

A Checklist for CSE Teams: Considering Limited English Proficiency before Classification of an English Language Learner

In developing an IEP for an English language learner (ELL); the CSE Team must consider the student's level of English language proficiency. It's important to know that research based shows that second language conversational skills are acquired in one to two years, but academic language proficiency is acquired over a longer period of time, five to seven years, sometimes longer. Therefore, the IEP Team must consider the student's level of English language proficiency to support and strengthen implementation of the IEP goals.

The CSE Team may find it helpful to ask the following framing questions:

- Has the dominant language in the home been considered?
- Has the child's primary language of communication been considered?
- Were the cultural values and beliefs of the parents considered in planning for the child's education before referral?
- Was sufficient time to adjust to new environment, language, classroom, community, and family situation provided before the referral?
- If the school district offers bilingual programs, has opportunity to learn in the 1st language been provided?
- Is there evidence of whether or not the student had prior success when schooled in home language?
- Are prior school experiences, attendance and/or interrupted formal schooling documented?
- Did interventions provided prior to referral included native language instruction and ESL methodology?
- Did the instructional plan incorporate a variety of research based instructional strategies for English language learners? (Including RtI specific for ELLs)
- Is there a member of the CSE Team who has expertise regarding the student and understands how language develops as well as strategies that can be used when educating a student with English as a second language?
- Does the CSE Team have access to assessment data to determine if it is accurate and culturally and linguistically unbiased?
- Does the assessment information use a variety of methods and environments? (Such as the use of multiple mediums to present information, culturally relevant information, a low stress environment for language performance...)
- The assessments must demonstrate that the disability is evident in the dominant language OR rule out limited English proficiency as the cause of the learning difficulties.
- Descriptive data, not test scores, should decide if the student qualifies for special education.

__ Standardized test results must be cross-validated with performance-based measures.

__ If both performances are low and parents are also concerned about their child's communication skills, then the student most likely has a disability.

__ Do the PLP "present levels of performance" statements in the IEP address both how the student uses his or her native language and how the student uses English?

__ Do progress monitoring activities measure progress toward the mastery of English?

__ Do the goals delineate in which language they will be addressed and who will be responsible for measuring the outcomes?

__ Was there collaboration between general, special education, English as a second language and bilingual education teachers, if appropriate, during the referral process?

__ Has the district communicated with the parents prior to the referral and clearly explained the referral process, Evaluations..., in the language they understand?

__ Have parents been actively involved in the referral process?

__ Is there an interpreter who is knowledgeable about special education terms, present at the CSE meeting for the parents and the student?

__ Are the CSE Team members trained in how to use an interpreter effectively?

__ Was the evaluation process that was used, clearly defined in the native language and in English during the reviews and reevaluation?