

IDENTIFICATION AND ASSESSMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

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IDENTIFICATION AND ASSESSMENT OF ENGLISH LEARNERS

3.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This chapter was developed to provide SELPA and District staff members with a concise, practical, and sequential approach to the identification, assessment, and programs for students with disabilities, who are English Learners (EL). When considering possible special education and related services, extreme care must be taken to avoid the over identification of students as having a disability, as well as the exclusion of English learners who may have a disability. With this in mind, two specific challenges are presented to educators:

1. To utilize appropriate assessment tools and procedures and to provide services in the least restrictive environment
2. To incorporate language and culture into a special education curriculum

All English learners will be properly identified. Identification includes the completion of the state-mandated Home Language Survey (HLS). The California English Language Development Test (CELDT) is administered to determine English proficiency. This assessment is to be done within 30 school days of initial enrollment and the primary language will be assessed within 90 calendar days of initial enrollment.

The CELDT has three purposes: (1) to identify students who are limited English proficient; (2) to determine the level of English language proficiency of students who are limited English proficient; and (3) to assess the progress of limited English proficient students in acquiring the skills of listening, reading, speaking, and writing in English. All ELs must be administered the CELDT annually, including EL students with disabilities. There are no parent waivers for taking CELDT.

The ALPI is used for students with severe disabilities to provide a primary language assessment in receptive and expressive language.

Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing student may be informally assessed in American Sign Language (ASL).

The student's IEP must include scores or levels in assessments of English language proficiency.

3.2 IDENTIFICATION AND REFERRAL OF ENGLISH LEARNERS SUSPECTED OF HAVING A DISABILITY

Procedures for Identification and referral for special education and related services for all students are described in Chapter 1.

3.3 SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR EL STUDENTS PRIOR TO REFERRAL

Unless the student has a severe disability, including but not limited to severe vision and hearing impairments, severe physical impairment, severe intellectual disability, autism, or severe health impairment, the student should be allowed sufficient time to acquire English proficiency and receive appropriate academic instruction in English Language Arts and math prior to being referred for a special education assessment.

It is critical to differentiate between a student who is not achieving in the classroom because English is not his/her primary language and a student who is not achieving due to a disability.

Following are some relevant sections of state and federal law that are particularly important in determining eligibility for special education instruction and services:

Education Code (EC) 56303: "A pupil shall be referred for special education instruction and services only after the resources of the regular education program have been considered, and when appropriate, utilized"

California Code of Regulations (CCR), Title 5 3023 (b) "The normal process of second language acquisition, as well as manifestations of dialect and sociolinguistic variance shall not be diagnosed as a handicapping condition"

Federal Code of Regulations (CFR) a 300.306: "A child may not be determined to be eligible....if (i) the determinant factor for that eligible determination is ...1) lack of instruction in reading or math, or (2) limited English proficiency ... and (ii) the child does not otherwise meet the eligibility criteria under 300.7"

3.4 STUDENT STUDY TEAM (SST)

The Student Study Team is designed to offer immediate assistance and suggestions for teachers, parents and support staff for an individual student who is not making progress or exhibiting various types of problems in the classroom and/or school. Through effective utilization of this team, many identification errors can be avoided. The Student Study Team serves as a group of professionals and parents, who will discuss pupil strengths and problems and possible interventions.

3.4.A. SST Team Members

Members of the team may include the following:

- At least one regular education teacher
- Bilingual personnel
- Principal or administrator
- Parent
- Special Education teacher
- School Psychologist

- School Nurse
- Counselor or specialists
- Speech/Language Pathologists
- Interpreters (as needed)
- Pupil (as appropriate)
- Others

3.4.B Student Study Team Responsibilities

Referrals for special education assessment are processed through the Student Study Team. The SST will review the student's strengths, concerns, prior interventions and modifications that have been considered, and/or utilized. The results of the interventions will be documented. A plan will be developed, listing additional interventions, and the individuals responsible for implementing them with a follow-up date to review the pupil's progress.

When an English Learner is referred to the school site's SST, the first step is to gather information regarding the specific difficulty the student is experiencing. The second step is to look at why the student is having this difficulty. When gathering information about the specific difficulty an English learner is experiencing, there may be a tendency to describe general performance behaviors, such as, "The student is not making progress," "The student is below grade level," "The student is having problems reading," etc. Statements such as these do not describe the specific difficulty that has been observed, which then makes it difficult to design appropriate interventions. In addition, not knowing the specific difficulty an English learner is experiencing makes it a challenge to determine if the perceived weakness is due to extrinsic factors (e.g. inappropriate instruction, normal process of second language acquisition, lack of formal education, etc.) or a possible intrinsic factor (such as a learning disability, language disorder, etc.)

When describing the specific difficulty the English learner is experiencing, the difficulty needs to be measurable and observable. In addition, data needs to be collected about the identified difficulty across different contexts (such as different subject areas), in different environments (such as home and school), and in both the primary language and English.

After identifying what specific difficulty the student is experiencing, the next step is to find out why the student is having this difficulty. If an English learner is experiencing difficulties only in English, but not in the primary language, then the problem could be due to extrinsic factors rather than an intrinsic disability.

3.5 ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES FOR ENGLISH LEARNERS

After interventions have been tried and programmatic changes have occurred, some students, who have been referred to the SST will need a special education assessment. Special assessment requirements for students whose primary language is other than English are included in this section.

3.5.A Psycho-Educational Assessments

Assessment requirements important to English learners include the following:

1. Assessments with pupils of limited English proficiency shall be administered in the child's native language or mode of communication, unless clearly not feasible to do so (EC 56320, EC 56001).
2. Assessments shall be administered by qualified personnel who are competent in both the oral or sign language skills and written skills of the individual's primary language or mode of communication and have a knowledge and understanding of the cultural and ethnic background of the pupil. If it clearly is not feasible to do so, an interpreter must be used, and the assessment report shall document this condition and note that the validity may have been affected. (CCR, Title 5: 3023)
3. Materials are selected and administered so as not to be racially, culturally or sexually discriminatory (EC 56320, EC 56001).
4. A variety of assessment tools and strategies will be used to gather relevant functional and developmental information, including information provided by the parent (EC 56320).
5. No single procedure is used as the sole criterion for determining an appropriate educational program for an individual child (EC 56320, EC 56001).

The assessment team may include, but is not limited to:

1. School psychologist
2. Language and speech specialist
3. Regular education teacher(s)
4. Special education teacher
5. School nurse
6. Bilingual specialist
7. Principal/vice principal/counselor
8. Parent

3.5.B Other Procedures for Gathering Information

It is necessary to review existing procedures and their applicability for appropriate identification and instructional planning. Appropriate standardized tests are often not available in all languages. A broader variety of methods are necessary to obtain the information needed to determine if the referred student is, in fact, an individual with a disability.

Following is a brief overview of four assessment procedures.

1. Norm-referenced Tests: The norm-referenced test measures an individual's performance in relation to others on the same instrument. Key words often associated with this type of testing include: reliability, validity, and standardization. When using this type of test, it is critically important that the pupil being tested comes from a background (e.g., language, socioeconomic status) similar to that of the pupils on which the norms were derived is questionable. This often is the case with English learners.
2. Criterion-Referenced Tests: The criterion-referenced test breaks down an area and measures what a student can do on each task in that area. No comparison of one student's performance with the performance of the group can be made. This type of testing gives yes/no answers to instructional questions (e.g. Can the student tell time by the ½ hour?) With this information, curricular suggestions can be made leading to specific goals and objectives.
3. Systematic Observation: This alternative assessment encourages the direct study of the referred student in a wide variety of settings. In systematic observation, one selects a specific behavior to observe, selects an appropriate measuring technique, depicts what is seen in the observation, and makes interpretations. Since the student is in his/her natural environment, it is possible to obtain a better picture of what the student is actually doing while using his/her own peer group as a backdrop. However, the presence of an observer may alter the environment and thus affect the validity of the behavior observed.
4. Structured Interview: This alternative assessment technique provides for a broad range of information collection. It is designed to incorporate the expectations and concerns of all those who are associated with the referral. Additional, interview based assessments allows for the funneling of information and expectations into the formal assessment system.

3.5.C Additional Assessment Guidelines

Following are additional guidelines to consider when assessing a student with limited English proficiency:

- Assess language dominance at time of referral or evaluation by regular education personnel.
- Whenever possible use two language dominance tests to establish functioning information.
- Assess in student's dominant language whenever possible.
- Assess using non-language measures (e.g., performance).
- Use a trained interpreter whenever needed.
- Assess achievement in both primary language and English.
- Do not accept scores on translations of tests as valid; use other, non-biased or non test based measures to support the scores. (Document!)
- Assess adaptive behavior, mindful of different cultural norms.
- When considering the presence of a language disability, consider whether primary language is deficient when compared to peers and school population. Is language generally depressed (common in low socioeconomic populations) or are there significant peaks and valleys? Is there evidence of a true language disability?

3.6 PROGRAM OPTIONS

All students in need of special education and related services, including students identified as English learners, are to be served under the requirements of current state and federal law.

Districts need to offer appropriate resources to ensure that each English learner with a disability receives appropriate *educational and linguistic opportunities in the least restrictive environment*. A full continuum of program options will be available to each student with a disability. To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities are educated with their typically developing peers.

A full continuum of program options include, but are not limited to the following:

1. Regular education program with specially designed modification.
2. Regular education program majority of the day with some special education specialist or resource specialist support
3. Regular classroom with specialized academic instruction for the majority of the day from SDC/and or special education specialist and/or related services support.
4. Special classes and centers.

5. Nonpublic schools
6. State special schools
7. Residential placement
8. Home/Hospital

3.7.A Specific Program Options for English Learners

There are three different types of programs for English Learners. All programs include daily English Language Development (ELD) instruction along with self-image and cross-cultural instruction that is integrated throughout the subject area. Each program focuses on the development of speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills to develop second language literacy in English. Below is a list of programs offered along with a brief summary of components for each program.

Structured English Immersion

1. Reading taught in English
2. Core curriculum taught in English
3. Some Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE) may be used to help with understanding
4. Daily English Language Development (ELD) instruction
5. Self-image and cross-cultural instruction is integrated throughout subject areas
6. May include some primary language support to help with understanding

English Mainstream

1. Reading taught in English
2. Core curriculum taught in English
3. Some Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE) may be used to help understanding
4. Daily English Language Development (ELD) instruction
5. Self-image and cross-cultural instruction is integrated throughout subject areas

Alternative Program

1. Develops literacy in primary language first
2. Core curriculum taught in primary language while student is acquiring English
3. Daily English Language Development (ELD) instruction
4. Gradual transition from primary language to English in reading and core subject matter
5. Self-image and cross-cultural instruction is integrated throughout subject areas

Students may receive primary language support and/or language development services in any of the above program options, when determined appropriate by the IEP team.

3.8 IEP DEVELOPMENT FOR ENGLISH LEARNERS WITH DISABILITIES

IEP Teams should ensure that:

- IEPs include linguistically appropriate goals and objectives, including when necessary use of the student’s primary language;
- Necessary documentation and translation services are provided to parents as needed; and
- Teachers providing the students the district’s core curriculum are appropriately certified.

Other requirements include:

- Qualified teachers
- Sufficient and appropriate basic and supplemental resources to ensure access to the district’s core curriculum.
- When possible translation of required parent notifications/documents, including IEP parent rights to inform and involve parents of EL students, and translation services as required by state and federal laws.
- Opportunities for parents to become members of the district and/or school advisory committees

3.8.A Linguistically Appropriate Goals, Objectives and Programs

CCR, Title 5, Section 3001(s): *“Linguistically appropriate goals, objectives, and programs means those activities which lead to the development of English language proficiency; and those instructional systems either at the elementary or secondary level which meet the language development needs of the limited English language learner. For individuals whose primary language is other than English, and whose potential for learning a second language, as determined by the individualized education program team, is severely limited, nothing in this section shall preclude the individualized education program team from determining that instruction may be provided through an alternative program pursuant to a waiver under Education Code section 311(c), including a program provided in the individual’s primary language, provided that the IEP team periodically, but not less than annually, reconsiders the individual’s ability to receive instruction in the English language.”*

In California, it is recommended that linguistically appropriate goals be aligned to the California English Language Development Standards. The California English Language Development Standards are available for downloading at www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/index.asp)

- Kindergarten – grade 2
- Grades 3 – 12, literate in their primary language
- Grades 3 – 12, not literate in their primary language

The CDE EL Standards Book further clarifies that “students who enter California schools in those grade levels not literate in their primary language need to be taught the ELD literacy standards for earlier grade levels, including those standards related to phonemic awareness, concepts of print and decoding skills.”

3.8.B IEP Considerations for English Learners

Linguistically appropriate goals and objectives have the following characteristics:

- They are appropriate for the cognitive level of the student.
- They are appropriate for the linguistic level of the student.
- They match the developmental level of the student’s primary (L1) or secondary (L2) language.
- They match the student’s general education transition criteria and re-designation policy.

3.8.C Additional Linguistic and Cultural Considerations

Culturally appropriate goals and objectives have the following characteristics:

- They access the student’s prior knowledge and experiences.
- They incorporate culturally relevant materials and experiences.
- They affirm the student’s cultural heritage.

3.7.D IEP Accommodations and Modifications

The IEP should stipulate appropriate accommodations and/or modifications that may be needed to assist the student who is an English learner be successful in an educational setting.

Examples of accommodations that may be appropriate to consider for students learning English may be but are not limited to the following:

- Primary language support to assist with academics
- Translation devices
- Extra time on tests and assignments
- Use of reference materials with visuals to aide comprehension
- Bilingual dictionary if applicable to second language

Examples of modifications that may be appropriate to consider for students learning English may be but are not limited to the following:

- Tests provided or adapted to be more “comprehensible”
- Tests and assignments modified in length and content
- Alternative testing formats such as use of visuals, drawings, etc.

3.7.E. IEP Checklist for English Learners

- The IEP indicates if the student is classified as an English learner.
- The IEP includes information about the student's current level of English language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing (based on current CELDT or alternative assessment scores/levels).
- The IEP indicates if the student is going to take CELDT or requires alternate assessment(s) to CELDT and, if so, what the alternate assessment(s) utilized will be.
- The IEP indicates which testing accommodations or modifications the student may utilize for CELDT.
- The IEP indicates how English language development (ELD) needs will be met and who will provide those services.
- The IEP indicates if primary language support is needed.
- The IEP indicates what language will be the language of instruction.
- The IEP includes goals and objectives that are linguistically appropriate.

Note: Linguistically appropriate goals should align to the student's assessed level on the CELDT (or designated alternate assessment) and the CDE English Language Development (ELD) Standards.

For additional information also see *Meeting the Needs of English Learners with Disabilities: Resource Book*.

APPENDIX

Appendix A: Sample Linguistically & Culturally Appropriate Goals & Objectives

Appendix B: Interpreters

SAMPLE LINGUISTICALLY AND CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE IEP GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

GOAL: To increase comprehension of the English language.

OBJECTIVE: By _____ (date) when shown visual stimuli (e.g., pictures, regalia) _____ (student) will respond *nonverbally* (e.g., point, nod, shake your head, clap hands, act out) to preproduction stimuli with _____ (%) accuracy as measured by teacher observation or records.

Examples of preproduction stimuli:

- a) “Nod your head when I point to the pencil.”
- b) “Clap your hands when I touch a farm animal.”

GOAL: To be able to give one word responses to question asked with comprehensible input.

OBJECTIVE: By _____ (date) when shown visual stimuli (e.g., pictures, regalia) _____ (student) will respond with a *one word response* to questions with comprehensible input with _____ (%) accuracy as measured by (teacher observation or records).

Examples of questions with comprehensible input:

- a) “Are you hot (teacher pantomimes wiping perspiration from forehead) or cold?” (teacher pantomimes shivering and bundling up)
- b) “Is this a dog?” (teacher points to a cat in a picture)
- c) “How many flowers (teacher points) are in the vase?”

GOAL: To respond to literal questions with short phrases, which may or may not, be grammatically correct.

BASIC OBJECTIVE: By _____ (date) when given comprehensible input _____ (student) will respond to (who, what, where, when, how, and why) questions using short phrases with _____ (%) accuracy as measured by _____ (teacher observation and records, etc.)

Examples of advanced student ideas and questions:

- a) “Where is the dog?” (sample student response: “By the tree”)
- b) “Who is walking the dog?” (sample student response: “The man”)
- c) “Why is the cat frightened?” (sample student response: “Sees the dog”)

ADVANCED OBJECTIVE: By _____ (date) in a natural environment _____ (student) will be able to articulate and express on their own initiative basic ideas and requests with _____ (%) accuracy as measured by _____ (teacher observation and records, etc.)

Examples of advanced student ideas and requests:

- a) “I am cold”
- b) “I go to the bathroom”
- c) “I like it”

GOALS:

- 1) To be able to respond to questions in writing with quality comparable to level of written language skills in native language.
- 2) To be able to read English at a comparable level to reading proficiency in native language.
- 3) To be able to respond in either writing or orally to stimuli that prompts critical and creative thinking with a response that shows elaboration and complex sentence structures.

BASIC OBJECTIVE: By _____ (date) after reading a story at his/her readability level _____ (student) will respond to writing task with _____ (%) accuracy as measured by _____ (teacher observation and records, etc.)

Examples of basic student responses:

- a) answering comprehension questions after reading story
- b) writing a friendly letter
- c) writing a creative story

OBJECTIVE: By _____ (date) _____ (student) will be able to comprehend reading selection at his/her readability level as measured by grade level curriculum assessment.

Examples of basic student responses:

- a) answering comprehension questions after reading story
- b) writing a friendly letter
- c) writing a creative story

OBJECTIVE: By _____ (date) _____ (student) will be able to comprehend reading selection at his/her readability level as measured by grade level curriculum assessment.

OBJECTIVE: By _____ (date) _____ (student) will be able to articulate responses to questions that require critical and creative thinking in the following four main areas: a) synthesis, b) evaluation, c) analysis, and d) application as measured by the following criteria: a) descriptive vocabulary, b) ability to elaborate, and c) use of complex sentence structures within their response.

CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE IEP GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

GOAL:

To increase reading comprehension in _____ (English, Spanish, Tagalog, etc.)

OBJECTIVE:

By _____ (date), _____ (student) will identify two common themes/main ideas and two differences in stories after reading _____ (independently, with modifications, listening, etc.) four folk tales from different countries with _____ (%) accuracy as measured by _____ (teacher observation, work samples, task based criteria, etc.)

GOAL:

To increase writing fluency in _____ (English, Spanish, Tagalog, etc.)

OBJECTIVE:

By _____ (date), _____ (student) will respond by _____ (dictating, writing a sentence, writing a paragraph, etc.) and share their personal responses to an open-ended question that draws upon their life experiences, culture, and perceptions after listening/reading to a story from core/supplemental curriculum with _____ (%) accuracy as measured by _____ (teacher observation, work samples, task based criteria, etc.)

GOAL:

To increase understanding of multiplication concepts taught in (English, Spanish, Tagalog, etc.)

OBJECTIVE:

By _____ (date), _____ (student) will be able to use an array of _____ (graph paper, multilink cubes, other manipulatives, etc.) to demonstrate their comprehension of the multiplication process after comparing and contrasting Mexican and Egyptian methods of multiplication as measured by _____ (teacher observation, work samples, task-based criteria, etc.)

Other Sample Linguistically Appropriate Goals

Note: Remember that you must develop a minimum of two (2) benchmark objectives for each goal if the curriculum the student uses is considered an alternative-curriculum that focuses on “life-skills”.

Sample Goal 1

Domain:	Listening & Speaking
Strand:	Strategies & Applications
Sub Strand:	Comprehension
Level:	Beginning
Grade:	K-2

Goal: By _____ (date) , _____ (student) will respond to simple directions and questions in English by using physical actions and other means of nonverbal communication (e.g., matching objects, pointing to an answer, drawing pictures) with 80% accuracy on 3 consecutive trials as demonstrated by written classroom data.

Objective: By _____ (date) , _____ (student) will respond to simple directions and questions in English by using physical actions and other means of nonverbal communication (e.g., matching objects, pointing to an answer, drawing pictures) with 40% accuracy on 2 consecutive trials as demonstrated by written classroom data.

Objective: By _____ (date) , _____ (student) will respond to simple directions and questions in English by using physical actions and other means of nonverbal communication (e.g., matching objects, pointing to an answer, drawing pictures) with 60% accuracy on 3 consecutive trials as demonstrated by written classroom data.

Note: The above goal & objectives are written at the “beginning” level of English language development and would be appropriate for a student whose CELDT score is at the beginning level in listening. This goal was adapted from the California ELD Standards published in 1999.

Sample Goal 2

Domain: Reading
Strand: Word Analysis
Sub Strand: Concepts about Print, Phonemic Awareness, and Vocabulary and Concept development
Level: Early Intermediate
Grade: 3-5

Goal: By _____ (date) , _____ (student) while reading aloud a short passage of 8-10 lines aloud at grade level, will recognize and produce English phonemes that do not correspond to phonemes he or she already hears and produces with 80% accuracy on 3 consecutive trials as demonstrated by data tracking records.

Objective: By _____ (date) , _____ (student), while reading aloud a short passage of 1-2 lines at grade level, will recognize and produce English phonemes that do not correspond to phonemes he or she already hears and produces with 40% accuracy on 2 consecutive trials as demonstrated by data tracking records.

Objective: By _____ (date) , _____ (student), while reading aloud a short passage of 3-4 lines at grade level, will recognize and produce English phonemes that do not correspond to phonemes he or she already hears and produces with 60% accuracy on 3 consecutive trials as demonstrated by data tracking records.

Note: The above goal & objectives are written at the “early intermediate” level of English language development and would be appropriate for a student whose CELDT score is at the beginning to early intermediate level in reading word analysis. This goal was adapted from the California ELD Standards published in 1999.

Sample Goal 3

Domain: Writing
Strand: Strategies & Applications
Sub Strand: Organization & Focus
Level: Intermediate
Grade: 6-8

Goal: By _____ (date) , _____ (student) will develop a clear purpose in a short essay (two to three paragraphs) by appropriately using the rhetorical devices of quotations and facts with 90% accuracy on 3 consecutive trials as demonstrated by a written response to a prompt.

Objective: By _____ (date) , _____ (student) will develop a clear purpose in a short essay (two to three paragraphs) by appropriately using the rhetorical devices of quotations and facts with 50% accuracy on 2 consecutive trials as demonstrated by a written response to a prompt.

Objective: By _____ (date) , _____ (student) will develop a clear purpose in a short essay (two to three paragraphs) by appropriately using the rhetorical devices of quotations and

facts with 80% accuracy on 3 consecutive trials as demonstrated by a written response to a prompt.

Note: The above goal & objectives are written at the “intermediate” level of English language development and would be appropriate for a student whose CELDT score is at the early intermediate level in writing. This goal was adapted from the California ELD Standards published in 1999.

Sample Goal 4

Domain: Reading
Strand: Fluency & Systemic Vocabulary Development
Sub Strand: Vocabulary & Concept Development
Level: Early Advanced
Grade: 9-12

Goal: By _____ (date) , _____ (student) will use a standard dictionary to determine the meaning of a list of 20 unknown words (e.g., idioms and words with multiple meanings) with 80% accuracy on 2 consecutive trials as demonstrated by classroom written records.

Objective: By _____ (date) , _____ (student) will use a standard dictionary to determine the meaning of a list of 100 unknown words (e.g., idioms and words with multiple meanings) with 60% accuracy on 2 consecutive trials as demonstrated by classroom written records.

Objective: By _____ (date) , _____ (student) will use a standard dictionary to determine the meaning of a list of 10 unknown words (e.g., idioms and words with multiple meanings) with 80% accuracy on 2 consecutive trials as demonstrated by classroom written records.

Note: The above goal & objectives are written at the “early advanced” level of English language development and would be appropriate for a student whose CELDT score is at the intermediate level in reading vocabulary. This goal was adapted from the California ELD Standards published in 1999.

INTERPRETERS

An acute national shortage of bilingual psychologists, speech and language pathologists and special education teachers requires reliance on interpreters. Informed participation by an interpreter will assist in appropriate administration of assessment instruments. It is imperative that interpreters be sensitive to the cultural and linguistic differences which may influence assessment decisions, enhance parental input, and contribute to educational planning.

Criteria for Selecting Interpreters

Ideally, a school district should arrange for a pool of interpreters, either using personnel with bilingual skills or hiring outside interpreters. In either case, interpreters should have qualifications other than bilingual skills. In developing a pool of interpreters, the following should be considered:

1. Language and Dialects Spoken

Because some language have distinct dialects, it is important to ensure that your interpreters can speak the dialect of the individuals school personnel wish to communicate with.

2. Ability to maintain confidentiality of information

Interpreters should be persons who understand the need for confidentiality. Ideally, interpreters are personnel employed by a school district who are familiar with and obligated to follow the school district's confidentiality procedures and policies. Training in confidentiality may be needed.

3. Familiarity with nature and purpose of meeting

Interpreters need to be briefed on topics that will be discussed. A list of terms that will be used should be provided. An inexperienced interpreter may incorrectly translate technical terms, such as "mentally retarded" as "crazy".

4. Professionalism

Since the interpreter will be "doing the talking for you", it is important that the interpreter convey the proper tone and professionalism of meeting. Appropriate dress, manner of addressing parents, and sensitivity in discussing issues are also qualities which should be considered when looking for interpreters.

5. Distinguishing opinion from interpretation

The danger of having interpreters convey the content from their own perspective should be understood. However, the interpreter should be encouraged to convey the intent when a literal word-for-word translation is impossible. When this occurs, the speaker should be informed by the interpreter.

Effective Use of an Interpreter in Assessments

I) **Before Testing** – The assessment team member and the interpreter review the following:

- a. The general purpose of the testing session.
- b. Which tests will be administered.
- c. Some information about the child.
- d. Discuss test behavior.
 1. Body language of the interpreter.
 2. Excessive reinforcement – type and frequency.
 3. Excessive cueing or prompting the child (verbally or with gestures).

II) **During Testing** – The assessment team member makes the following observations of the child:

- a. Mixing of two languages.
- b. Use of gestures for purposes of communication.

III) **After Testing** – Note observations by the interpreter.

IV) **Minimizing Interpretation Errors during Conferencing**

- A. Introduce conference participants.
- B. Seating arrangements are critical. The interpreters should not block the parent from the school person. Parents must be able to see both the interpreter and speaker.
- C. Address your remarks and questions directly to the parents. Even though you are using an interpreter, you want to communicate with the parents, not the translator. When parents ask questions, look towards them and listen. Remember that much is communicated non-verbally.
- D. Communicate in short segments. Keep grammatical constructions as simple as possible and minimize the use of idioms.
- E. Avoid professional jargon. Explain terms such as behavior modification, reading comprehension or dysfluency.
- F. Observe body language. Rely on your interpreter to assist you in understanding culturally appropriate behavior.
- G. Ask the interpreter to remain neutral.
- H. Make the conference comfortable and non-threatening. Limit the number of participants, especially school personnel.
- I. Caution should be used in including siblings, relatives, friends or acquaintances, especially as interpreters.