea-flexibility/index.html.
21. 20 U.S.C. § 1414(b)(3)(A)(i).
22. 20 U.S.C. § 1414(b)(3)(A)(ii).
23. 20 U.S.C. § 1414(b)(3)(A)(iv).
24. 20 U.S.C. § 1414(b)(5)(C).
25. 20 U.S.C. § 1414(d)(3)(B)(ii).
26. 34 C.F.R. § 300.345(e).
27. 20 U.S.C. § 1415(b)(3),(4).
28. 20 U.S.C. § 1415(d)(2).

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The Common Core State Standards and English Language Learners with Disabilities

by Delia Pompa and Martha Thurlow

Led by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers, and working with content-area experts, new standards for English language arts and mathematics were developed in 2010. The new standards are known as the Common Core State Standards, or CCSS for short.

> *New standards for English language arts and mathematics developed in 2010 have been adopted by 46 states. What do they mean for English language learners with disabilities?*

These standards have now been adopted by 46 states, replacing the reading and math standards that states had identified for themselves.

What do these new standards mean for English language learners (ELLs) with disabilities? How are they related to the English proficiency of ELLs with disabilities? Do they really change anything? To answer these questions, it is necessary to say just a bit more about the CCSS and their implementation. Then we address some of the promises and the challenges that may come with the CCSS as we educate ELLs with disabilities. Finally, we identify some next steps for educators and parents of ELLs with disabilities.

CCSS for English Language Arts and Math

The CCSS have been described as being "fewer, clearer, and higher." Most states agree that the standards are more rigorous than their current state standards. They are viewed as more coherent, meaning that they are logically organized across grades to reflect increasing levels of knowledge and skills without a lot of repetition and review. The CCSS are viewed as being internationally benchmarked so that students who meet these standards are more likely to be college and career ready and competitive in a global economy when they complete the K-12 education system.

The CCSS are also viewed as being dependent on understanding the English language as well as the content of English language arts and mathematics. This means that there are inherent challenges for students who are learning English. It also means that there are challenges for students who have disabilities that may interfere with their access to the content or with demonstrating their knowledge and skills in the content.

CCSS Promise for ELLs with Disabilities

The promise of the CCSS for English language learners, students with disabilities, and students who are both is that they are fewer and deeper. Teachers will no longer have to attempt to cover a large number of standards, but can spend more time on each concept. Teachers also can embed formative assessments in their instruction to check on student progress. Creating formative assessment lessons can deepen students' understanding of mathematics and English language arts.

Consortia of states are in the process of developing new technology-based assessments for the CCSS. These assessments hold the promise of being a new generation of assessments that truly measure the academic achievement of ELLs with disabilities. Current assessments are limited in the number of items that measure achievement on either end of the achievement spectrum; the new generation of technology-based assessments may remove that limitation.

CCSS Challenges for ELLs with Disabilities

Educators across the country are challenged by the new standards for English language arts and mathematics, even when they are just thinking about typical students – those without disabilities or those whose English skills are well established. Implementation requires a shift in their thinking about the content itself and about when certain topics need to be taught.

For ELLs, challenges surround the reliance on English skills. Major initiatives, such as the Understanding Language initiative out of Stanford University (see http://ell.stanford.edu), confirm that ELLs need more than a focus on language acquisition independent of content learning. They need improved instruction in the content areas of English language arts and mathematics, as well as science, but they also need continued work on English skills that are aligned to the CCSS so that they have access to the CCSS instruction.

For students with disabilities, challenges surround their ability to access the curriculum with the supports and accommodations needed to reduce any barriers to learning due to their disabilities. Barriers to learning might include learning disability issues, language disability issues, emotional or behavioral issues, or a variety of sensory and intellectual disability issues.

For ELLs with disabilities, the challenges are two-fold: They involve both language acquisition and disability issues. These dual challenges require that educators and parents be aware of the needs of ELLs with disabilities as the CCSS are implemented.

Steps for Educators and Parents as CCSS are Implemented

It is imperative that educators working with ELLs with disabilities, and the parents of ELLs with disabilities, be aware of the CCSS. They also need to be attuned to both the challenges and opportunities that the CCSS create for ELLs with disabilities. Recommendations for next steps for educators and parents of these students include:

- Make yourself familiar with the CCSS, and how they are linked to college and career readiness. Two useful resources are the CCSS Web site (www.corestandards.org) and a parent/teacher resource from the Council of Great City Schools (www.cgcs.org/Domain/36).

- Ensure that educators working with ELLs with disabilities are trained in the CCSS, and have an understanding of how to develop curriculum, instruction, and formative assessment aligned to those standards.

- Use data to determine the needs of individual students, as well as programmatic needs of ELLs with disabilities.

- Focus instructional goals so that educators and parents have a common purpose – improving the access and success of ELLs with disabilities in achieving the CCSS.

- Ensure that evidence-based practices are used to reach the targets identified by the CCSS, while at the same time recognizing the language and disability needs of ELLs with disabilities.

- Implement the appropriate strategies deeply. This requires a focus on core, effective strategies that blend language and content instruction, and leaving behind extraneous activities that may be fun but that do not address the instructional needs of ELLs with disabilities.

- Monitor and provide feedback so that there is a continuous emphasis on improvement and change in the instruction of ELLs with disabilities.

Conclusion

States and educational organizations are recognizing the importance of the CCSS for all students. Ensuring that ELLs with disabilities realize the promise of the CCSS will require that educators and parents work together toward this end.

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Resources on English Language Learners with Disabilities for Professionals and Families

The following resources from around the country may be of interest to readers of this Impact issue:

- **NCEO English Language Learner Resources (http://www.nceo.info).** *The new report, "Assessment Principles and Guidelines for ELLs with Disabilities," (www.cehd.umn.edu/nceo/onlinepubs/partners.html) is among the extensive resources about English language learners (ELLs) with disabilities available on the Web site of the National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO) at the Institute on Community Integration, University of Minnesota. Among the topics addressed in the online resources are accommodations, accountability, graduation requirements, standards, and Universal Design.*

- **English Learner Disability Resources (http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/SchSup/SpecEdComp/EngLearnDisabiRes/index.html).** *This Web site from the Minnesota Department of Education offers information useful to professionals and parents within Minnesota and elsewhere. Among the online resources are information on staff development for interpreters working with English language learners with disabilities, glossaries of special education terminology in Hmong and Somali, plus a brochure on how to hold IEP meetings with an interpreter.*

- **English Learners with Special Needs (www.ncela.gwu.edu/files/uploads/17/Accellerate_3_3.pdf).** *This issue of AccELLerate!, the Spring 2011 quarterly review produced by the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, addresses theory, research, and practice related to English learners with special needs.*

- **National Center for Learning Disabilities Spanish Web site (http://www.ncld.org/recursos-en-espanol).** *The center offers much of its Web site and extensive information on learning disabilities for parents and professionals in both Spanish and English. It includes information on different types of learning disabilities, perspectives of parents raising children with learning disabilities, explanations of different types of education practices and services, and tips on planning for life after high school.*

- **Special Education: What Do Parents Need to Know? (http://www.pacer.org/publications/specedrights.asp).** *This free, online presentation for parents is available in Hmong, Somali, Spanish and English. It was created to help parents of children with disabilities understand what special education is, how a child might get into special education, how to resolve disagreements, and what role parents play. Developed by PACER Center, a resource center for families of children with disabilities, whose Web site also offers many other materials for families in Hmong, Somali, Spanish and English. Their phone number is 888/248-0822 (U.S.) and 800/537-2237 (MN).*

Accommodations Considerations for English Language Learners with Disabilities

by Martha Inez Castellón and Sandra Hopfengardner Warren

The American education system has always faced the challenge of educating students who are not yet proficient in English. Likewise, it has always faced the challenge of educating students who experience a disability. Recent reforms around accountability have drawn attention to the instructional and assessment needs of students who fall into both

> *The CCSSO Accommodations Manual establishes general guidelines for states and districts to use in selection, administration, and evaluation of accommodations for instruction and assessment of ELLs with disabilities.*

categories. In this article, we address several key considerations that educators at all levels – state, district, and school – must keep in mind when making instructional and assessment-related decisions for English language learners (ELLs) with disabilities.

The Current Assessment Context

The new Common Core State Standards in English language arts and mathematics place an unprecedented emphasis on language. As noted by the Understanding Language initiative co-leaders Kenji Hakuta and María Santos, the Common Core State Standards "raise the bar for learning, call for increased language capacities in combination with increased content sophistication, and call for a high level of discourse in

classrooms across all subject areas" (Quinn, Cheuk, & Castellón, 2012, p. ii). In English language arts, for example, students will have to comprehend and evaluate complex texts across a range of types and disciplines, construct effective arguments, and convey intricate and multifaceted information (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010a). In math, mathematically proficient students will be able to understand and use stated assumptions, definitions, and previously established results in constructing arguments; they will be able to make conjectures and build a logical progression of statements to explore the truth of their conjectures; and they will be able to justify their conclusions, communicate them to others, and respond to the arguments of others (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010b).

Further complicating matters, ELLs with disabilities must take two different types of assessment for accountability purposes: content assessments in which knowledge of the practices of the discipline is measured, and language proficiency assessments in which proficiency in discipline-specific language is measured. English language proficiency assessments are now required to correspond with the types of texts, problems, and tasks that students must perform on content assessments. Hence, characteristics of language found on language proficiency tests will mirror the types of language used in content assessments as never before.

CCSSO's Accommodations Manual for ELLs with Disabilities

In 2012, two Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) State Collaboratives on Assessment and Student

Standards (i.e., the English Language Learners and Assessing Special Education Students collaboratives) undertook the task of creating the new resource, *Accommodations Manual: How to Select, Administer, and Evaluate Use of Accommodations for Instruction and Assessment of English Language Learners with Disabilities* (CCSSO, in press). Its purpose is to establish general guidelines for states and districts to use. When published in its final form, states and districts will be able to adapt the manual (adding their respective policies and procedures) to be followed by educators at the school and district levels charged with making accommodations decisions.

> *Use of accommodations is one critical way of offering these students increased access to sophisticated content and "a high level of discourse in classrooms across all subject areas."*

The manual presents the following five-step process for schools and districts (CCSSO, in press):

1. Expect English language learners with disabilities to achieve grade-level academic content standards.

2. Learn about accommodations for instruction and assessment.

3. Select accommodations for instruction and assessment of individual students.

4. Administer accommodations during instruction and assessment.

5. Evaluate and improve accommodations use.

In the remainder of this article we provide an overview of steps 2 and 5.

Learn About Accommodations for Instruction and Assessment (Step 2)

The accommodations manual defines accommodations as "procedures and materials that increase equitable access during instruction and assessments for ELLs with disabilities and generate valid assessment results that show what ELLs with disabilities know and can do." (CCSSO, in press). The manual makes clear that accommodations provided to students on assessments must also be provided during classroom instruction. In certain instances, some accommodations may not be appropriate for use on certain statewide assessments (e.g., read aloud on reading assessments). Educators should consult their state policies about the appropriate use of accommodations on assessment.

Accommodations for ELLs with disabilities should be selected based on an individual student's needs. Therefore, a particular student may have accommodations identified for ELLs as well as students with disabilities. Examples of accommodations for ELLs include (CCSSO, in press):

- The use of English language reference materials in which students are allowed to look words up in a dictionary or glossary.
- Oral response in English in which students are allowed to give their answers orally as opposed to in writing.
- Written translation in which students access instruction and assessment content through a translated version in their native/home language.

Examples of accommodations for students with disabilities include (CCSSO, in press):

- Use of an alternate location to minimize distractions for students who are easily distracted by other students.

- Audio description of instructional or test content for students who are visually impaired.
- Calculation assistance (i.e. the use of a calculator, abacus, or arithmetic table) for students whose disability affects mathematics calculation but not reasoning.

It is important to note that accommodations do not remain static throughout a student's education. As ELLs with disabilities become more proficient in English, their need for language-related accommodations may decrease (CCSSO, in press). The same is not necessarily true of disability-related accommodations. For example, a student who is blind will always require some sort of accommodation in order to have access to instructional tasks and test items, even though the specific accommodations may change.

Educators need to carefully consider students' strengths and needs with respect to language and disability in selecting an appropriate suite of accommodations for each student. According to the manual, accommodations decisions should be individualized based on the particular language- and disability-related challenges faced by ELLs with disabilities. Students with high English language needs and low disability-related needs will require more language-based accommodations, while their counterparts with high disability-related needs and low English language needs will require more accommodations that remove disability-related barriers (CCSSO, in press).

Evaluate and Improve Accommodations Use (Step 5)

Step 5 in the manual highlights key considerations in evaluating and improving use of accommodations during instruction and assessment. Particularly with the advent of technology-based assessments, it is possible to collect powerful data that can support decision making regarding policy development and implementation, resource allocation, and

instructional and assessment practices. However, "having" data and "using" data in thoughtful, proactive ways that may improve student learning are different.

Before the "evaluation" process can begin, it is important for decision makers to give careful thought to the purpose and components of the "evaluation" so it can inform practices at the district and school levels as well as at the student level. Making such decisions prior to implementation of accommodations makes it possible to collect data that will inform subsequent evaluation and decisions.

The manual identifies seven key questions to consider at the district or school level (CCSSO, in press):

1. Are policies in place to ensure ethical testing practices, standardized administration of assessments, and test security practices are followed before, during, and after the day of the test?

2. Are procedures in place to ensure test administration procedures are not compromised with the provision of accommodations?

3. How many ELLs with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) or 504 plans are receiving accommodations?

4. Are students receiving accommodations as documented in their IEP and 504 plans?

5. Are procedures in place to ensure test administrators adhere to directions for the implementation of accommodations?

6. What types of accommodations are provided and are some used more than others?

7. How well do students who receive accommodations perform on state and local assessments? If students are not meeting the expected level of performance, is it due to the students not having had access to the necessary instruction, not receiving the accommodation, or using accommodations that were not effective?

Questions to guide evaluation at the student level may include the following (CCSSO, in press):

Utilizing Differentiated Instruction for English Language Learners with Disabilities

by Robi Kronberg

As more educators face the challenging and often daunting task of teaching English language learners (ELLs) with disabilities, it is becoming increasingly imperative that teachers are equipped with sound pedagogy as well as a wide repertoire of instructional tools and strategies designed to create accessible and successful learning opportunities for all students. Principles of *differentiated instruction* and *universal design for learning,* as well as the methodology and strategies inherent in our collective

> *A primary goal for all educators who aim to differentiate is to create access to curriculum and instruction so all students can be challenged, but not overwhelmed, by academic demands.*

knowledge base of English language acquisition and special education, have the potential to provide a useful combination of theory and practice to support successful student achievement. Implementing these educational frameworks with fidelity requires educators to think thoroughly and intentionally about who they teach, what they teach, and how best to teach.

Differentiated Instruction Overview

Much has been written and debated about differentiated instruction in the past 10 years. While different definitions exist, many scholars and practitioners agree that differentiated instruction

embodies both a set of principles and a repertoire of instructional practices that are proactively implemented for the purpose of meeting the varied needs of all students. Non-negotiables of differentiated instruction could be considered to include respecting individuals, owning student success, building community, providing high quality curriculum, utilizing assessment to inform instruction, implementing flexible classroom routines, creating varied avenues to learning, and sharing responsibility for teaching and learning (Tomlinson, Brimijoin, & Narvaez, 2008).

Some educators believe that differentiated instruction is difficult to empirically validate as it includes an amalgamation of many different teaching theories and practices. Other researchers and practitioners point to a history of studies that validate components inherent in differentiated instruction and conclude that differentiated instruction has a positive basis in research. In spite of the ongoing debate, many school districts have embraced differentiated instruction as a professional development focus and have encouraged teachers to implement educational practices that embody the principles of differentiated instruction. Because of the significant recognition of differentiated instruction as a viable means to meet the needs of diverse learners, its potential to be effectively utilized with ELLs with disabilities is worthy of continual examination.

A positive note for educators: the vast majority of the principles and strategies deemed to support ELLs with disabilities transcend applicability to only one type of student. In short, many of the principles and strategies represent sound educational practice for all students. It is a daily occurrence to hear a teacher remark, "I differentiated today's lesson specifically for six students and realized that my other students also benefitted from the varied

text choices and the visual organizer." Good teaching for a few is most often good teaching for all.

The remainder of this article discusses and illustrates how several constructs of differentiated instruction can be utilized to support ELLs with disabilities.

Knowing and Respecting Your Students

Quality differentiation for all students must be rooted in a knowledge of and respect for specific students. This knowledge base includes students' prior academic experiences, cultural beliefs and practices, linguistic strengths and needs, learning preferences, interests, and prior and current academic performance. When teaching ELLs with disabilities additional information is essential. It is important for teachers to know each student's level of English language proficiency (Fairbairn & Jones-Vo, 2010). Knowledge of each student's linguistic proficiency in the student's native language, as well as the student's prior experiences with formal schooling, are also important. Relative to information about disability, it is essential for educators to know specific information about each student's disability; how the disability impacts learning, including language learning in both their native language and English; and the services, goals, and accommodations/modifications that are described in the IEP (Individualized Education Program). A teacher who knows his or her students well is far likelier to create respectful and engaging learning opportunities for all students, including those with diverse language and learning needs.

Creating Varied Avenues to Learning

A primary goal for all educators who aim to differentiate is to create access to curriculum and instruction so that

all students can be challenged, but not overwhelmed, by academic demands. Determining an appropriate level of challenge within academic content can be particularly challenging for ELLs as linguistic proficiency plays a significant role in the ability to understand academic content. English language learners face challenges in all four areas of language: reading, writing, speaking and listening. These challenges are made more complex when combined with students' specific disabilities (e.g., storing or retrieving information, focusing attention, spatial relationships, abstract reasoning, language processing, visual-perceptual processing) and the effect of the disability on educational performance.

When designing lessons, the teacher rooted in the framework of differentiated instruction continually utilizes assessment data to guide upfront instructional planning as well as day-to-day instruction. Of particular importance when planning instruction for ELLs with disabilities are decisions about *frontloading* instruction. Frontloading introduces students to important aspects of the soon-to-be taught curricular content in order to increase understanding of the content. Teachers can choose to frontload such topics as: critical academic vocabulary; big ideas; essential understandings; specific purposes for reading, speaking, listening, or writing; and text structures that will be encountered. When frontloading for ELLs with disabilities, teachers should consider language-related needs as well as disability-related needs.

Planning Effective Instruction

When planning effective instruction for ELLs with disabilities, it is important to be cognizant of two distinct areas of need – linguistic needs and disability-related needs. Relative to linguistic needs, it is important for a teacher to consider what specific academic language students will need to know in order to understand the content and communicate mastery of the focus skill/s. English language learners, both with and without disabilities, often struggle with academic

vocabulary and therefore benefit from explicit instruction on essential vocabulary words as well as the language used to demonstrate understanding of a specific focus skill. An example involves the focus skill of *sequencing*. For students learning about the sequence of events in a historical context, students must understand the academic terminology inherent in the time period being studied. Additionally, in order to speak of, write about, or read and comprehend text it will be necessary for students to also understand the language used to articulate events in sequential order. A student with emergent language skills may benefit from being explicitly taught basic sequencing words such as *first, next, then,* and *last*. A student with more advanced English language skills might benefit from explicit instruction in more sophisticated sequencing terms such as *initially, in the interim, towards the end,* and *finally*. Designing instruction that addresses the academic content (historical time period), as well as the focus skill (sequencing) and the language used to communicate both requires thoughtful and intentional lesson planning. A teacher might choose to frontload the terminology of sequencing and several targeted vocabulary words from the social studies lesson. Ongoing instruction would include repeated exposure to academic content as well content-embedded language in text material, teacher presentation, and student discourse. Some students who are native English speakers may also benefit from the same frontloaded lesson and could be easily included in targeted small group lessons.

Relative to disability-related needs, it is important for the teacher to plan instruction that will address learning strengths and needs as specified on students' IEPs. Using the above lesson focus, a teacher could further differentiate the lesson to include accommodations and/or modifications needed by certain students. For example, one student requiring multisensory presentation might need to see the sequencing terms in repeated contexts as well

as repeatedly hear the terms. Another student might benefit from placing the sequencing words on the floor and retelling the key events in chronological order while stepping on the correct sequencing term. Yet another student might need a color coded visual organizer which lists key events in chronological order and includes a word bank of appropriate sequencing terms for later use in a writing task. Still other students may benefit from a picture dictionary or a captioned video highlighting the social

> *Because of the significant recognition of differentiated instruction as a viable means to meet the needs of diverse learners, its potential to be effectively utilized with ELLs with disabilities is worthy of continual examination.*

studies topic being studied. As with the previous example, these instructional options may be specifically implemented to meet the needs of targeted students, but could be made available should other students find these varied approaches helpful to facilitate their own content understanding.

When instructional planning includes attention to both linguistic needs and disability-related needs, it is likely that a teacher will incorporate instructional strategies that are responsive to the range of learner needs. Two of the many strategies that are frequently discussed in the literature of differentiated instruction, instruction for ELLs, and individualized instruction for students with disabilities are *instructional scaffolding* and *collaborative peer instruction*. Instructional scaffolding involves providing temporary support to a student

Considerations for Including English Language Learners in a Response to Intervention System

by Julie Esparza Brown

Education has long been considered the great equalizer. However, current data indicate that English language learners (ELLs) are achieving far below their English-only counterparts in reading and math. It is obviously in the best interest of our nation to ensure that *all* students reach proficiency standards.

Beyond the obvious linguistic diversity, ELLs differ in culture, educational backgrounds, immigration status, socio-economic status and life experiences, challenging schools to provide appropriate and effective instruction

> *RTI has changed the focus to ensuring appropriate evidence-based instruction and intervention. However, appropriate instruction and curriculum cannot be assumed for English language learners.*

for them. Recent changes in federal policy, however, outlined a framework of instructional support where struggling learners are identified, and teams (which may include general and special educators) plan instruction matching the level of student need and monitor progress to determine student response (IDEA, 2004). This framework, known as Response to Intervention (RTI), has changed the focus from identifying within-child weaknesses to first ensuring the provision of appropriate evidence-based instruction and intervention. However, appropriate instruction and curriculum cannot be assumed for ELL students because very few curricular programs have included them in their

research base (Sanford, Brown & Turner, 2012). To address their specific instructional needs an overview of RTI will be provided here and then four questions posed that can guide the provision of instruction and intervention for ELLs.

RTI at a Glance

RTI is conceptualized as a three- or four-tiered system of support where each tier aligns with the intensity of support needed (National Center on Response to Intervention, 2010). Across all tiers, evidence-based instruction and intervention are delivered with fidelity. In general, Tier 1 is the general education classroom using the core curriculum. Approximately 80% of students should be successful in this scenario. Tier 2 provides a "double dose" of intervention for the 15-20% of students moved from Tier 1 to Tier 2. Tier 2 instruction is generally a small group pull-out and may use specific intervention programs not used in the classroom but targeting the same grade-level skills. Tier 3 provides the highest level of support for the approximately 5% of students below grade level. Tier 3 may or may not include evaluation for and provision of special education services. In four-tiered models, Tier 4 is special education services.

Missing from the above descriptions of RTI is the inclusion of culturally, linguistically and experientially responsive instruction. Without instruction that is adjusted to meet each ELL student's language needs, incorporate cultural views and beliefs of the students, and build requisite background knowledge of the content, they are not likely to fully benefit from instruction nor make expected gains (Orozco & Klingner, 2010).

There is an additional caution when identifying students needing support. If all of the students scoring at the bottom 20% are ELL students, the problem

is likely an ineffective and inappropriate curriculum for ELLs rather than a within-student problem.

Posing the following four questions will guide educators in considering each ELL student's ecology when planning instruction and interventions:

- Have you had the opportunity to fully know your students?
- Has the student had sufficient opportunity to learn grade level skills and content?
- How can the family support their child's education?
- Is your system culturally responsive?

These will be discussed in the remainder of this article.

Do You Know Your Students?

First, teachers need to know their ELL students. Information is best gathered through home visits, file reviews, and collaboration with the district bilingual/bicultural staff identified to work with specific cultural communities. For example, a foreign-born student who moved to the U.S. just prior to kindergarten would likely have developed age-appropriate first language abilities in their home country. Thus, the child can build on a firm first language foundation to develop their second language (Goldenberg, 2008). On the other hand, ELL students born in the U.S. often have limited exposure to standard English, particularly if their parents are also acquiring English skills. They may hear a mixture of languages from birth. Lack of exposure must not be confused with a language-based disorder. Consultation with the ELL specialist for instructional strategies is highly recommended as well as seeking professional development opportunities.

Of course, there will be ELL students with intrinsic language disorders. For example, if a child did not begin to speak

any language until age three, this delay may signify a disorder (Kohnert, 2008). In this case, a team meeting that includes a speech and language specialist would be appropriate. Below are examples of information to gather in order to know your students:

- **Student Information**
- Country of birth
- Immigration history (if relevant)
- Health status
- Developmental milestones
- Does the student receive free and reduced lunch?
- **Language Development**
- What was the first language spoken and at what age?
- What was the second language? Is there a third language? When was the second language introduced? At what age was the second language spoken?
- **Language Use in the Home**
- What language does the child prefer to speak at home? In the community?
- What language(s) is/are used in the home by parents?
- What language(s) is/are used in the home by siblings?
- **Current Language Proficiency Data**
- Proficiency in first language
- Proficiency in second language

Has the Student Had Sufficient Opportunity?

Second, it's important to ask whether the student has had sufficient opportunity to learn grade level skills and content. All students are screened annually to identify those needing additional support. In an RTI framework, it is assumed that the evidence-based core instruction taught with fidelity is effective and appropriate for all students, and the lowest achievers likely have learning challenges (National Center on Response to Intervention, 2010). The curriculum used within the classroom, however, may not be specifically designed for and researched on ELL students. Thus, it may not provide enough language support and may assume knowledge of uniquely American concepts.

Further, many teachers with ELL students in their classrooms have little or no preparation in teaching ELLs (Giambo & Szecsi, 2005) and consequently are unfamiliar with the concept of adjusting instruction to match these students' language proficiency. Another consideration is a student's language(s) of instruction. For example, if students have received native language literacy instruction in a bilingual program, they may have skills only in that language and score very low on English-only screeners and assessments. Thus, native language assessments must be administered to identify the knowledge already developed in their first language. Research is clear that most literacy skills transfer from first to second language with explicit instruction (Durgunoglu, 2002). Finally, but perhaps the most critical, is the cultural relevancy of the instructional materials (Sleeter, 2012). Below are examples of information to gather regarding instructional experiences:

- **Educational Background**
- Preschool experiences
- Grades attended in native country (if applicable)
- Grades attended in U.S.
- If child was enrolled in a bilingual program in the U.S., identify the model: Dual language, Late exit, Early exit, ESL push-in, ESL pull-out
- **Language of Instruction**
- What is the student's proficiency in the language of instruction?
- How is classroom instruction adjusted to the student's language proficiency level?
- **Culturally Responsive Instruction**
- Is the student's culture reflected in the curriculum?
- Are instructional groupings aligned to student cultural learning preferences?
- When instructional groupings and practices are unfamiliar to students, does the teacher offer explanations and modeling?
- Does the teacher bridge the student's background experiences to assumed knowledge in the curriculum?

How Can the Family Support Their Child's Education?

Third, we know that students achieve higher success when their parents are partners in the educational process. Because of language barriers and cultural misunderstandings, diverse parents and families are sometimes reluctant to take part in school activities. Understanding each family's cultural beliefs, family constellation, and ways in which they can support their children's learning will help facilitate stronger partnerships. For example, knowing parents' literacy levels will allow teachers to ask the parents to support their child in appropriate ways. Many ELL families come from cultures with strong oral traditions. Storytelling and helping their children memorize family and traditional tales is one literacy practice most families would enjoy. Below are examples of information that can be gathered to help teachers learn about each family:

- **Literacy Use in the Home**
- Father's highest grade attended
- Mother's highest grade attended
- What reading materials are available in the home (e.g., newspaper, magazines, books)?
- **Culture**
- What is the family constellation and structure?
- What are the roles and duties of the student at home?
- What does the family believe their role is in the education of their children?
- What cultural group does the family identify with?
- Does the culture focus on individual or group achievement?

Is Your System Culturally Responsive?

The fourth area, sometimes overlooked, is the cultural responsiveness of the educational system beyond just the classroom. This demands that educators evaluate their own response to cultural and linguistic differences and work from a platform of reciprocity. Below are

The Roles of Interpreters and Speech-Language Pathologists for ELLs with Disabilities

by Henriette W. Langdon

There are an estimated 4.6 million students who are English language learners (ELLs) in K-12 schools in this country (Watkins & Liu, 2013). Manuel Chávez* is one of those children. Manuel, an only child, is a 5-year-old growing up in a bilingual Spanish-English environment. His family immigrated from Puerto Rico three years ago, and Spanish is spoken in the home, but his parents have a fairly good command of English. His kindergarten class is conducted in English only; Manuel's parents would have preferred to enroll him in a bilingual class but there were no such programs in their community. Manuel tries

> *Working as an interpreter, and with an interpreter, is quite complex and requires ongoing training on the part of the speech-language pathologist and the interpreter/translator.*

to interact in English with his peers, yet his progress in acquiring more complex language has been slower than expected. He has been attending an after-school program with other English-speaking children to enhance his communication skills, but he does not interact with them as much as other children. He prefers to play alone and needs to be redirected to the activities that are offered. The school assessment team, with his parents' input, recommended a bilingual speech and language evaluation for Manuel to document his general communication skills in both Spanish and English. The speech-language pathologist (SLP) at his

school, Ms. Smith, speaks some Spanish, but her proficiency is not adequate to conduct a full assessment in that language. Collaboration with an interpreter/translator (I/T) will be necessary.

Manual's story serves as an illustration of an occurrence in many schools across the country. Throughout the remainder of this article the process of collaboration between the SLP and an I/T to assess a student will be illustrated by using Manuel's story, with additional suggestions for how schools can best engage in this process.

The Bilingual Speech-Language Evaluation Process

The number of certified speech-language pathologists who are bilingual is only 7% out of a total of about 150,000 members, with Spanish being the most common language spoken by those individuals (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2012). As noted earlier, Ms. Smith, the SLP in Manuel's school, does not speak sufficient Spanish to conduct the assessment; other bilingual SLPs in the district do not speak Spanish at all. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 2004) includes specific federal guidelines for the identification, assessment, and intervention for children with educational needs, and it indicates that in the case of ELL students "a child shall not be determined to be a child with a disability if the determinant factor for such determination is limited English proficiency" [20 U.S.C.§1414(b)(5)(C)]. The statute also requires that schools ensure that assessments and other evaluation materials are provided and administered in the language and form most likely to yield accurate information "unless it is not feasible to so provide or administer" [20 U.S.C.§1414(b)(3)(A)(ii)]. An IDEA brief drafted by the American Speech-

Language-Hearing Association, which is the agency regulating certification of speech-language pathologists and audiologists, makes the following statement (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, n.d):

> When evaluating English language learner (ELL) students, it is important for speech-language pathologists (SLPs) and audiologists to carefully review the child's language history to determine the language of assessment. If it is determined that the child should be evaluated in a language other than English, the SLP must use all available resources, including interpreters when necessary, to appropriately evaluate the child (p.2).

Interpreter/Translator Characteristics

Working with an I/T to bridge the communication between two parties that do not share the same language or mode of communication is not a new process. It has been followed in many contexts such as interpreting for the Deaf, international conferences, healthcare, education, and the courts. Training and certification exist in some states for I/Ts working in legal and healthcare arenas, as well as those working with Deaf individuals, but not for those working in educational settings. Although many qualities desired in I/Ts for the schools are similar to those who work in other contexts, I/Ts who work in educational settings need to understand child development, school structure, and general academic requirements, and need to be able to work easily with children of various ages. Those working in special education also need to understand various learning challenges, due process procedures, key terminology related to speech and language development and disorders, names of assessment tools, how to elicit and transcribe a language sample, as well as have command of specific vocabulary

used in writing speech and language goals and objectives.

There are several different types of interpretation/translation in which I/Ts engage. *Interpretation* means conveying an oral message from one language to another; *translation* means the same, but using written messages. *Simultaneous interpretation* means that the message is translated orally into a second language at the same time as it is conveyed in the first language. S*equential interpretation* is when the oral message in the first language is heard and then conveyed in a second language. *Sight translation* means that the written text is interpreted (if rendered orally) or translated into a second language as it is read by the I/T.

Collaborating With an I/T in an Educational Setting: The Process

Interpreters and translators working in special education settings collaborate with other professionals and with families to gather background information about students, plan interventions, test students, and share results from the assessments. In all cases, the meetings should consist of three segments: *Briefing*, *Interaction* and *Debriefing* (*BID* process). Written guidelines exist for practicing interpreters and SLPs (Langdon, 2002). How they may play out in that three-part process is illustrated below using Manuel's case history where a bilingual assessment was recommended.

Ms. Smith, the SLP in Manuel's school, assessed him using tests in English to establish a baseline of his skills in the language, and she also elicited and transcribed a representative language sample. Because there are some test materials in Spanish that have been normed on bilingual Spanish-English children, Ms. Smith is the professional responsible to select those that are most appropriate tests to assess Manuel in Spanish. In addition, she is in charge of selecting the procedures to be followed and for interpreting the results of Manuel's assessment. Finally, she must ensure that Ms. Ortiz, the I/T, has received adequate training to administer those tests and that she has been taught how to obtain a representative language sample in Spanish.

During the Briefing segment of the process, Ms. Smith will meet with Ms. Ortiz prior to the actual testing date to prepare her adequately to use the available tests, and to ensure that she follows the directions of the tests accurately and that she records all responses verbatim. Ms. Ortiz must feel secure in establishing rapport with Manuel and in redirecting him to the task at hand if he is not responding as expected. In addition, Ms. Ortiz needs to be knowledgeable about test terminology, district procedures, and confidentiality, and must feel competent in eliciting and transcribing a verbatim language sample in Spanish. For Ms. Ortiz, as for other I/Ts in a similar setting, oral proficiency is not sufficient; the bilingual I/T must be proficient in reading and writing the language. And it is essential that both professionals have been trained adequately to work together to ensure a successful collaboration (for more detail see Langdon & Cheng, 2002).

During the Interaction segment of the testing process Ms. Ortiz should not carry out any of the assessment tasks without Ms. Smith's presence. During the assessment, Ms. Smith will observe Ms. Ortiz to ensure she does not use unnecessary cues or repeat instructions when not called for, and that her interaction with Manuel is proceeding smoothly. Ms. Smith's presence is very important for three additional reasons: (1) to observe Manuel's assessment behaviors, such as possible distractibility or perseveration; (2) to note his use of nonverbal communication (e.g., more gestures than words); and (3) to describe verbal patterns such as excessive pauses and hesitations when trying to express himself, or use of what may appear as very brief answers.

During Debriefing , Ms. Smith and Ms. Ortiz need to review and analyze Manuel's responses, including the transcription of the language sample. Ms. Smith will document Ms. Ortiz's impressions of the entire process, noting both positive and challenging aspects of the experience. They may also brainstorm about ways to improve procedures for a future assessment on another child.

Conclusion

This scenario illustrates that being bilingual is not sufficient in ensuring that an individual will be a successful I/T. Being bilingual also means being biliterate. Working as an I/T and with an I/T are quite complex and require ongoing training on the part of the SLP and the I/T. School personnel should never ask a bilingual person to interpret or translate without appropriate training or preparation. The skills of an I/T working in an educational setting require special preparation. It is also important that SLPs be trained to effectively collaborate with I/Ts when assessing and working with ELL students who might have disabilities. And, because the collaboration process is lengthy and involves additional costs, procedures should be in place to facilitate the hiring and compensation of adequately prepared I/Ts by schools and districts. This collaboration process is key to fulfilling the legal mandate to ensure that ELL students with disabilities are fairly assessed and served.

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Issues in the Education of Deaf and Hard of Hearing K-12 English Language Learners

by Barbara Gerner de García

According to the Gallaudet Research Institute, nationwide 23% of deaf and hard of hearing K-12 students are categorized as English language learners (ELLs) under No Child Left Behind, and over 30% are Latino (Gallaudet Research Institute, 2011). However, deaf and hard of hearing ELLs continue to be largely invisible, with few advocates, in our educational system. Given the large numbers of deaf and hard of hearing ELLs, the time is ripe for a national response.

The Current Situation

For over 25 years, as an urban public school teacher, university professor, and researcher, I have focused on Latino deaf and hard of hearing students. Many issues that impact these students also affect other immigrant deaf students. For example, many meet the Title III* definition of ELLs:

> ...not born in the United States, and/or whose native language is other than English, and lack of English proficiency is a barrier to learning in classrooms where the instruction is in English, and to meeting state assessment levels of proficiency. (U.S. Department of Education, 2013)

They are therefore ELLs who are deaf and hard of hearing. They need appropriate instruction by teachers trained to work with deaf and hard of hearing students to meet their English learning needs, and specialized services from other professionals such as audiologists and school psychologists. Another issue is that their parents commonly experience language barriers in trying to access services, as well as a lack of culturally-appropriate services. In some school districts, services provided to ELLs who are deaf and hard of hearing are a result of lawsuits in which the school district agreed to take certain actions to remediate the situation, without admitting fault.

Outside of these jurisdictions, however, there are few special services for K-12 ELLs who are deaf and hard of hearing.

In preparing this article, I contacted schools with large numbers of deaf and hard of hearing students from immigrant families to ask what they were currently doing to meet the needs of these students, and to identify issues. I learned that some schools provide immersion American Sign Language (ASL) classes, and some provide English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) or transition programs to newly arrived students. Others provide accommodation during school-wide testing by providing foreign language translators for students who understand spoken language. I also have had contact with many classroom teachers in online and face-to-face courses who teach ELLs who are deaf and hard of hearing, and they report having few resources and limited support. There is a limited research and documented practice to provide guidance for classroom teachers, and national conferences on deaf education and teacher preparation in the field consistently neglect the topic.

Who Gets the Deaf ELL Label?

The categorization of deaf and hard of hearing ELLs is challenging. For example, bilingual deaf education programs that use American Sign Language and English consider their deaf and hard of hearing students to be English language learners whose first language is ASL. However most of these students do not meet Title III definitions of ELLs, which are tied to national origin. In early 2011, the U.S. Department of Education, in a letter to Title III directors, clarified that, in general, deaf and hard of hearing students cannot be considered ELLs (or limited English proficient) simply due to their reliance on ASL for communication, but

those deaf and hard of hearing children "who have a language other than English as a native language" would be ELLs.

Due to a shortage of bilingual and multilingual professionals to assess the language skills of immigrant deaf and hard of hearing students, it is difficult to determine a student's native or dominant language and their level of language development. Under-schooled immigrant deaf and hard of hearing students may not have any well-developed language. Even those immigrant deaf students who come with knowledge of a sign language other than ASL may be labeled as "having no language" (Gerner de Garcia, 2012). When a new student is seen as "language-less", he or she may be placed in a class for deaf students with additional disabilities, and have even less language stimulation. More aware educators may work in collaboration with local immigrant deaf adults or trilingual sign language interpreters who may know the same sign language (for example Mexican Sign Language, or LSM), to gauge the new arrival's language development.

Instruction, Evaluation and Outcomes

Low test scores continue to plague schools and programs for deaf students. Under No Child Left Behind, the majority of schools for the deaf do not meet federal requirements for demonstrating the academic progress of all students (Cawthorn, 2011). A few schools for the deaf provide special programming for ELLs who are deaf and hard of hearing, but many don't. While there is national data on the demographics of K-12 deaf students (Gallaudet Research Institute, 2011), these data are not separated out in a way that tells us how deaf ELL students are doing in regular public schools or how they are being served. Despite the dramatic increase in the numbers of

deaf and hard of hearing K-12 students who are ELLs, a trend that has been noted since the 1970s, we have not responded with changes in teacher education, special programming, or services for families (Gerner de García, Cobb-Morocco, & Mata-Aguilar, 2006).

Responding to the Issues

What are some immediate steps that we can take to address these issues for deaf and hard of hearing ELLs? One of the first is development of an online portal for teachers of deaf immigrant students that can serve as a place of support for teachers. This online community, which I am developing with a colleague at Texas Christian University, will link teachers, many of whom work in rural areas and in public schools, with others

working with ELL deaf students. We hope to have it ready in the fall of 2013. Concurrent with this effort, I plan to conduct a nationwide study of teachers of ELL deaf and hard of hearing students, a collaborative effort with researchers in two other universities. This nationwide needs assessment will also provide empirical data to help identify potential sites for a follow-up study of teachers' strategies for educating deaf ELL students. By learning about teachers' challenges, we hope to create awareness of the growing deaf ELL population, and identify and disseminate strategies that teachers are developing to work with these students. These efforts can help raise awareness of these students, and support the teachers and other service providers working with them.

Note

* Title III in Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act

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Resources for Families, Educators, and Other Professionals

The following resources from around the country may be of interest to readers of this Impact issue:

- **Raising Deaf Kids (www.raisingdeafkids. org).** *This Web site for parents is available in English and Spanish, and provides extensive information on various aspects of hearing loss in children, including growing up with hearing loss, learning, communicating, and getting help. It also offers opportunities for parents to share their stories, questions and experience with others.*

- **Supporting Young Children who are Dual Language Learners With or At-risk for Disabilities: Young Exceptional Children Monograph 14 (http://www.dec-sped.org/ store/YEC_Monograph_series).** *This collection of articles from the Division for Early Childhood (DEC) explores contemporary perspectives on strategies to support young children who are dual language learners served in inclusive early childhood settings. The information is useful for professionals and families.*

- **Hearing Loss in Children (www.cdc.gov/ ncbddd/hearingloss/freematerials. html)**. *A variety of free materials for families and health professionals, many available in both English and Spanish, can be found on this Web page from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Among the resources is "Guía para Familias de Niños con Pérdida Auditiva," ("Guide for Families of Children with Hearing Loss").*

- **Autism Speaks: Resources for Non-English Speaking Families (http://www. autismspeaks.org/family-services/ non-english-resources).** *On this Web page from this national advocacy organization are resources in 13 languages for families and professionals, including toolkits, checklists, and guides related to Autism Spectrum Disorders. Resources vary by language.*

- **Colorín Colorado (www.colorincolorado. org).** *Among the topics on this bilingual (Spanish/English) Web site for families and educators of English language learners is "Learning Disabilities," which contains over 30 articles on the topic.*

- **ELLs (English Language Learners) in the Schools (http://www.asha.org/practice/ multicultural/ELL/).** *These Web pages from the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association include links to You Tube videos for speech-language pathologists on how to support parents in raising children bilingually, as well as other resources for professionals.*

- **National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities (http://nichcy.org).** *This Web site is available in English and Spanish, and offers a wealth of information on disabilities in infants, toddlers, children, and youth. It includes easy-to-read information on IDEA, the law authorizing early intervention services and special education, as well as State Resource Sheets that help users connect with the disability agencies and organizations in their states. It also includes dozens of publications about specific types of disabilities, education practices, and laws.*

Meeting the Educational Needs of English Language Learners with Learning Disabilities

by Brenda-Jean Tyler and Shernaz B. García

Mr. Santos is a 4th grade bilingual teacher in a large urban school district. His classroom includes Spanish-speaking students, some of whom receive special education services. Although well-prepared to meet their educational needs based on their English proficiency and cultural backgrounds, he is unsure how to be responsive to their disabilities. Ms. Green, a special educator with whom he collaborates at his school, is a monolingual English speaker. She wishes that her

> *Many teachers find themselves inadequately equipped to meet the educational needs of English language learners who also have a learning disability.*

teacher education program had taught her how to adapt special education instruction to students' levels of English proficiency and to make instruction more meaningful for students from different cultural backgrounds.

Like Mr. Santos and Ms. Green, many teachers find themselves inadequately equipped to meet the educational needs of English language learners (ELLs) who have a disability (Mueller, Singer, & Carranza, 2006). Teaching this population requires educators to be responsive to students' needs related to their disability, language proficiency in the native language and English, as well as their socio-cultural identities (Cloud, 2002). Failure to address all aspects could create barriers to learning for ELLs with disabilities, particularly when they are taught in English. In this article, we provide a framework to guide general and special educators in creating a culturally/linguistically responsive and inclusive learning environment (García & Tyler, 2010). Since learning disabilities is the largest disability category, serving roughly 40% of all K-12 students with disabilities (Aud et al., 2012), we focus on ELLs with learning disabilities, but many of the considerations are relevant for ELLs with other disabilities.

The Interface Between Disability, Second Language Status, and Culture

When ELLs are not making sufficient progress in school, it can be difficult to locate the underlying source(s) of their academic difficulties, and to determine the relative influence of a possible (or identified) learning disability, language dominance and proficiency, and socio-cultural experiences. Complicating the issue is the fact that difficulties experienced by ELLs functioning in English can look very similar to learning disabilities (Salend, 2008). Additionally, instruction in each of the programs in which such students might participate – general education, ESL services, and special education – often fails to adequately account for all their learning needs because each program focuses on only one or two aspects of students' identities. Clearly, disability, socio-cultural, and linguistic characteristics are integrally intertwined. To identify more clearly the role of each for ELLs with learning disabilities, they are separated for discussion as follows:

- *Key characteristics related to learning disabilities.* According to IDEA (2004), learning disabilities affect a student's ability to understand and/or use language effectively. Although students with learning disabilities are a heterogeneous group with differing strengths and needs, they frequently experience difficulty with fast and accurate decoding. Poor decoding skills result in slow, dysfluent reading, limited vocabularies, and, often, below-grade level comprehension (Hock et al., 2009). Learning disabilities also affect other areas critical to school success, such as working memory and information processing. Further, students with learning disabilities often lack self-monitoring skills, and may not use the learning strategies they have been taught (Shippen, Houchins, Steventon, & Sartor, 2005).

- *Learning in a second language.* ELLs are a heterogeneous group, representing many languages, nationalities, and immigrant or refugee experiences. Whereas most ELLs acquire basic conversational English in a relatively short time, proficiency with the more complex, abstract vocabulary and concepts inherent in academic content can take up to 10 years or more to acquire (Collier, 1995). Moreover, learning to navigate schooling in a second language draws on more than knowledge of grammar and vocabulary; ELLs must understand linguistic subtleties and implications often conveyed through culturally-based references assumed to be background knowledge for all students. Challenges associated with learning in a second language are increased when the student has a learning disability, given the language-based nature of learning disabilities. Cognitive demands of a lesson increase to a degree not experienced by native English-speaking counterparts.

- *The socio-cultural contexts of education.* Students from non-dominant socio-cultural and linguistic communities often enter school with world views, information processing styles, and communication patterns that vary considerably from those expected at

school (Hollins, 2008). When students' life experiences and identities are only minimally reflected in classroom discourse, instruction, and materials, students may encounter schooling practices that not only create barriers to learning, but which may appear unwelcoming, thereby affecting their achievement motivation, and contributing to feelings of alienation or marginalization.

Responding to the Interface

Ensuring that the classroom environment provides equitable opportunities to learn for all students involves a two-step planning process: (1) identifying potential barriers to learning, and (2) selecting instructional approaches, materials and other resources that will provide comprehensible input, make learning accessible, and foster student engagement and motivation to learn.

Table 1 identifies several factors that teachers should consider when planning instruction so that the learning environment meets the educational needs of ELLs with learning disabilities. These recommended practices and strategies have been organized into four sections. The first section identifies key elements that may increase the level of difficulty of classroom materials for ELLs with learning disabilities, prompting special educators to think beyond their native English speakers and the reading level of the texts they use. The second section offers strategies and considerations targeted at making instruction and assignments comprehensible to ELLs with learning disabilities. In the third section, we address the accessibility of content, assignments, and instructional activities for students who are non-native speakers of English and who have learning disabilities. Finally, the last section addresses student motivation and engagement in ways that are particularly salient for students with disabilities from diverse socio-cultural and linguistic communities.

Table 1: Factors to Consider During Instructional Planning for ELLs with Learning Disabilities

1. Determine difficulty level of materials.
❏ Students' reading skills vs. reading level of texts.
❏ Shifts in reading level and academic difficulty within and across instructional materials.
❏ Aspects of the lesson, related concepts, and assumed background knowledge that will be unfamiliar to ELL students.
❏ Cognitive demand involved for ELLs who are simultaneously learning a new concept and its English term (vs. only learning the English term).
❏ Likely impact of the learning disability on students' ability to retain skills and information previously taught.

2. Select and use instructional approaches, materials, and assignments that provide comprehensible input for ELLs with learning disabilities.
❏ Pre-teach vocabulary associated with the content area (e.g., discipline-specific language; the language of symbols in math, science).
❏ Preview and pre-teach additional terms, expressions, and grade-level vocabulary that are expected knowledge for native-English speakers but may not be familiar to ELLs.
❏ Preview key concepts before lesson (in students' native languages when available).
❏ Ensure students have linguistic skills needed to effectively engage with and learn the new material (e.g., paraphrasing and summarizing, use of logic to organize and express ideas, reasoning, analysis, inference, interpretation).

❏ Tap students' prior knowledge, including that acquired in their native languages.
❏ Pay attention to lesson delivery (e.g., use of multi-media material, simpler vocabulary, reiteration, repetition, slower speech).
❏ Provide access to materials in students' native languages to reinforce academic concepts taught in English (e.g., use their native languages to preview and review concepts, use cognates shared in their native languages and English to teach reading in English).
❏ Provide access to native-language speakers who can provide native-language support during instruction and outside the classroom (e.g., bilingual peers, paraprofessionals, other teachers, parents/family members, community volunteers).
❏ Use strategies and materials that support comprehension, cognitive development, and information processing (e.g., advance organizers, story maps, KWL charts).

3. Ensure that the content, assignments and activities are accessible.
❏ Reduce information to be generated independently (e.g., provide detailed outlines, checklist of steps to be followed, peer assistance with note-taking during lectures).
❏ Offer alternate ways to acquire new information (listening v. reading, oral v. written).
❏ Embed new learning in tasks that connect school to students' lives and socio-cultural phenomena.

❏ Modify the test format (read questions to students, allow extra time, performance-based assessment, multiple choice vs. essay questions).
❏ Make available peers and/or other adults to support learning (e.g., heterogeneous grouping, peer- or cross-age tutoring).

4. Foster student engagement and motivation to learn.
❏ Use developmentally appropriate content for ELLs, given their previous curriculum and school experiences.
❏ Select materials that allow students to draw on socio-cultural knowledge and life experience to engage with the texts.
❏ Foster meaningful dialogue about the content of the lesson (e.g., instructional conversations).
❏ Affirm and use students' native languages to support learning, even when the language of instruction is English.
❏ Use materials that support positive identity development, for example accurate portrayals of diverse groups, including people with disabilities; contemporary as well as historical perspectives; contributions of under-represented groups in math, science, and other areas; materials and language that are free from bias (omissions, distortions, racism, sexism, ableism).
❏ Facilitate meaningful interactions with peers and adults in the classroom that promote satisfying social relationships in the classroom community.

Educating ELLs with Significant Cognitive Disabilities: Lessons Being Learned in One State

by Audra Ahumada and Leila E. Williams

Arizona, like many other states, has adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), and educators across the state are implementing them in their daily instruction to ensure that all students have the academic knowledge and skills they need to be ready for career, college, and life (see http://www.azed.gov/azcommoncore/). The local education agencies, in partnership with the Arizona Department of Education, are focused on how to support all students – including English language learners (ELLs) with disabilities – to experience academic success. However, ELLs with disabilities continue to lag behind their peers in making adequate educational gains in the traditional instructional models. And, ELLs with significant cognitive disabilities may experience additional challenges if they have limited or no communication systems.

Educators examine and use various types of data to help improve achievement for students with significant cognitive disabilities. However, the availability of an appropriate English language proficiency assessment is lacking for these students. This article will highlight some of the critical issues in this regard for educators whose primary focus is to deliver meaningful instruction. It will focus in particular on how English language proficiency of ELLs with significant cognitive disabilities is being monitored and language development being determined in Arizona. The lessons being learned in our state reflect the fact that all states are in the process of discovering how to improve instruction and assessment for these students.

Fulfilling the Federal Mandates

Several federal laws – the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, English Language Acquisition Act, and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) – mandate that ELL students and students with disabilities participate in state achievement assessments and are instructed on grade level academic standards. IDEA further mandates that state education agencies develop alternate assessments based on alternate achievement standards (AA-AAS) for students with significant cognitive disabilities who cannot demonstrate their knowledge on general state assessments, even with accommodations. To comply with federal mandates, the State of Arizona developed an alternate assessment known as *Arizona's Instrument to Measure Standards Alternate* (AIMS A). Approximately, 8,000 students with significant cognitive disabilities are assessed with the AIMS A, and approximately 1,500 of them are ELLs.

In Arizona, all educators must have a Structured English Immersion (SEI) endorsement to their teaching licenses. SEI-endorsed teachers are able to provide instruction to ELLs in the English Language Proficiency programs. All Arizona educators, whether they are SEI classroom teachers or instructional personnel, are trained to support students' instruction as it relates to English language acquisition.

Students identified as ELLs receive specialized instruction by an ELL teacher in a SEI program. However, language and instructional decisions for students with significant cognitive disabilities who are identified as ELLs are made by the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) team, which includes an ELL coordinator. Ultimately the IEP team determines the students' placement as well as the educational program to include language acquisition instruction. Language acquisition for these students is often related to their communication needs including response mode, evolving communication systems, and opportunities for meaningful communication exchanges. Supporting students with significant cognitive disabilities who are also ELLs has presented some instructional challenges for some educators. For instance, a small number of students in this population have a limited symbolic communication system. There is a need to assist educators to identify an effective communication system for those students, continue to move them through the other stages of communication, and improve their language abilities. When students do not have effective communication systems in place, how can they show what they know? The true language supports or needs of ELLs with significant cognitive disabilities may be overshadowed by the desire to work on non-academic skills and not build language acquisition skills.

Looking at Our Data

In 2012, Arizona and four other states participated in an Enhanced Assessment Grant titled, "Improving the Validity of Assessment Results for English Language Learners with Disabilities (IVARED)" and based at the National Center on Educational Outcomes, University of Minnesota. Through IVARED, which is funded by the U.S. Department of Education, the five states (Minnesota, Arizona, Maine, Michigan, and California) work together to address the assessment challenges for ELLs with disabilities and seek to improve the validity for results from large-scale content assessments that aim to include the full range of learners (see http://www.ivared.info/). Many of the findings from this research have shed light on the performance of ELLs with significant cognitive disabilities on the AIMS A.

After participating in the IVARED project, the Assessment Unit of the Arizona Department of Education delved deeper into the state's 2010 and 2011 alternate assessment data, including the number of students identified at any time as students having a Primary Home Language Other Than English (PHLOTE),

and their performance on the alternate assessment. When PHOLTE was a proxy for ELL identification, these students showed proficiency in their alternate assessment scores over the last three years. One reason ELL students with significant cognitive disabilities may have shown progress on the AIMS A is that there is great flexibility in the use of accommodations and adaptations to the assessment (e.g., visual supports, plug-ins, read aloud, and prompting and levels of supports for the performance tasks). Many of these accommodations can support both ELLs and students with significant cognitive disabilities.

In addition, state data in all three years of the study shows a discrepancy between the number of students with significant cognitive disabilities enrolled in an ELL program and the number of students identified as having a PHLOTE. Typically ELLs with significant cognitive disabilities are receiving their academic and language instruction in a self-contained classroom with a special educator who is SEI endorsed. This is in contrast to ELLs with a learning disability who could receive part of their instruction in an English learner program and receive special education support through a pull-out or resource setting. Because of the extent of the students' disabilities, the IEP teams for ELLs with significant cognitive disabilities determine both how the student can demonstrate English proficiency and the language skills most appropriate for the student to continue to acquire as part of their special education program.

However, there were nearly 1,000 students with significant cognitive disabilities identified as ELLs based on their PHLOTE survey that were not identified as ELLs within our student accountability system that uses ELL program enrollment as its criteria. This raises the question of whether we (teachers) are truly considering these students' language needs or is our emphasis only on their academic needs.

Finally, the alternate assessment data from 2010-2011 provide a comparison of students with significant cognitive

disabilities whose home language is English or non-English. The students whose home language is English perform better than their ELL peers.

As a result of the Arizona Department of Education's involvement with IVARED, the next steps for the state include developing clear guidance on how accommodation decisions are made and implemented for all students with language needs, including ELLs with significant cognitive disabilities, both in the instructional and assessment settings. Recently, the department's Alternate Assessment unit has added greater emphasis on ensuring that professional development for educators includes strategies to support students who are also ELLs. In addition to professional development and accommodation guidance, procedures are being established in partnership with the state's Office of English Language Acquisition Services (OELAS) to help guide IEP teams to ensure students receive needed language instruction. OELAS and the Exceptional Student Service Division have worked collaboratively to train special educators and ELL coordinators to ensure students' language acquisition needs are being considered and to integrate the SEI models into their instructional planning, especially for those students who are in more restrictive special education programs. Because all Arizona educators are SEI trained this can be accomplished by special educators in partnership with the content teachers.

Moving Forward

Although Arizona's educators are SEI endorsed, and the expectation is that ELLs with significant cognitive disabilities will receive instruction that will facilitate English language acquisition, many of the teachers for these students focus on the students' educational needs, specifically related to academic and functional skills. The state is now moving toward putting greater emphasis on ensuring that students with significant cognitive disabilities have a communication system. However, in

Arizona, as in many other states, we have not effectively supported educators on how to ensure they provide a balanced curriculum that includes language acquisition as part of the instructional planning for these students. While we have learned that more training is required to support the implementation of appropriate accommodations that support academic and language acquisition, we have to also help teachers for ELLs with significant cognitive disabilities integrate English language instruction into their communication and content instruction. As mentioned earlier, the IEP teams of some ELLs with disabilities may discuss how to best measure their English proficiency. Perhaps Arizona's next step is to consider how to monitor students who are unable to demonstrate their language skills on our English language proficiency test because of their severity of their disability. States that joined an English language proficiency consortium (World-Class Instruction and Design and Assessment) are developing and implementing alternate English language proficiency assessments for ELLs with significant cognitive disabilities (see http://www. wida.us/assessment/alternateaccess. aspx). Lessons learned from the consortia work and ongoing research will help states like Arizona better support the instructional programs for our English language learners with significant cognitive disabilities.

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Working Together: One District's Transformation in Teaching English Learners with Disabilities

by J. Valerie Brewington, Karla Estrada, and Hilda Maldonado

In 2011, the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) addressed the lack of access and services English learners (ELs) with disabilities were experiencing in English language development (ELD). Central to the district's response was the design of targeted staff development for special education teachers, and collaborative steps by the departments responsible for ELs and students with disabilities.

A compliance review of educational programs for ELs conducted in the district by the federal Office for Civil Rights (OCR) in 2011 concluded that the district's services and supports for

> *Through joint efforts by student-centered staff, innovative thinking on how to meet the language and learning needs of English learners with disabilities and transform student learning has occurred.*

ELs, especially at the secondary level and including students with disabilities, were in need of improvement. Particular areas to be addressed specifically regarding EL students with disabilities were the lack of delivery of both special education services and English learner services (e.g., ELD and access to core content instruction). In addition, access by students with disabilities to EL intervention programs that targeted students not making adequate ELD progress and ELD materials were identified. Recognizing the need to address the educational program for all ELs and for students with disabilities, the district agreed to enter into a Voluntary Agreement in October 2011.

LAUSD's agreement with OCR included a specific section on meeting the ELD needs of ELs with disabilities. This section of the agreement called for the district to "provide both special education services and English learner services to each EL student in special education in a manner appropriate to the student's individual needs, regardless of the nature or severity of the student's disability as defined by the student's IEP." The agreement also called for a specific and immediate implementation of professional development for all special education teachers in LAUSD, and a re-write of the *English Learner Master Plan* to include ELs with disabilities. In order to address the actions outlined in the agreement, collaborative planning activities were organized between the district's Division of Special Education and the Language Acquisition Branch (recently renamed Multilingual and Multicultural Education Department, MMED).

Collaborative Staff Development

In LAUSD, over 45% of students with disabilities are also ELs (over 38,000). The interface between educational programs for ELs and for students with disabilities was going to be critical in meeting language and learning needs of ELs with disabilities. The partnership between these departments generated a cultural shift and an integration of common initiatives began to take shape. The team acknowledged that past practices in delivering both professional development and implementing newly adopted curriculum had been done in silos. It was also determined that a lack of appropriate ELD materials and differentiated professional development were key causes for the lack of services and access to individualized ELD instruction for ELs with disabilities.

Specialists in both departments began to meet regularly in work sessions

that centered on improving the language acquisition and English proficiency needs of ELs with disabilities. As the creation of this staff development for special education teachers continued, the team found it challenging to address each of the language domains (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) while still meeting the student's individual learning needs. For example, how do I teach reading to an EL with an auditory processing disorder when strategies call for the use of listening and speaking activities or strategies? OCR was very clear in informing the district that there is no room for negotiating the student's rights in both language and learning. Keeping an instructional focus on developing a second language, while also meeting the specific learning needs of an EL with a disability, required those with language acquisition and special education expertise to work through each aspect of the staff development content together. Although this was successfully integrated, the need for more evidence-based methods of accomplishing this integration still remains and requires further research.

Differentiated Staff Development

Of the approximately 30,000 teachers in LAUSD, 3,000 are special education teachers. Analysis of training attendance data prior to October 2011 for ELD instruction training revealed that most Secondary Resource (750) and Mild to Moderate Special Day Program teachers (1000) had not participated in the ELD instruction professional development provided in the district. The reason for low attendance was that special educators, in particular Special Day Program teachers, typically were not included in the invitation. This was due to a misunderstanding that training of special educators was to be provided

by the Special Education Division, and to classroom and student relevance not being experienced by certain special educators attending the training. This revealed the need for inter-office collaboration and commitment between MMED and the Division of Special Education to provide special educators with targeted professional development addressing key content and language acquisition topics, while also differentiating to ensure relevance and meet the needs of special educators.

Data also revealed that elementary and secondary Moderate to Severe Special Day Program teachers (approximately 825) had not participated in district ELD training. Since the learning needs of ELs with disabilities vary, differentiated professional development was created and provided to Secondary Resource teachers, Mild to Moderate Special Day Program teachers, and elementary and secondary Moderate to Severe Special Day Program teachers. This training was co-taught by both EL and special education instructional staff. The two-day professional development for teachers of ELs with mild to moderate disabilities focused on understanding and utilizing the district's adopted ELD curriculum, ELD strategies, language domains, and appropriate accommodations/modifications for ELs with disabilities.

While the curricular materials for students with mild to moderate disabilities are typically the same as those for general education ELs, the same is not necessarily true for students with moderate to severe disabilities, who may be on an alternate curriculum. Special education and EL specialists were tasked with an immediate identification of curriculum materials and the creation of the professional development for these materials. Additionally, due to the demands of addressing the four domains of language required for ELD, the team had to ensure that the curriculum was designed with both English learner needs and special education needs of students with moderate to severe disabilities in mind. During the search for appropriate materials, an instructional curriculum was identified that was being utilized in

classrooms for students with moderate to severe disabilities. Further examination revealed that it was originally developed for ELs. It addressed the four language domains, was primarily picture based, and could be differentiated to meet the multiple learning needs of ELs with moderate to severe disabilities. This curriculum was reviewed and approved by EL and special education specialists, including those of moderate to severe programs. Two-day professional development training was created based on this material and centered on the needs of EL students with moderate to severe disabilities, including students who are low or non-verbal and may use alternate forms of communication. Objectives for the staff development were comprised of evaluating and monitoring ELD progress and proficiency using an alternate ELD assessment, functional communication, learning and utilizing the newly identified ELD curriculum, and application of ELD strategies. As a result of these changes in professional development, approximately 90% of the LAUSD special educators have now participated in the targeted professional development for special education teachers.

Lessons Learned and Ongoing Work

Key lessons learned in the implementation of staff development to improve ELD instruction by special education teachers include the necessity for ongoing, differentiated staff development and coaching support specifically targeting how language is developed and acquired, and progress monitored, and strategies and tools to meet ELD needs while considering the impact of the student's disability. During the professional development roll-out, a common belief shared by many teachers was that disability trumps language when working with ELs with special needs. ELD is a key content area for ELs and necessary for overall academic success. Equally critical to this success is special education supports and services for students with disabilities. For this reason, the co-existence of language and disability needed to be

examined and addressed in professional development. This was also evident, and set a precedent, by having the professional development co-taught by specialists in EL and special education. A student's cultural and linguistic needs do not stop being important once they have an Individualized Education Program, which speaks to an ongoing challenge in the field: We need to recognize that it is not a language vs. disability issue but a language *and* disability need.

Another critical element in implementing the professional development was instructional and fiscal commitments by department leadership. Instructionally, ongoing partnership and collaboration in policy setting between MMED and the Special Education Division, most recently in the ELD program placement policy for ELs with and without disabilities, is underway. Fiscally, concerted effort has been placed on realigning budgets to support prevention efforts related to monitoring progress and intervention initiatives of ELs prior to being referred to special education, and intervention supports for ELs, including students with disabilities. The Voluntary Agreement served as a springboard for launching this work, but these efforts must be an ongoing district priority.

Through joint efforts by student-centered staff, innovative thinking on how to meet the language and learning needs of ELs with disabilities and transform student learning has occurred. Although the efforts continue, the foundation laid by this partnership will continue to guide the ongoing work.

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United Action for Improving Academic Outcomes of ELLs with Disabilities

by Manuel Barrera

As students with disabilities and students in general education become increasingly diverse ethnically and linguistically, the need for schools to be effective in promoting united action to improve academic outcomes for English language learners (ELLs) with disabilities has become more pronounced. There may be a misperception that parents of ELLs who themselves may not be literate in English are not likely to be helpful in promoting academic outcomes in their children's education.

> *Ultimately, "collaboration" among parents, educators, students, and their communities must be seen as engaging in our common task to realize real academic progress for students.*

Aside from the legal necessity for involving the child's parents in the planning and education of a student with a disability (IDEA, 2004), there are also professional and pedagogical reasons why parent involvement is essential for effective schooling of ELLs with disabilities. These students, like all students, need their parents to understand the importance of school, to believe that their children can benefit from completing an education, and to support their children's participation through moral, emotional, and physical means of support. The more connected parents and communities feel toward the schools that educate their children, the more connected students will feel with the educational process they encounter in their schools.

This feeling of connection is a first step in developing united action in effecting positive academic outcomes. Such connections are made effectively in the process of parent, educator, and student collaboration as students participate in classes or in the all too ubiquitous standardized assessments that students must take as part of demonstrating academic competence. For teachers to be maximally effective, they require the help of parents and children's communities to demonstrate that there is no disjunction between the goals of families for their children and the goals of educators for their students. However, this very need for collaboration – united action – is often one of the most difficult tasks for educators, and parents, to accomplish. Three aspects of this problem include collaboration among parents and educators in IEPs and IEP meetings; the difficulties and differences between general education, special education, and ESL/bilingual education educators; and structural issues associated with schools that may impede the connection with parents for united action in promoting their children's education.

Issues in Collaborating on Student IEPs

The effect of cultural and linguistic differences between home and school for English language learners, especially ELLs with disabilities, has been a major challenge. The primary vehicle for fostering parent, educator, and student collaboration for children with disabilities is the process of developing the Individualized Education Program (IEP). Yet, parents of ELLs with disabilities, and ESL or bilingual teachers, have often expressed feelings of frustration at being excluded from IEP meetings or only marginally involved for "rubber stamp" forms of decision-making (Liu & Barrera, in press). ELL parents may feel that their knowledge of the child's native language skills, likes and dislikes, as well as the student's preferred learning styles are not taken into consideration. In addition, these parents may feel that their own goals for their child's learning are not valued by school staff (Liu & Barrera, in press).

On the other hand, educators may not be trained in working with linguistically and culturally diverse parents and may have limited knowledge of how parents' cultural and educational backgrounds influence their desires for their child's academic experiences. Parents may not be familiar with the terms teachers use for instructional strategies or materials that will be used in the classroom. Additional time must be allowed for interpretation of IEP meetings so that interpreters can fully explain ideas that may not exist in the parents' native language.

Differences in Training and Perspective Among Educators

ESL and bilingual teachers (Goldstone et al., in press; Liu & Barrera, in press) may have limited opportunities to collaborate with special education and content teachers to plan instruction for ELLs with disabilities. ESL teachers, like their counterparts, are busy and may serve a sizeable number of students, making it difficult for them to attend IEP meetings without explicit support and expectation to do so. When these teachers do attend IEP meetings they may experience communication difficulties if they have a different way of conceptualizing and talking about learning for ELLs. Many special education teachers may not be familiar with concepts of second language teaching and learning (Robinson

& Buly, 2007) increasing the complexity of creating authentic communication on a multi-disciplinary IEP team.

School Structural Issues

In addition, there are school structural issues that may impede collaboration among educators not simply in developing IEPs, but in the ultimately more important direct service to ELLs with disabilities as IEPs are implemented and students are integrated into the "free and appropriate public education" these students need and deserve. One major structural problem is often seen as unavoidable: the school day versus the time that parents, especially working parents, may have in participating in meetings and activities typically planned by educators based on school working hours. A second issue is the difference between how students are expected to participate in school and what teachers must do to manage the teaching of increasingly diverse students. In both cases, an important amount of problem solving must be engaged by parents and the various educators involved with their children in order to overcome difficult barriers.

Effective Approaches to Promote United Action – Educational Dialogues

While much of the collaboration among parents of ELLs with disabilities and educators remains based on a paucity of and very generalized research (Harry, 2008), some very good ideas have been generated. Some schools and individual educators have tried to implement them. In my own research with parents over 10 years, a common observation has been that parents welcome opportunities not only to discuss the issues and needs of their children with disabilities but are often very interested in "instructional dialogues" very similar to those of educators in the field (Barrera & Liu, 2008; Vang & Barrera, 2005).

The National Center on Culturally Responsive Educational Systems (Waterman & Harry, 2008) has compiled important wisdom and practice for effective parent-educator collaboration in supporting ELLs with disabilities. In addition to improved communication strategies, a common point for parent involvement, important approaches that seem to increase and promote effective collaboration include the following:

- Provide open-ended group meetings of parents to provide them with a safe environment to ask questions (safety in numbers) of select school staff known to be especially communicative with parents (e.g., cultural or parent liaisons, student- or parent-identified teachers or administrators). Such meetings can be used to determine parent-identified issues of concern that may result in future informational or development sessions.

- Provide possible topics for future meetings such as book selections for students, math or other curriculum and how it is taught in the U.S., parent expectations, and community resources, among others.

- Engage parents in school site decision-making bodies that are often not well known among immigrant and linguistically diverse communities.

- Assign staff or designate teachers to work on parent-school collaboration on a periodic and rotational basis to spread the knowledge base of current parents and parent involvement expertise.

- Create parent educational development programs on topics such as family literacy, family-based mathematics and science, as well how to engage in parental volunteering.

- Establish specific parent advisory boards to strengthen community-based guidance for issues related to ELLs with disabilities.

There is a rich resource for parent involvement resident in virtually every staff with ELLs in their schools: teacher assistants and others involved in parental advocacy or "cultural liaisons." Indeed, several parents in my research studies (Barrera & Liu, 2008; Vang & Barrera, 2005) reported that they took such jobs because they felt it important to serve as a conduit for improving communication and knowledge among parents and the schools who serve their children. A good first step for promoting strong collaboration with parents of ELLs with disabilities is to start with the collective wisdom of those educators who already may be involved with the communities of these children.

Ultimately, "collaboration" among parents, educators, students, and their communities must be seen as engaging in our common task to realize real academic progress for students. Doing so cannot simply be about feeling that what has been is appropriate, but that it is appropriate. The only real way to accomplish this task is to think that parents and educators are engaged in action and that action must be united action.

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Advocating for Your Child: Tips for Families of English Language Learners with Disabilities

by Lusa Lo

In the U.S., schools and families are considered as equal partners in the education of children with disabilities. Families are expected to collaborate with schools and be actively involved in their child's life and academic career. This expectation can be foreign to many families who are new to the country because schools may be considered as authority figures who know best. In addition, the lengthy and complicated special education process in the U.S. can be overwhelming to many families of students with disabilities. This article offers families of students who are English language learners with disabilities some suggestions to help them become involved in the education process as their childrens' advocates and decision-makers.

Be Proactive

When a student has a diagnosed disability, the school is required to form an Individualized Education Program (IEP) team. This team includes parents, their child (if applicable), and professionals, such as special educators, a speech and language pathologist, an occupational therapist, a physical therapist, and a psychologist. The child's first IEP meeting can be very overwhelming to many parents, since all the professionals will share their child's evaluation results and discuss the types of services their child should receive during the year. If the school does not meet with parents and explain the IEP process to them prior to the meeting, parents are encouraged to request this meeting, with interpretation support. Parents are part of their child's IEP team. They have the right to understand the process and be prepared. At this pre-IEP meeting, parents should be able to find out information, such as the purpose of the IEP meeting, their role in the IEP team, what will be discussed at the IEP meeting, and who they can bring to the meeting.

Know Your Parental Rights

At the beginning of the IEP process, a copy of the procedural safeguards notice is provided to the parents. Parents who are not fluent in English have the right to obtain a copy of this document in their native language. This document describes parents' rights during the special education process and important timelines of the process. For instance, parents have the right to request an independent educational evaluation of their child if they disagree with the evaluation of their child done by the school. If parents are unclear about any of the information in the document, they should contact the special education coordinator at the school and ask for clarification.

Keep Good Records

Each year, parents of students who are English language learners with disabilities receive a huge amount of written documents from schools, government agencies, and physicians. These documents can include IEPs, evaluation reports from schools and specialists, progress reports, communication logs, and medical records in English and translated versions. These are important documents that parents must maintain, since many of them can be difficult to recover or recreate. Organizing these records by types and dates will enable parents to search for information easily.

Go Beyond IEP Meetings

A student's IEP team is required to meet annually to discuss the progress the student has made throughout the year and if changes should be made in the provided special education services. In addition to the annual IEP meetings, parents can request to meet with the team any time during the year and learn about the progress of their child. During these meetings, parents should also ask about the instructional strategies that are used in their child's school since many of these strategies are very different from what they have learned in their native country. Using the same instructional strategies at home can make sure that their children are not confused. Often, these strategies can be used in their native language.

Seek Support from the Community

Parents should not solely rely on schools for resources and supports. Due to the budget constraints, many schools do not have the resources and staff members to provide parents with the types of support they need. Parents should consider seeking support from community organizations. There is at least one Parent Training and Information Center in each state. Some states also have Community Parent Resource Centers that focus on reaching underserved families of children with disabilities, such as families that are low income or whose first language is not English (see http://www.parentcenternetwork.org for more information). All these centers receive federal funding and are required to support families of children with disabilities, such as offering parent education workshops and providing advocacy in IEP meetings. For parents of students who are English language learners with disabilities, many of the centers have information about local parent support groups where parents can connect with other parents who speak the same language and have children with similar disabilities. Most of the center services are free or low cost.

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Planning for the Successful Transition From School to Adulthood for ELLs with Disabilities

by Hyejung Kim

The growing number of English language learners (ELLs) with special education needs in American schools is creating an increasing need to prepare these students for the transition from school to adulthood. Legislative efforts addressing the rights of students with special education needs have led to great progress in postsecondary outcomes. However, youth with disabilities, their families, and educators continue to face numerous challenges during the transition process. For ELLs with disabilities there are some additional unique challenges.

Bilingualism and Academic Performance

Research has repeatedly found that instruction in a student's native language assists second language acquisition and academic achievement. However, several states have passed initiatives that limit educational support for bilingual programs. These sorts of initiatives challenge ELLs and their families who seek support for bilingual education in order to increase postsecondary opportunities. Bilingual education needs are further complicated by disability status.

Educators should consider bilingualism as a strength of youth with disabilities, and consider the doing the following during transition planning:

- Make sure that family members' communication regarding postsecondary goals for their children is supported through interpreters or community liaisons, avoid using jargon, and provide materials in their home language.

- Invite other family members, as well as parents, to participate in transition planning for an increased understanding of the student's bilingualism as it intertwines with special needs.

- Use in-depth interviewing with the student and their family to understand diverse beliefs and values in relation to the student's future.

Removing Postsecondary Barriers

Using disability services in adulthood requires families and youth to understand processes and eligibility requirements that differ from entitlement programs in special education. Postsecondary education can improve adolescents' quality of life, but attaining this goal requires college preparatory academics, goal setting, understanding of application processes, and so forth (Hart, Grigal, & Weir, 2010). Goals for postsecondary education must be established early. The recommended practices include:

- Provide language support for adolescent ELLs with disabilities and engage them in inclusive settings.

- Inform the students and their families about available postsecondary education resources for gaining information about processes and language accommodations.

To make informed decisions about work, ELLs with disabilities and their families need to know eligibility for vocational services. The federal Benefits Planning, Assistance, and Outreach Initiative aims to address barriers along with the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999. These initiatives help youth and families make informed choices regarding gaining and maintaining employment (Brooke et al., 2012). To support movement to postsecondary employment for ELLs with disabilities schools should:

- Ensure that teachers, transition specialists, youth and their families understand the vocational supports available to ELLs with disabilities.

- Invite members of the state vocational rehabilitation agency to IEP meetings.

Leaving the school community introduces change. ELLs with special education needs may experience social isolation in new contexts, and this may be compounded by linguistic differences.

Isolation negatively impacts obtaining and maintaining postsecondary degrees and jobs. To increase social inclusion for ELLs with disabilities, transition planning teams should:

- Provide opportunities for the student to gain experience in the community.

- Provide instruction on using community transportation, recreation, and enrichment resources, coupled with English language use and community bilingual resources.

- Arrange for mentorship from the adult bilingual community.

Additionally, some ELLs with disabilities confront challenges to accessing postsecondary services because citizenship documentation, in addition to English language fluency, may be necessary preconditions (Trainor, 2010). Acknowledging the potential challenges is the first step in addressing these obstacles.

Conclusion

Although ELLs with disabilities face great challenges in the transition process, the outcomes can be significantly improved through the above efforts. Providing support for this population includes responding to bilingual strengths and needs, sharing information about disability services for adults, planning for the future in culturally responsive ways, and providing social skill interventions.

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English Language Learners with Disabilities: What School Professionals Need to Know and Do

by Lusa Lo

As our U.S. population continues to get more diverse, the number of English language learners (ELLs) with disabilities continues to grow. There is a need for schools to pay special attention to this particular group within the student population.

ELL Training for Pre- and Inservice Teachers

Effective and knowledgeable teachers make an important difference in the academic careers of our students. While colleges and universities prepare most of the pre-service teachers each year, not all state-approved programs include coursework that focuses on the pedagogy of teaching ELLs. Students who are acquiring English language skills may appear to be experiencing a language delay or learning difficulty. Teachers who do not have sufficient knowledge and skills about second language acquisition may misinterpret this performance as a disability. Unnecessary special education referrals may have been made prior to implementing proper interventions. A variety of instructional strategies must be used when working with ELLs. States should consider requiring an endorsement in Structured English Immersion for all certified teachers and principals.

Linguistically Diverse Professionals

When ELLs are being evaluated for special education services, the IDEA 2004 requires that evaluations be conducted in the language most likely to obtain accurate information on what the students know and can do. In other words, students whose dominant language is not English should be evaluated in their native language. Unfortunately, only 16% of school professionals are from diverse cultures (Coopersmith, 2009), and an even smaller number of them have special education training. When bilingual evaluators are unavailable, interpreters are

often used. However, the validity of the obtained evaluation data is a concern. There is an urgent need for universities and school districts to collaborate to recruit, prepare, and retain culturally and linguistically diverse teachers and specialists. These professionals not only can ensure that fair and nondiscriminatory evaluations are conducted, but also provide primary language supports to ELLs with disabilities. They can also ensure that the special education team considers the cultural values and beliefs of the students and their parents when developing the special education program.

Multiple Evaluation Methods

While nondiscriminatory evaluation tools are needed to assess ELLs, school professionals should use a variety of assessment methods. When choosing a formal test, educators must review the examiner and technical manual carefully to ensure that: (1) the test is reliable and valid; (2) the test items and testing procedures are unbiased; and (3) the norm sample of the test reflects the cultural and linguistic background of the students. Although valid and reliable formal data are useful, informal assessment data are also crucial. The administration procedures of informal assessments are much more flexible than formal assessments. In addition, professionals can frequently and quickly assess their ELLs' performance in more natural settings.

Parent Education

Research consistently suggests that many immigrant families of children with disabilities are confused with the special education process in the U.S. and need guidance and support (Lo, 2009). Some may misunderstand the purpose of special education services as additional support for their children. These parents need information regarding their children's

disabilities, their parental rights, how they should be involved in the process, and where to obtain resources to support their children. Professionals should take the time to explain each step of the IEP process to families of ELLs with disabilities (Lo, 2012a). Further, schools should partner with community organizations and organize parent education workshops in their native languages so parents can learn how to serve as their children's advocates (Lo, 2012b).

Qualified Translators and Interpreters

Translators and interpreters are often used to bridge the communication gap between schools and linguistically diverse families of ELLs with disabilities. However, many of these individuals have never been formally trained to provide quality translation and interpretation. Many are also unfamiliar with the field of special education. When a large amount of terminology is used during IEP meetings and in IEP documents, these unqualified translators and interpreters may not know how to translate and interpret. There is a need for schools to train pools of translators and interpreters to ensure the quality of their services. Additionally, a glossary of terms commonly used in special education should be provided to them.

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English Learners with Disabilities and Charter Schools: The Principal Perspective

by Peggy McLeod

In 2002, the National Council of La Raza (NCLR), the largest national Hispanic civil rights and advocacy organization in the U.S., established a network of 115 charter schools that serve majority Latino students and high percentages of English learners (ELs). These schools were established specifically to improve educational outcomes for Latino children and for ELs who were not successful in traditional public schools. As publicly-funded entities, the schools have an obligation to follow all federal civil rights legislation, including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

NCLR schools have been successful in serving ELs, as indicated by their average higher academic proficiency rates and higher graduation rates. To learn more about the challenges and successes of some of these schools in serving ELs with disabilities, principals of three high-performing high schools were interviewed: Ed Mendez of Alta Vista Public Charter School in Kansas City, Missouri; Ricardo Robles of Luz Guerrero Early College High School in Tucson, Arizona; and Carlos Rodriguez of Houston Gateway Academy in Houston, Texas.

Challenges Identifying ELs with Disabilities

As local educational agencies and, therefore, not part of traditional school districts, these three schools are responsible for all aspects of special education programming, from initial identification to the provision of appropriate services. The schools vary in the percentage of students with disabilities: 4% at Houston Gateway, 5.5% at Alta Vista, and 14% at Luz Guerrero. The schools tend to have students with mild to moderate disabilities, including learning disabilities and Autism Spectrum Disorders.

Among the challenges named by the principals in identifying ELs with disabilities is distinguishing the process of learning English language skills from the existence of a language-based disability. However, one of the principals indicated that this situation has improved in the last few years because assessment procedures have become more accurate. The special education team in one of the schools uses the student's native language to assess if the student needs additional support outside EL services. Another principal believes charter schools have an edge over traditional public schools in identifying ELs with disabilities because their small size allows for recognition of indicators of a disability much earlier. All three principals reported they are in the process of developing a Response to Intervention framework that will lead to more accurate identification of ELs with disabilities.

Challenges Serving ELs with Disabilities

All the principals stated that a lack of funds is the major issue in providing services to ELs with disabilities. For example, one school is able to employ only four special education staff, of which only one is a credentialed special education teacher. However, this shortage of special education staff has also led that school to integrate students with disabilities into regular education classrooms. One principal indicated his school's biggest challenge has been getting teachers to implement the accommodations on students' Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) throughout the instructional day, rather than just during assessments. This challenge has been met by having the school's special education director provide professional development on accommodation and modifications.

Success Stories

The three principals were asked about success stories of ELs with disabilities in their schools. A common thread running through the stories was the willingness of all school staff to hold these students to the same high expectations as all other students, and to provide the extra support they needed to graduate from high school and continue with postsecondary education. One EL student wanted to drop out during her sophomore year because she struggled with a writing disability. However, after putting in place supports for writing in all of her classes, she is now in her senior year, will graduate on time, and will attend a community college. A student who is an EL with a disability at another school was far behind in completing the core high school credits. A senior, the school staff provided independent studies that allowed him to gain the necessary credits. That extra help, together with online courses, will allow him to graduate this year on time and enroll in community college next fall.

Finally, the lack of funds experienced by these charter schools due to their small size has also led them to use all their internal and external supports to serve ELs with disabilities. Internally, they approach the education of ELs with disabilities as a shared responsibility across all staff. Externally, they supplement what they offer by creating partnerships with outside organizations and programs. Thus the nimbleness from their small size allows them to "put everything in place for the kids" and gives them the needed flexibility to ensure that ELs with disabilities graduate ready for postsecondary education and careers.

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expected Patxi to communicate with his extended family. Coming from a bilingual upbringing, we understood the cognitive advantages this choice could provide our son. Language was not up for negotiation.

We sought professionals who respected our choice and would work with us on our terms. And Patxi flourished. He was an engaged, emotionally connected infant with speech delays who responded with basic signs to requests in both Spanish and English. His first words were in Spanish, but he was cognizant of the other languages in his world. His awareness of languages was built around the relationships he had with his important people. He played with his father in English, addressed my parents in Spanish, and babbled Tagalog sounds with my mother-in-law.

This came to an abrupt halt when he started school. We struggled in the first private preschool, but he advanced. At three, he started to read a few sight words and recognized consonant-vowel-consonant word patterns. Then he stopped. Stopped learning, stopped connecting, stopped communicating, and the anxiety started. His first two private preschools failed to meet his needs; he attended the special education public preschool, then two special education kindergarten classes. By age five he had been to five schools. Displaying significant regression, he didn't connect to peers and had lost interest in learning. The school assessments were devastating, especially the psychological evaluations, casting doubt on what I knew as Patxi's mother. I admit, it got to me and I stopped speaking to him in Spanish.

In his second kindergarten year, we insisted on inclusive time in the school's dual language program. One hour a day in that setting sparked his interest. However, Patxi was removed from the dual language program after his first grade year. The IEP team's decision to change his placement from a dual language classroom to a co-taught classroom (an English-only setting with a general education teacher and a special education teacher) drew on the belief that

he would have greater access to the curriculum with the concentrated support available in this setting. Patxi would lose a language in order to get services.

Patxi's co-taught class underwent six staff changes. The inconsistency amplified negative behaviors and he became self-aggressive. A placement that had not been fully developed, staffed, or conceptualized had huge repercussions for Patxi. He donned a coping attitude, which we called his "stoic mask:" nonverbal, glaze-eyed, non-compliant, and when challenged too far, disruptive, or combative.

Independently we researched other avenues to access learning. Then we started Floortime™ sessions at a therapy center and, almost immediately, we saw increased interaction and communication. Floortime™ meets children where they are and builds upon their strengths and abilities. During each session you follow the child's interests, strengthen an emotional connection, and then challenge the child to be more creative, which promotes intellectual and emotional development (see http://www.stanleygreenspan.com/about-floortime/).

Coincidentally, at that time we also learned of Creative Minds International Public Charter School (CMI), a newly chartered school in Washington D.C. that intended to apply Floortime™ to its program and that was opening in fall 2012. CMI's mission is "to offer students a rigorous education plan that provides them with the skills required for successful participation in a global society" (see http://www.creativemindspcs.org). CMI was designed to be inclusive while implementing the International Primary Curriculum, which uses 6-8 week curriculum units that are thematic and combine several subjects in project-based, art-infused activities, with language instruction and cultural awareness interwoven into the curriculum.

We uprooted from our Virginia suburb and enrolled Patxi in CMI to great success. The thematic units extend instruction of subject matter, which provides more repetition and review –

something Patxi needs to acquire new material. Also the presentation of information in diverse arts-infused forms afforded him non-threatening access to the curriculum. But, the major success in reaching Patxi is the wholehearted belief in the Floortime™ child-centered approach.

His case manager, Hannah Schedrick, calls it a humanistic and holistic approach whose emphasis on the emotional connection to each student is paramount. It was fundamental that Patxi feel not only comfortable in his environment, but also feel that his choices were valued and heard. When given ownership of his school day, Patxi felt safe and nurtured, and he was able to take ownership of his learning.

The classroom assistant, Katherine Johnson, described the first month of school as "setting the stage." The day would start out with transition time in the sensory room. He was allowed sensory time as well a flexible schedule to acclimate, and his teachers used this time to learn his strengths and individualize instruction to his learning style.

Music and movement have always been favorite activities for him. So, songs are built into his day, with proprioceptive activities for awareness of his body positions (for example, jumping on a trampoline) and vestibular activities for awareness of movement and direction (for example, swinging) to help him regulate as well as address several of his needs. Songs help with memorization, sequencing, articulation, turn taking, and creativity. He is encouraged to create his own version of songs that address problem solving, practice shared attention, and challenge him verbally. He displayed more interest in reading when his favorite books from home were used to teach literacy. He comes home with projects collaboratively created at school.

In addition, Patxi receives language instruction three days a week. Maria Alejandra Rivas, the Spanish and drama teacher, quickly understood that Spanish was an area of strength for him to draw from. She perceived it as not just

a comforting reminder of home, but also a place where he can shine and feel confident among his peers. Spanish-speaking adults at school speak Spanish to him throughout his day. Finally, true home/school collaboration and communication exists with additional support through school-produced blogs and newsletters full of curriculum information, materials for home, and pictures and videos of the school day.

For the first time in his young life my son enjoys school. And he can tell me about his day, and has made meaningful human connections outside of his family. Every day his communication becomes more descriptive and engaged. He is willing to challenge himself. I see the boy I knew and I speak to him in Spanish again.

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and services for ELLs with disabilities and their families:

- Understand that if you serve ELLs or students with disabilities, you most likely serve ELLs with disabilities. These students are a part of both groups, but may have needs that are different from either due to the interaction of students' disabilities and second-language learning processes.

- Keep in mind that the labels applied to students are not sufficient to describe students' characteristics. Because there is a great deal of variability in the population of ELLs with disabilities, educators and service providers must look beyond the group name and develop appropriate ways to understand the complex characteristics of the students they serve. They should be sensitive to within-group variation and to changes in group characteristics due to acculturation that occurs over time.

- Recognize that descriptions of populations of ELLs with disabilities vary across states and programs, depending on who is identifying the size of the group and for what purpose. No one source of information captures all of the relevant information on students. Each state is unique in the size and make-up of the population of ELLs with disabilities, the prevalence of particular home languages, and other factors relevant to providing appropriate supports and services for students and families. It may be necessary to piece together a knowledge base from multiple sources of information, but this must be done cautiously.

- Plan for student and family supports and services that meet the needs of the particular population in your area. Having targeted services and supports that meet the needs of a particular language group, for example, will require staff who are knowledgeable about the characteristics and needs of students and families from that group. Developing this type of knowledge in staff will require specialized staff recruitment and training efforts within a school or organization serving individuals with disabilities. Outreach materials will be needed in both the languages and preferred media of the local population. For example, some groups may be more likely to access information via DVDs or local television while others prefer print information. Organizations should also be prepared for periodic shifts in the language and cultural groups requiring services, due to changes that occur at the local, national and international level.

- Know that there will be ongoing issues and challenges in appropriately identifying and serving ELLs with disabilities in schools. The needs of ELL families will fluctuate over time, particularly with newly arriving groups. Research in the field of ELL special education is also evolving rapidly. Educators and policymakers must be flexible and willing to rethink decisions based upon changing circumstances and emerging information.

Notes

[1] The term *ELL* is just one of many terms used by educators to refer to these students. Others include: English learners (ELs), used by the federal Office of English Language Acquisition and many ESL or bilingual programs funded by that office; and Limited English Proficient (LEP), used by the Office of Special Education Programs. There are also terms for related groups such as Language Minority (LM) or Persons with a Home Language Other than English (PHLOTE) students – for those who have a home language that is not English but who may not have limited English proficiency – and terms like Formerly English Proficient (FEP) to refer to students who have exited ESL services but are still being monitored for their academic success. Not all terms are equivalent.

[2] See https://www.ideadata.org/PartBData.asp, Part B Data and Notes, Child Count Data.

[3] To calculate the percentage of ELLs we divided the total number of ELLs that states reported in *2009-2010 Consolidated State Performance Reports* (available at http://www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/consolidated/sy09-10part1/index.html) by their projected total enrollment using projected growth rates for Fall 2009 published in the *Digest of Education Statistics* (Table 34 available at http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d09/tables/dt09_034.asp).

[4] Based on data compiled from *2009-2010 Consolidated State Performance Reports* (available at http://www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/consolidated/sy09-10part1/index.html).

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[Castellón and Warren, continued from page 11]

1. What accommodations are used by the student during instruction and assessments?

2. What are the results of classroom assignments and assessments when accommodations are used versus when accommodations are not used? If a student did not meet the expected level of performance, is it due to not having access to the necessary instruction, not receiving the accommodations, or using accommodations was ineffective?

3. What is the student's perception of how well the accommodation worked?

4. What combinations of accommodations seem to be effective?

5. What are the difficulties encountered in the use of accommodations?

6. What are the perceptions of teachers and others about how the accommodation appears to be working?

In addition to identifying the "right" questions to ask at the "right" time, it is important to have the "right" people involved in the evaluation process. For district and school level discussions, individuals charged with policy decisions regarding curriculum and instruction, assessment, and student performance should be involved. When considering effectiveness on the student level, members of the student's ELL/IEP team(s) should be involved. The manual includes adaptable forms/tools that can be used to gather information from the student, teacher(s) and team members, and school/district administrators.

Conclusion

Earlier in this article, we discussed the impact of Common Core State Standards on all learners – and in particular, English language learners with disabilities. Use of accommodations is one critical way of offering these students increased access to sophisticated content and "…a high level of discourse in classrooms across all subject areas." To facilitate this, educators and administrators need to consider the impact of their policies, resources, and practices. Resources described in this article and developed by the National Center on Educational Outcomes and the CCSSO State Collaboratives on English Language Learners and Assessing Special Education Students offer districts and schools valuable tools to facilitate their journey to provide ELLs with disabilities access to instruction that will help to bridge opportunity-to-learn gaps and navigate the assessment experience.

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[Tyler and García, continued from page 21]

Conclusion

In summary, we have offered an integrative framework for addressing students' educational needs in ways that are responsive to their disability in the context of their socio-cultural and linguistic identities. To provide this kind of integrated instruction, teachers must receive the support of their school administrators, who can ensure that the necessary tools, time, and access to resources are available to support collaboration and sharing of diverse areas of expertise across programs and teachers. Accountability for the success of all students requires no less, if we are to ensure that no child is left behind.

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[Kronberg, continued from page 13]

who is not yet at independent mastery of a task or skill. Scaffolded supports can include such things as modeling, written organizers or templates, and verbal coaching. Collaborative peer instruction includes a variety of means through which students formally and informally interact around instructional tasks. A teacher who has a thorough knowledge of his or her students might differentiate a writing lesson by providing a framed paragraph (scaffolding) for students needing guided writing support while encouraging other students to examine in-depth writing samples to determine writer style and voice. All students may end the lesson by working in small groups to share their insights as writers.

Delivering information to ELLs with disabilities must enhance student comprehension. The literature on teaching both ELLs and students with disabilities consistently encourages teachers to present information slowly and succinctly, chunk information into manageable pieces, allow for wait time, build-in checks for student understanding, and provide opportunities for students to relate the content to prior knowledge and experiences. The use of *sheltered instruction,* a methodology developed for ELLs that addresses both language and content instruction, specifically addresses the need for teachers to repeat and restate instruction; slow the rate of delivery; provide visual references, physical gestures and realia to increase student understanding of spoken and written words; simplify the use of complex language; and use high-frequency words (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2004). Fortunately, there is ample evidence to suggest that these same strategies benefit not only students with disabilities and ELLs, but can support all students in successfully accessing grade level curriculum and instruction.

Conclusion

The literature on the use of differentiated instruction with English language learners who have disabilities is limited. However, there is clear consensus that the use of sound educational practices will benefit all students. Collaboration among practitioners who have different skills and knowledge, defensible implementation of educational practices, and ongoing formative and summative assessment of student growth and instructional effectiveness are imperative as we continue to explore the intersection between differentiated instruction and the achievement of ELLs with disabilities.

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[Brown, continued from page 15]

examples of questions to pose regarding your system:

- Have you ever conducted home visits? If not, what are the barriers and how can they be overcome?

- Does your school have a community liaison/broker who is bilingual and bicultural to allow parents to communicate with administration and teaching staff?

- Do parents feel welcome at the school when they enter the door?

- How effective is the front desk staff at welcoming diverse families? Does the office staff need professional development opportunities?

- Does your school have a parent group for families whose primary language is not English? Does this group have a voice in school decisions?

- Does the curriculum include assignments that allow students to share their own history and culture?

- Does the administration provide cultural immersion events and reading lists/book groups for all staff?

Final Thoughts

At first glance, gathering the above information may seem overwhelming to a busy teacher. Yet, when ELL students struggle, it is imperative that their teachers understand their backgrounds in order to plan instruction that is responsive to their unique needs. Once we deliver appropriate instruction we can collect data on a student's response to rigorous instruction. If the student shows good growth, we can monitor to ensure the growth continues. On the other hand, if after providing effective instruction in targeted areas that student shows minimal or no growth, a team that includes an ELL specialist can discuss the need for further evaluation. This will also ensure that all children truly receive a free and appropriate education in the least restrictive environment and will achieve to their potential. In the end, we all benefit when education is truly an equalizer.

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