

CABE 2019

Considerations for English Learners with Specific Learning Disabilities


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Considerations for English Learners with Specific Learning Disabilities

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Agenda

- A problem of practice: differentiating between language acquisition and learning disabilities-- important questions
- What is a specific learning disability?
- What instruction should look like within MTSS/RtI system for culturally and linguistically diverse students
- An ecological approach to identification
 - Assessments
 - Team members
 - Comparisons
 - Family

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Questions

- What do you think is the most challenging aspect of distinguishing between language acquisition and learning disability?
- How do your English learners do in comparison to other students?

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Questions We Must Consider to Distinguish Between Language and Disability

- Compared to English, for how long has the student been speaking and exposed to the home language?
- Are the difficulties present in home language and English?
- Are concerns present in multiple settings—home and child care?
- Have appropriately explicit instruction and intervention been provided?
- Have this instruction produced improvement?

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What is SLD?

A disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia.

– (ii) Specific learning disability does not include learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, of mental retardation, of emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage.

And a students cannot be eligible if the basis is limited English proficiency.

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A Civil Rights Issue

The Exclusionary Clause of IDEA 2004

“A child shall not be determined to be a child with a disability if the determinant factor for such determination is (A) lack of appropriate instruction in reading, including in the essential components of reading instruction...; (B) lack of instruction in math; or (C) limited English proficiency” (IDEA 2004, Section 614.b.5)

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Sequential Bilinguals and Simultaneous Bilinguals

ELLs with LD exhibit difficulties in their first language as well as in English.

- When students are sequential bilinguals, it is not hard to determine whether difficulties are evident in both languages.
- When students are simultaneous bilinguals, it is much more challenging to determine if difficulties are the result of language acquisition or LD.
- We need a new way to think about the process of simultaneous language acquisition (Escamilla).

Janette Klingner and Amy M. Eppolito, *English Language Learners: Differentiating Between Language Acquisition and Learning Disabilities*

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(Some) Similarities b/w LD and Language Acquisition

Behaviors Associated w/ LD	Behaviors when Acquiring an L2
Difficulty following directions	Difficulty following directions
Difficulty with phonological awareness	Difficulty distinguishing b/w sounds not in L1
Slow to learn sound-symbol correspondence	Confusion w/ sound-symbol correspondence when different than in L1 Difficulty pronouncing sounds not in L1
Difficulty remembering sight words	Difficulty remembering sight words when word meanings not understood
Difficulty retelling a story in sequence	May understand more than can convey in L2
Confused by figurative language	Confused by figurative language
Slow to process challenging language	Slow to process challenging language
May have poor auditory memory	May have poor auditory memory
May have difficulty concentrating	May have difficulty concentrating
May seem easily frustrated	May seem easily frustrated

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Opportunity to Learn

Opportunity to learn must be established.

Some ELLs are identified as having LD not because they have disabilities, but rather because they have not received an adequate opportunity to learn.

Some ELLs are taught in “disabling contexts,” with too few opportunities to develop their language/literacy skills.

Janette Klingner and Amy M. Eppolito, *English Language Learners: Differentiating Between Language Acquisition and Learning Disabilities*

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Instructional Opportunity and Bias

- Eliminate a deficit view of bilingualism—hear these voices:
 - “She really has a language problem right?”*
 - “She speaks too much Spanish all day.”*
 - “Her mom doesn’t speak any English.”*
 - “She goes back and forth to Mexico so of course she never learns.”*

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What IS Opportunity to Learn

- Has tier 1 been high quality? Are you implementing a strong curriculum?
- Are tiered interventions of increasing intensity afforded to English learners? Do you have ways to assess intervention response?
- Is literacy instruction culturally and linguistically responsive?
- Are teachers and students producing together?
- Is language and literacy developed across the curriculum? Are lessons meaningful?
- Are teachers using conversation in their instruction?

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Important Literacy Domains and Strategies

- **Oral language:** Provide opportunities for students to interact around content.
- **Word work:** Consider using familiar sounds and words when working on phonics; use words students produce themselves that can serve as the basis of phoneme segmenting, blending, syllabication, etc.
- **Fluency:** Use repeat reading, modeled and shared reading, partner reading, voice technologies.
- **Comprehension:** Build background, highlight key vocabulary, address syntax and teach specific strategies.

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Literacy Domains and Strategies continued

- **Cross-language connections:** Note similarities and differences between home language to English, understand the literacy skills students bring from L. 1; build on cognates
- **Writing:** Create functional writing opportunities, modeling and interactive writing
- **Connections to home and community:** Understand the practices and knowledge of the students and their families and bring that into the classroom.

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How is Learning to Read in English different for ELs than Learning to Read English for Native English Speakers

- **Phonological awareness:** 1st language may not include some of the English phonemes
- **Alphabetical principle:** Letters may look the same but represent different sounds; English has many spellings for the same sound
- **Fluency:** Opportunity to read aloud may be limited, accent may impede fluency
- **Vocabulary:** Prepositions, pronouns, multiple meaning words, idioms, false cognates present challenges
- **Comprehension:** Syntax, strategies, variations in text structure are potential challenges

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Language Acquisition or Learning Disability

- It is, to a large extent, a process of elimination.
- Many factors and explanations must be considered.
- No one definitive test exists
- However, screeners do exist in more than one language now (DIBELS/IDEL; FastBridge; AimsWEB Spanish reading; i_ready)

And there is a new assessment that may be very useful...

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A new Assessment that is very interesting

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=diyzkCc354w>

And a critical skill to assessment in both languages...

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What ESSA says about Assessment for ELs

“A state must provide an alternate ELP assessment for each English learner covered under §200.6(a)(1)(ii)—that is, those with the most significant cognitive disabilities—who cannot participate in the general ELP assessment even with appropriate accommodations” (34 CFR § 200.6(h)(5))

And...If an “English learner has a disability that precludes assessment of the student in one or more domains of the English language proficiency (ELP) assessment such that there are no appropriate accommodations for the affected domain(s), a State must assess the student’s English proficiency based on the remaining domains in which it is possible to assess the student.” (34 CFR 200.6(h)(4))

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Phonological Awareness and Phonemic Awareness

- Phonological awareness in Spanish or English predicts reading achievement.
- In fact, Spanish phonological awareness may be a better predictor of English word reading than English or Spanish oral proficiency (Durgunoglu, Nagy, & Hancin0Bhatt, 1993).
- A student can be given a phonological test in the home language by a speaker who is trained.

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An Ecological Approach

- A systematic process for examining the specific background
- Information gathered through a variety of informal and formal assessments variables of Els (1st and 2nd language)
- Examination of the appropriateness of classroom instruction and interventions
- Non discriminatory interpretation of assessment data
- Attention to intended or unintended bias

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Ecological Framework

Factors

- Characteristics of the learner
- Appropriately challenging curriculum
- Culturally responsive instruction
- Home language
- Family educational history

Data in BOTH Languages

- Observation, CBMs, language samples, other assessments
- Work samples
- Comparison to other students with similar characteristics and language
- Home language survey, family/care giver interview
- Home visit

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An Ecological Approach: The Team

Recommended Team Composition:

- At least one expert on the student's English language acquisition
- At least one expert on the student's special education goals and services
- At least one expert on the student's general education content achievement
- At least one family member (and any requisite interpreters/cultural liaisons to ensure family members' full participation in the team)
- Any related service providers who work with the student

Janette Klingner and Amy M. Eppolito, *English Language Learners: Differentiating Between Language Acquisition and Learning Disabilities*

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Recommended Evidence to Collect

- State standardized (alternate) achievement assessment processes
- Standardized or curriculum-based assessments used to monitor progress towards IEP goals relevant to developing English language proficiency
- Classroom observations of students' language use
- Student work samples or portfolios
- Teacher input on students' English language development progress
- Family input on students' language development and use at home
- Data related to how the student was initially identified as an EL
- Review of EL services across multiple years to ensure receipt of adequate English language development support for an extended period of time

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More Evidence (if you can get it)

- Assessments that evaluate proficiency in home/primary language
- Language samples demonstrating listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills (or in the domains in which the student can demonstrate skills)
- Language use inventories
- Comparable peer group data (**THIS ONE IS VITAL: How are similar students, similar language backgrounds going?**)

Appreciation to Soyoung Park, Ph.D.
The University of Texas at Austin

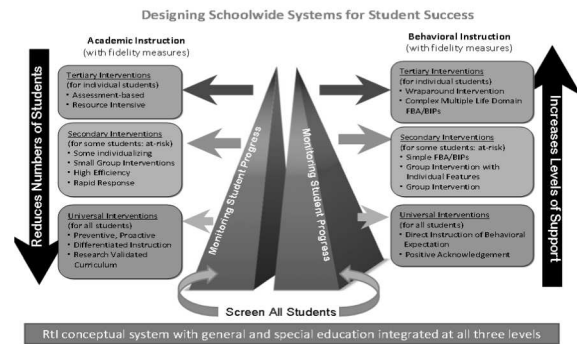
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Potential Solution



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Questions?



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RTI: Considerations for English Language Learners (ELLs)

Data-Based Decision Making

What information do I need in order to make appropriate decisions regarding ELLs?

When making decisions regarding appropriate placements for ELLs or the effectiveness of a particular intervention or curriculum for ELLs, school personnel must consider additional data points beyond screening and progress monitoring data. Factors such as first and second language acquisition; methods and programs for instruction in the native language; and the interaction among linguistic, cognitive, and academic development are all areas to be considered so that the evaluation of ELLs, whether through screening or progress monitoring, can be conducted equitably and appropriately. School personnel should review students' records and talk to students and their parents to obtain information on the following data points:

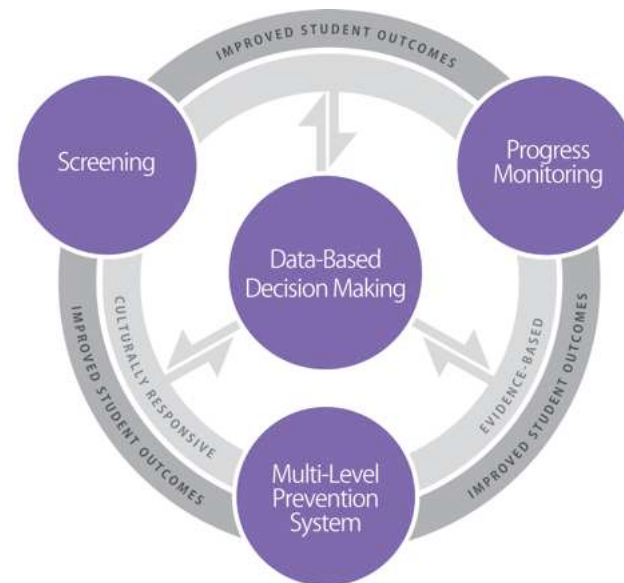
- Native language (L1) skills
- Cultural values and beliefs
- Life experiences and assets
- Prior formal education (in L1 and L2)
- Second language (L2) skills

Screening

How do you identify ELLs who are potentially at risk?

A limited number of tools have been researched specifically for use with ELLs. Validity may be a concern because assessment results could be influenced by students' language, cultural, and experiential backgrounds.

- Use tools with demonstrated reliability and validity to identify and monitor students' needs for instructional support in reading in both L1 and L2.
- Assess students' language skills in L1 and L2 to provide an appropriate context regarding evaluation of current levels of performance.



Defining RTI

- Response to intervention integrates assessment and intervention within a multi-level prevention system to maximize student achievement and to reduce behavioral problems.
- With RTI, schools use data to identify students at risk for poor learning outcomes, monitor student progress, provide evidence-based interventions and adjust the intensity and nature of those interventions depending on a student's responsiveness.
- RTI may be used as part of the determination process for identifying students with specific learning disabilities or other disabilities.

Progress Monitoring

How do you determine adequate progress for ELLs?

It may take longer for instruction to have the desired impact with ELLs, but this does not necessarily mean the student has a specific learning disability.

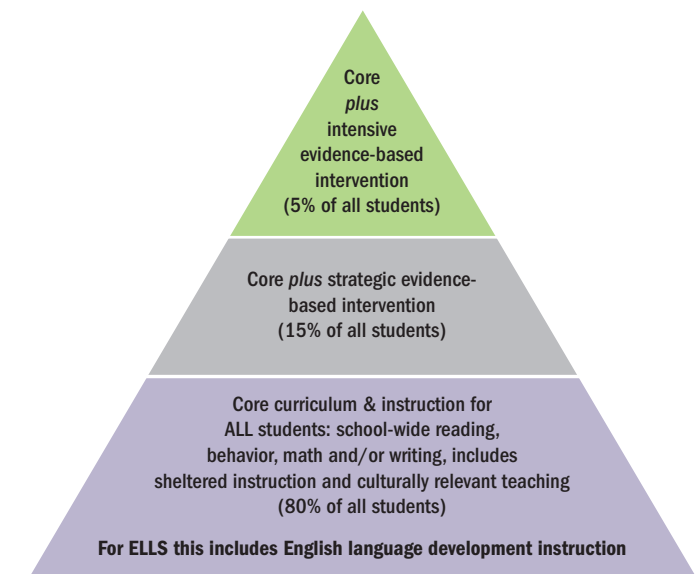
- Set the same goals—grade-level standards—for ELLs as for everyone else, and use the same measures to determine achievement.
- It may be helpful also to set short- and long-term intermediate goals as ELLs work toward meeting the grade-level standards. Depending on what these are, it may be appropriate to use a test or a portfolio to determine when these goals have been met.
- Monitor student progress in all languages of instruction.

Multi-Level Prevention System

What evidence-based interventions should be used with ELLs?

Few intervention programs have included ELLs in their norming samples. Therefore, we must use what we know about effective instruction in literacy and instruction for ELLs for instruction at all levels of the multi-level prevention system.

- Plan instruction based on what you know about the student's performance and literacy experiences in L1 and L2, and teach for transfer if needed.
- Consider students' cultural and linguistic needs, and adjust instruction accordingly.



Reference

Brown, J. E., & Sanford, A. (2011). *RTI for English language learners: Appropriately using screening and progress monitoring tools to improve instructional outcomes*. Washington, DC: National Center on Response to Intervention. Retrieved August 11, 2011, <http://www.rti4success.org/resourcetype/rti-english-language-learners-appropriately-using-screening-and-progress-monitoring-too>

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Additional Contacts

Center on Instruction: www.centeroninstruction.org
IDEA Partnership: www.ideapartnership.org
RTI Action Network: www.rtinetwork.org

About the National Center on Response to Intervention

Through funding from the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs, American Institutes for Research and researchers from Vanderbilt University and the University of Kansas have established the National Center on Response to Intervention. The Center provides technical assistance to states and districts and builds the capacity of states to assist districts in implementing proven response to intervention frameworks.



National Center on Response to Intervention
<http://www.rti4success.org>



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Resources for English Learners and Disabilities

<https://wida.wisc.edu/sites/default/files/resource/FocusOn-Identifying-ELLs-with-Specific-Learning-Disabilities.pdf>

<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela/english-learner-toolkit/chap6.pdf>

<http://cedar.education.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/EBP-for-english-learners.pdf>

<https://rti4success.org/resource/rti-english-language-learners-appropriately-using-screening-and-progress-monitoring-tools>