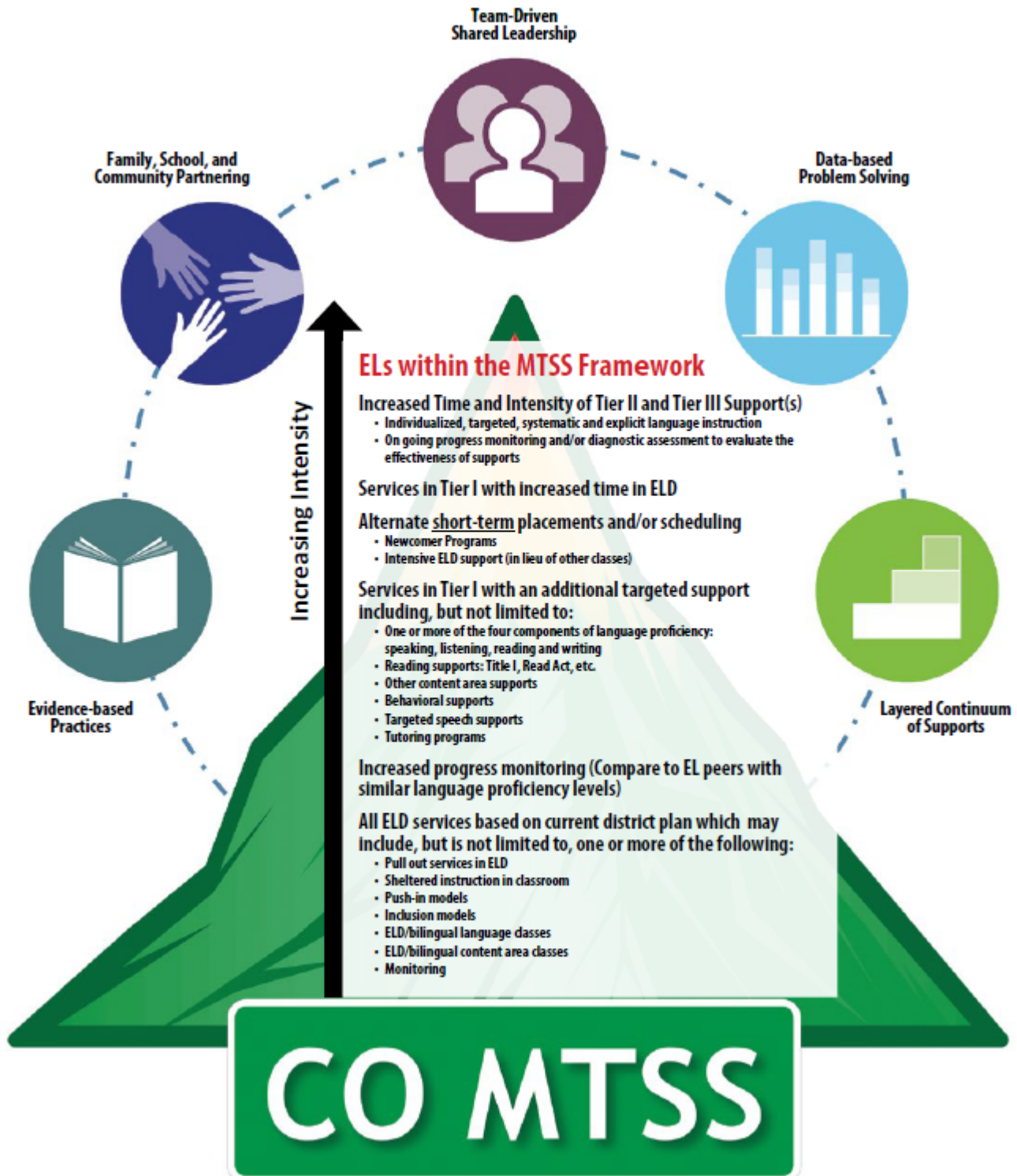
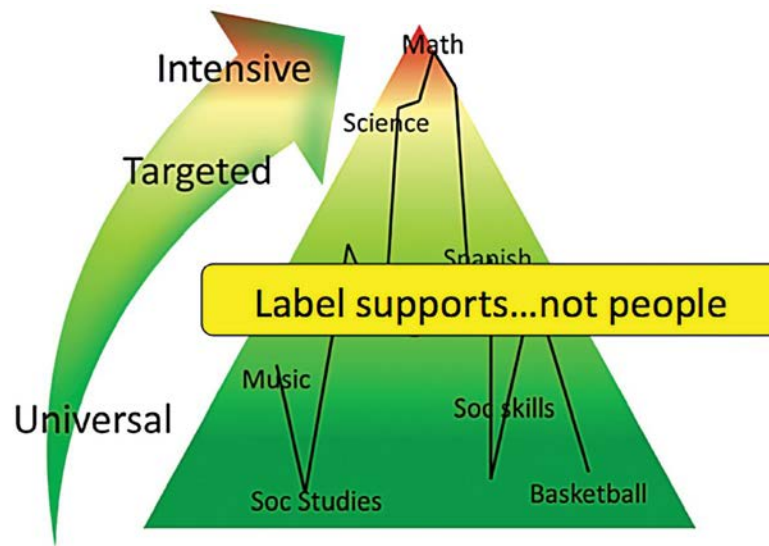


MTSS and Essential Components: English Learners Within the MTSS Framework





Adapted from the OSEP TA Center for PBIS

Continuum of Supports

The tiers describe instruction and intensity of support, not steps in a process; therefore, students do not leave the Universal Tier (Tier 1) to receive targeted or intensive instruction in Tiers 2 and/or 3. Supports are layered on to supplement the universal learning experiences that every student receives. Access and opportunity are ensured for every learner. The intensity of instruction is determined by the data.

For more information on the [Colorado Multi-Tiered System of Supports Resources](http://www.cde.state.co.us/mtss/resources), visit www.cde.state.co.us/mtss/resources.

Tier 1—Universal Supports

Tier 1 of a MTSS framework is referred to as universal because every student has access to academic and behavioral supports through a general education setting. It refers also to the entire school climate that is created for students and adults in a particular school or school community. Klingner and Edwards (2006, p. 113) explain that “the foundation of the first tier should be culturally responsive, quality instruction with ongoing progress monitoring within the general education classroom.” For ELs, Tier 1 includes their English language development instruction (e.g., bilingual, ESL, sheltered or dual language instruction). English language instruction is not viewed as an intervention (Tiers 2 or 3) but rather as part of universal instruction (National Center on Response to Intervention, 2011).

A culturally and linguistically Tier 1 serves as a system check, a way to evaluate whether or not the school/district is moving toward the most effective service delivery model for their student population. All EL core instruction professionals need to understand that they must make the content they are teaching comprehensible to the students (Echevarria, Vogt & Short, 2012) as well as differentiate instruction according to their language proficiency levels. Instruction in this context consists of a high quality curriculum supported by differentiated instruction and flexible grouping. All students are assessed multiple times throughout the year to identify those in need of additional support. For ELs, Tier 1 or universal instruction must be enriched to address their particular linguistic, sociocultural, and academic needs in a sustained, coordinated, and cohesive way. As noted above, Tier 1 instruction for ELs is delivered in classrooms by teachers knowledgeable about the process of acquiring a new or additional language (Hill & Flynn, 2006) and how to deliver culturally relevant content, literacy, and language instruction. Monitor the adequacy of the learning environment created for the universal tier continually to avoid preventable challenges for all students.



Tier 2—Targeted Supports

Tier 2 of an MTSS framework, Targeted Supports, takes place in small groups (usually 3–5) who have not responded sufficiently to effective Tier 1 instruction and curricula. Approximately 10–15 percent of students require the daily, targeted supports provided in Tier 2. Tier 2 support is supplementary because it is delivered in addition to the core content instruction. Tier 2 supports are provided to students in specific areas (academic, behavioral, or both) that have been identified as areas of need through the problem solving process. By gathering a variety of assessment data from, such as: classroom observations, review of student work samples, performance on common assessments, student-teacher conferences, field notes, or any standardized measures that are used in schools, teams can target and support students in identified areas of need (Chappuis, Stiggins, Chappuis & Arter, 2012).

Students' progress continues to be assessed through ongoing data collection (summative and formative) to determine the length of time they would benefit from receiving Tier 2 assistance. Tiers are fluid, and the needs of students who demonstrate improved performance and skill development may require supports in any given tier that reflect individual needs and progress monitoring data reviewed through the problem-solving process. Five key features of Tier 2 supports include: (1) supplementary resources to implement high-quality instructional strategies (2) targeted supports at increased levels of intensity (3) ongoing formative/classroom as well as standardized assessment to monitor students' responses to supports (progress monitoring) (4) team decision-making and collaboration (WIDA, 2013, August 10) and (5) Increase in positive feedback for meeting expectations of a culturally and linguistically responsive Tier 1 learning environment has been created for all students, including ELs, only a small percentage of students need Tier 2 support in any given area.

Tier 3—Intensive Supports

Tier 3 of an MTSS framework, is the most intensive level of supports. Tier 3 supports do not represent referral to special education services but represent strategic or intensive individualized supports designed to meet the specific needs of the smallest percentage of students who did not make adequate progress through previous interventions. Supports at this level are typically longer in duration, at a higher frequency, and/or delivered in a smaller group size and are provided by a highly qualified teacher with the skills necessary to support the needs of the student(s). Strategies may be the same as in Tier 2 but are more intensive and individualized. If a culturally and linguistically responsive Tier 2 has been created for students, including ELs, only a small percentage of students need Tier 3 supports.

Potential Advantages of a Culturally and Linguistically Responsive MTSS for English Learners

A Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) includes family, school, and community partnering as a crucial component. Including families on the decision-making team and partnering with families ensures that the problem solving process is facilitated with all relevant information so that students understand that all adults within their lives care about their learning outcomes and have a role in contributing to their success in school. There are various advantages for ELs in a comprehensive MTSS designed for their unique and particular needs; teams have permission to support students more proactively.

ELs will be more successful in the general education setting, including ELD instruction, and special education referrals and determinations will be more accurate. Other potential advantages arise from increased system-wide awareness of culturally responsive instruction. Teachers benefit as well because they are supported as part of a team and have structured opportunities to collaborate with colleagues across disciplines. Critical to early intervention, teams do not have to wait for students to fail before providing additional instructional supports and should create mechanisms that identify students which do not rely solely on a referral process. A culturally and linguistically responsive MTSS allows better monitoring of teaching practices in general and special education. The following table describes some of the conditions necessary for a culturally and linguistically responsive MTSS.



Necessary Conditions for ELs to Experience the Benefits of a Culturally and Linguistically Responsive MTSS
Use innovative practices and reforms in all tiers with a focus on enrichment, increased comprehensibility, and meaningfulness rather than remediation.
Customize MTSS systems according to a school or district's individual needs and select multiple and different practices for the multiple tiers of support. Implement these practices in a cohesive, contextualized, and comprehensible way from a sociocultural perspective.
Make certain that all educators are aware of the research on what practices, strategies, approaches, and interventions work with whom, by whom and in what contexts (Klingner & Edwards, 2006).
Ensure that students receive culturally responsive, appropriate, quality content and language instruction that is evidence-based at all levels.
Provide linguistic supports when assessing students' content knowledge.
Provide time for team members to plan for students' instruction, resulting in instruction and intervention strategies that are cohesive, authentic and meaningful, and connected to the core curriculum.
Include approaches that focus on complex sociocultural phenomena and better address students' unique educational contexts.
Look not only at classrooms, but also at languages and outside social/educational settings for insights into students' performance.
Recognize the need for both appropriate EL literacy instruction as well as academic language instruction throughout the school day.
Differentiate at all tiers of support according to students' academic language proficiency levels.

Adapted from Damico (2009)

Assessment

Accurate and reliable assessment of ELs' language development, content knowledge, and behavior make teaching more instructionally-responsive and action-oriented. An MTSS incorporates formative (e.g., observations, performance-based projects, conversations, writing samples) as well as standardized assessments in all three tiers for different purposes. First, MTSS uses data from various assessments to identify students whose educational needs may not be met by the existing instructional program and need additional Tier 2 or Tier 3 support. Whenever possible, assess learning in the native language to establish appropriate instructional plans even when instruction will be in English. Second, data can be used to improve the instructional methods as well as evaluate the appropriateness of the curriculum.

Universal Screening—Screenings in Tier 1 identify students who need additional support or acceleration. School-wide screenings can be administered throughout the year; at minimum, data should be gathered at the beginning, middle, and end of the year. Data provides information about the quality of the instructional program as well as students' academic performance and social-emotional wellbeing. Data provide feedback about groups of students, grade level patterns of performance, and the impact of the wider learning environment and school climate on student achievement and academic language development.

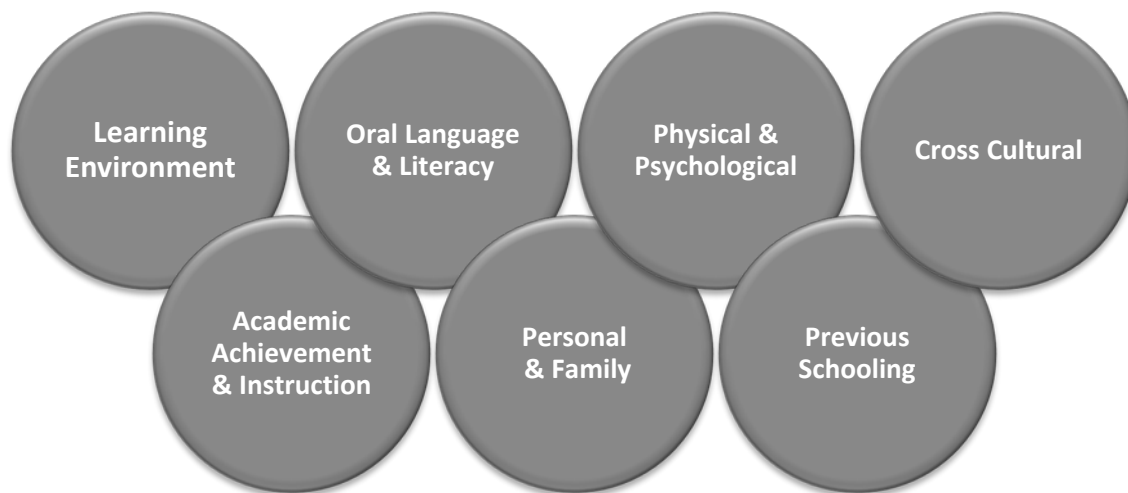
Monitoring Student Progress—Monitoring student progress is an essential component of MTSS. In a culturally and linguistically responsive multi-tiered system of supports, it is essential that assessment procedures are as responsive as the instructional approaches. Limited assessment tools have been researched specifically for use with ELs (National Center on Response to Intervention, 2011) and while Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) may already have uniform assessment practices in place, it is important that they review and evaluate their application to EL performance to ensure they are appropriate. School teams should gather information from a comprehensive set of procedures that assess learning (Chappuis et al., 2012) including: observations, student work (digital, written, recorded, performed), common language and academic achievement assessments, conferencing with students, teacher anecdotal and field notes, checklists, rubrics, rating scales, portfolios, performance tasks, paper-pencil tasks, student self-assessments and surveys/questionnaires, among others. All decisions about instructional services should be based on multiple measures that capture the complex nature of the learning process.

In Tier 1, monitoring student progress shows how well the general education instruction and curriculum is meeting students' needs. In Tiers 2 and 3, progress monitoring helps determine if students are responding adequately to general education supports, if targeted/intensive supports need to be modified, or if students should return to Tier 1-only instruction. This model ensures that content and language development are assessed regularly, in authentic ways, throughout the instruction cycle. A lack of adequate response to culturally and linguistically responsive, research-based supports in Tier 3 may indicate a need for a special education referral.

Factors that Impact English learners' Academic Progress, Linguistic Development, and Response to Instruction and Intervention

It is important to develop a proactive protocol to collect student information related to seven factors that may influence academic achievement and linguistic development (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). This will help develop instruction, interventions and assessments for those who are not responding adequately to universal instruction. The seven factors that follow apply to all students but are focused on English learners and providing an authentic context within which to understand their performance.

Seven Factors that Impact Learning and Behavior



Adapted from Hamayan, Marler, Sanchez-Lopez & Damico (2013)

For more information about:

- [The Seven Factors that Impact Learning and Behavior](http://www.twin-cs.org/uploads/2/0/5/2/20520752/handout_seven_factors_hamayan.doc), visit www.twin-cs.org/uploads/2/0/5/2/20520752/handout_seven_factors_hamayan.doc
- [WIDA's Culturally and Linguistically Responsive to Intervention](http://morethanenglish.edublogs.org/files/2013/09/RtI2-Planning-Form-for-ELLs-WIDA-1y4ki5q.pdf), visit morethanenglish.edublogs.org/files/2013/09/RtI2-Planning-Form-for-ELLs-WIDA-1y4ki5q.pdf
- [WIDA English Development Standards](http://wida.wisc.edu/teach/standards/eld), visit wida.wisc.edu/teach/standards/eld
- [WIDA Can Do Descriptors](http://wida.wisc.edu/teach/can-do/descriptors), visit wida.wisc.edu/teach/can-do/descriptors
- [Essential Actions for Academic Language Success](http://www.cde.state.co.us/cde_english/theoreticalframeworkpage), visit www.cde.state.co.us/cde_english/theoreticalframeworkpage



6.2 Special Education Needs

As outlined in section 6.1, state education agencies, school districts, and schools can develop a culturally and linguistically responsive MTSS that will help close the achievement gap and reduce inappropriate referrals to special education. The enriched and cohesive support that a culturally and linguistically responsive MTSS can provide forms the basis for more valid evaluation and effective programming for English learners (ELs). A culturally and linguistically responsive MTSS will address many of the extrinsic factors that impact ELs' success in school so they can be ruled out as the main influences on ELs' performance. However, educators should consider these external factors before considering special education explanations.

School teams that work within a culturally and linguistically responsive MTSS to support ELs may find that particular students experience challenges across many contexts, both social and academic, and languages. Some of these students may have special education needs. If ELs experience challenges only in English academic settings, it is improbable that the difficulties are due to a disability. ELs who cannot remember directions given during English academic classes but can remember directions in their home language or social English settings, do not likely have underlying disabilities. You cannot have a disability in one language or context and not another; special education needs should manifest across languages and contexts.

For more information culturally responsive pedagogy, visit [The National Center for Culturally Responsive Educational Systems](http://www.nccrest.org/the-key-aspects-of-culturally-responsive-pedagogy.html) (NCCRESt) at www.nccrest.org/the-key-aspects-of-culturally-responsive-pedagogy.html

Comparing Language Differences and Special Education Needs

It is difficult to determine when low performance of ELs in English settings is due to the process of acquiring English or a special education need. Reframing the traditional question: *Is what we observe part of the second language learning process, or is this student's performance due to a more intrinsic special education need?* The answer need not be one or the other. Diversity within EL populations in our schools is immense and no two ELs' experiences are identical. Begin with the assumption that the students are ELs; this way we can address the unique needs of EL students while we determine if they also may have special education needs. Some students will require both EL and special education support (Hamayan et. al., 2013).

For example, the table below illustrates, if the student omits words in English, specialists may suggest that perhaps the student is in the early stages of acquiring English and using elements of his home language. If that home language has a different grammatical structure, without articles, the student might continue to omit articles when he speaks English. If a student has a disability, the same observable behavior would have a different explanation: the special education teacher or speech language clinician might suggest that omitting words was due to difficulties with word retrieval or expressive language. If the student had both types of needs, he would omit words in his home language as well as in English, and in social as well as academic settings. As a result, he would need support both as an EL acquiring a new language and related to difficulties with word retrieval and expressive language.

An Example of Interpreting Behavior: EL Explanations and Possible Special Education Explanations		
Observable Behavior	Possible EL Explanations (Observed in academic English contexts)	Possible Special Education Explanations (Observed across all languages and contexts)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Omits words in sentences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Direct transfer from student's home language Early stages of academic English development use of brief utterances that are typical of that stage of acquisition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Word retrieval difficulties Expressive language difficulties



As teams provide explanations from both perspectives, they should intervene for the EL possible explanations first, supporting these students in all of their languages and across as many contexts as possible. Though some might need more support than others, this may lie within typical performance. Scaffolds may be all that these ELs need to support learning and address their challenges, and they may show progress once the appropriate scaffolds are in place. These are ELs who need more intensive support as language learners, but do not require support within special education.

If, on the other hand, the student receives more intensive EL support across all his languages, in both social and academic contexts, and makes insufficient or very slow progress, the team can now add additional academic or behavior support across contexts and in all of the student's languages in an intensified manner. If the team observes that a student requires scaffolds and supports for much longer than typical ELs in order to show progress, the student would continue to receive EL appropriate instruction and may be considered for a special education evaluation.

Learners with Exceptionalities

In many ways, children with disabilities are not different from their typically developing peers. They require instruction and support that: are embedded in meaningful contexts, actively engage them, are interesting and authentic, provide opportunities to compare and contrast and are recurrent, exposing them to concepts and skills in multiple contexts and settings (Bruner, 1990; Cambourne, 1988; Damico & Nelson, 2005; Perkins, 2005; Smith, 2004; Vygotsky, 1978; Wells, 1986, 2003).

Instruction for children with disabilities differs from that of typically developing students in other respects.

A central difference is the amount and duration of the scaffolding provided to them. They may not acquire skills or knowledge as efficiently, easily or quickly as typical students; they may need more focused support and mediation within their zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). Students with disabilities may need additional support to generate efficient learning strategies. Teachers may provide these strategies and be prepared to model their use in various contexts with multiple examples. Students with disabilities may experience difficulty extending learning across contexts or applying new skills in novel situations. Teachers need to give these students many opportunities to practice effective meaning-making strategies within authentic contexts (Cloud, 1994; Damico & Hamayan, 1992; Dundaway, 2004; Paradis et al., 2011; Westby & Vining, 2002).

Caution also must be taken not to delay a referral for special education evaluation beyond the point when the team suspects a disability. Neither an MTSS framework nor participation in a process based on the child's response to intervention replaces the right of a child with a disability to be identified as such and to receive special education services.

—adapted from *Colorado Guidelines for Identifying Students with SLD (2019)*, p. 45 found at www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/guidelines_slid_draft_2019-02-25

For information about [WIDA's Focus on Differentiation](#) in the classroom, visit wida.wisc.edu/resources/differentiation-part-1 and wida.wisc.edu/resources/differentiation-part-2

For information about tools and resources for addressing [English Learners with Disabilities](#), visit www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela/english-learner-toolkit/chap6.pdf



6.2a Specific Learning Disabilities Determination

The process for determining a Specific Learning Disability (SLD) is slightly more prescriptive than for other disabilities. The team must include the child's parent, general education teacher and at least one person qualified to conduct diagnostic examinations, such as a special education director or designee, school psychologist, speech language pathologist or remedial reading teacher. Choosing the multidisciplinary team members from the individualized problem-solving team, who would be familiar with the child's data is suggested. An additional team member should have specific expertise working with ELs and knowledge and skills in the areas of linguistics, education implications, cultural influences and best practices. Teams need to consider the current instruction, the qualifications/training of the person delivering the instruction and the child's access to that instruction.

SLD designation requires documentation of a student's insufficient response to research-based supports, there should be evidence that appropriate instruction in the area(s) of concern has been provided. Of course, fidelity of instruction/supports implementation must be ensured. The team will want to determine whether a student's access to core instruction, as well as to supports provided through MTSS, is impacted by poor attendance, frequent moves between schools, etc. If an SLD determination cannot be made due to concerns in this area, attempts to provide appropriate instruction and the student's response to that instruction must be documented.

When considering a referral or determining eligibility of an EL, information must be gathered in the following areas: cognition, communication, social emotional status, physical status, academic performance, transition/life skills and adaptive behaviors. The body of evidence for making an eligibility determination should include but not be limited to the HLS, W-APT/WIDA Screener, ACCESS/Alternate ACCESS for ELLs, English proficiency level, characteristics of the student's cultural background that might be impacting academic success and assimilation into an unfamiliar school environment, progress monitoring of supports implemented under the MTSS framework, and multiple data points from the progress monitoring and triangulation.

Local Education Agencies (LEAs) must also provide special education services to ELs who have been identified as students with disabilities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) or as qualified students with disabilities under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

Source: *OELA Toolkit, Chapter 2*
(ncela.ed.gov/files/english_learner_toolkit/2-OELA_2017_language_assist_508C.pdf)

The issue should not be whether a student is an English learner, but whether the student has met eligibility requirements under the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

- (5) *Special rule for eligibility determination.*—In making a determination of eligibility under paragraph (4) (A), a child shall not be determined to be a child with a disability if the determinant factor for such determination is —[[Page 118 STAT. 2706]]
- lack of appropriate instruction in reading, including in the essential components of reading instruction (as defined in section 1208(3) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965);
 - lack of instruction in math; or
 - limited English proficiency.

To rule out limited English proficiency as the primary cause of learning difficulties, several questions must be answered affirmatively:

- Has the student been given an English language proficiency test?** Colorado Identification Procedures require that potential EL students must be assessed with the W-APT/WIDA Screener within the first 30 days of school or within two weeks of enrollment during the remainder of the school year. All identified NEPs/LEPs are required by law to take ACCESS/Alternate ACCESS for ELLs each spring to assess their English language proficiency.
- Is the student receiving or has this student received ELD services in accordance with the district's LIEP?** The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires districts to notify parents/families of the student's Language Instruction Education Program (LIEP). CDE requires districts to annually report student's LIEP through the Student Demographic file.



- **Have targeted supports been implemented in addition to ELD services?** English language development services, although important, should not be considered supports.
- **Has progress been monitored and compared with the progress of a comparable group of ELs?** It is important to compare students to peers from the same culture, language, age and immigrant groups.
- **Has progress been markedly lower than that of English learner peers?** ELs demonstrate similar acquisition patterns. A student must demonstrate atypical growth for his/her peer group in all areas of language (speaking, listening, reading and writing) for language development to be ruled out as the cause of difficulties.
- **Have ELD and other services been provided for a sufficient length of time so that growth can be measured?** Newly arriving immigrants will move through a stage of culture shock and adjustment to the U.S. school system. They may appear to have signs and symptoms of a disability when, in reality, they have not yet adjusted to the school system. Although there is not a specific time frame for adequate adjustment, teams should carefully consider whether time has been sufficient to learn basic vocabulary, hear and discriminate English sounds and symbols, follow basic directions and practice learned skills. An appropriate referral to special education should happen only after all other avenues have been explored, and the student's needs cannot be met in the regular classroom, or with only ELD services.

Being an English learner in and of itself does not qualify a student for special education. Not having English as a first language is not a disability requiring special education instruction. However, an English learner who has a learning or emotional disability could be found eligible for special education for that reason. An appropriate referral to special education should happen only after all other avenues have been explored, and the student's needs cannot be met in the primary education classroom or with only English Language Development services.

Special Education Eligibility Criteria

Special education eligibility in the category of a Specific Learning Disability (SLD) is based upon evidence that the student does not perform or grow adequately for the student's age or to meet grade-level standards in one or more of the following areas: oral expression, listening comprehension, written expression, basic reading skill, reading fluency skills, reading comprehension, mathematical calculation, mathematics problem solving.

Specifically, the multidisciplinary team must determine if a student:

- Has one or more significant academic skill deficits as compared to age-level peers or grade-level benchmarks
- Makes insufficient progress in response to research/evidence-based interventions
- Has learning difficulties that are not primarily* the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities; significant limited intellectual capacity; significant identifiable emotional disability; cultural factors; environmental or economic disadvantage; or limited English proficiency



In addition, as is stated in the Federal Rules and Regulations and pertaining to the identification of any disability, the findings cannot be the result of a lack of appropriate instruction, specifically in the essential components of reading and in math. Eligibility for special education is based on two final determinations:

1. Student has a Specific Learning Disability and
2. Student cannot receive reasonable educational benefit from general education alone

* Note that a specific learning disability may coexist with another disability that is found to be the primary disability by the multidisciplinary team and that all special education needs must be identified whether or not commonly linked to the primary disability category in which the child has been classified.

For more information about [SLD Eligibility Criteria](http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/guidelines_sld_draft_2019-02-25), visit Section 4 at www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/guidelines_sld_draft_2019-02-25

For more information about [CDE's Student Demographic File](http://www.cde.state.co.us/datapipeline/inter_student), visit www.cde.state.co.us/datapipeline/inter_student

Documentation must show that parents/guardians whose primary language is not English have been informed of the referral, evaluation and eligibility process, as well as findings and recommendations, in their primary language unless it is not feasible to do so. Special education means specially designed instruction to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability. Services need to reflect the language needs of the student; the overall program must be coordinated, cohesive and consistent.

Additional SLD Resources:

- [CLD Learners with Educational Disabilities at www/cdesped/cld](http://www.cdesped/cld)
- [Special Education Guidance at CDE at www/cdesped/guidance](http://www.cdesped/guidance)
- [Critical Questions Regarding Special Education Process for CLD Learners at www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/ta_criticalquestionscld](http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/ta_criticalquestionscld)
- [Specific Learning Disability Evaluation and Eligibility at www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/ta_sld_evaluation_eligibility](http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/ta_sld_evaluation_eligibility)
- [CLDE and Specific Learning Disability at www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/ta_sld_cld](http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/ta_sld_cld)
- [Office of Special Education at CDE at www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/ta_sped](http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/ta_sped)
- [SLD Resources for Eligibility and Guidance at www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/sd-sld_resources_eligibility_guidance](http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/sd-sld_resources_eligibility_guidance)

6.3 Talent and Diversity: Limited English Proficient Students in Gifted Education

According to the US Department of Education, English learners (ELs) are typically underrepresented in Gifted Education (GE) as well as advanced courses. In order to assure equal access to these programs, we need to address possible barriers including but not limited to: language acquisition, perceptions of ELs and their capabilities, and systemic issues around identification and access to services.

The State of [Colorado Office of Gifted Education](http://www.cde.state.co.us/gt/identification) (www.cde.state.co.us/gt/identification) outlines three general categories for giftedness:

- General Intellectual Ability
- Specific Academic Aptitudes (including reading, writing, math, science, social studies, and world language)
- Specific Talent Aptitudes (including creative or productive thinking, dance, leadership, music, performing arts, visual arts, and psychomotor)

One barrier to the inclusion of English learners in gifted or advanced programs is identification.

Gifted Education Screening

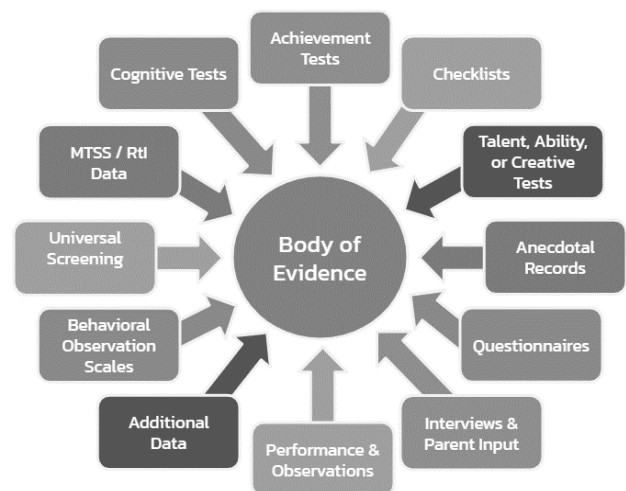
Universal screening ensures fair and equal access for **all** students to demonstrate ability and potential. It is an assessment method that uses a tool(s) to determine if the resulting data provide evidence of exceptional potential in an area of giftedness. Screening tools may be qualitative or quantitative in nature, standardized and/or normative. Screening data are part of a body of evidence for making identification and instructional decisions.

For English learners, screening and identification could use non-verbal tests, tests in their native language, or a collection of school and/or district assessments that show above average growth or achievement either in English or their native language.

Another area of consideration when identifying gifted students is the expression of giftedness and gifted characteristics across different cultures. For example, leadership or visual art may manifest differently across cultures and languages, and consultation with families or community members may help educators understand and identify gifted ELs.

Body of Evidence

Gifted identification relies on the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data. A body of evidence considers intellectual, academic, and talent areas through use of multiple sources and types of data. **Qualitative measures** are a representation of student skills and abilities and may include observations, portfolios, work samples, and performances. **Quantitative data** includes norm-referenced tests of both cognitive ability and achievement and criterion-referenced test (e.g. state assessment and curriculum based measures). Parents often provide valuable insight into their child's strengths, abilities, and interest. Primary points for parental involvement are referral and adding important information to the body of evidence.



Colorado Department of Education 2020 Gifted Education Guidebook, page 10



Gifted Education Referrals

A student may enter into gifted education screening through many different entry points. Administrative Units (AUs) should develop screening procedures that seek referrals from a variety of sources used for conducting identification assessment. Identification is not just a moment in time or the use of data from one assessment. Referrals for gifted screening may include but not limited to these sources: universal screening, MTSS/Rtl, test data, performance & observations, checklists, anecdotal records, questionnaires, and interviews.

Exceptional Children's Educational Act (ECEA) Rules state an identification team has no more than 30 school days after a referral is received to communicate decisions to parent, student and other educators and to determine whether a student will be formally identified or if more time is needed to continue identification assessment.

Gifted Education Determination

The AU Team should use a body of evidence upon which to base the determination of giftedness, which evidence must include, at a minimum, the identification assessment results, parental input, and multiple types of measures and data sources. The assessment process used by the AU for identifying students who meet the definition is specified by the ECEA section 12.01 (16) and for identifying the educational needs of gifted students.

The assessment process should recognize a student's exceptional abilities or potential, interests, and needs in order to guide student instruction and individualized planning and programming. Identification may require the collection of student information over time, using additional data points from a response to intervention approach especially in but not limited to traditionally underrepresented student groups, visual/performing arts student groups, or students for whom talent pool services are provided.

Portability is defined as: student's identification in one or more categories of giftedness transfers to any district in the state. Portability of identification is a part of the student's permanent record and Advanced Learning Plan (ALP). The rule for gifted portability means districts will develop identification processes that are aligned to identification procedures defined by the Exceptional Children's Educational Act (ECEA). The rule for portability does not apply to students moving into Colorado from another state.

Collaboration between Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD) staff, Special Education staff and Gifted Education staff is highly encouraged at every point in decision making. Service for these special populations must be coordinated and one need or identification must not overshadow another. Rather, students must receive all necessary services.

For more information from the [2020 Gifted Identification Guidebook](http://www.cde.state.co.us/gt/idguidebook), visit www.cde.state.co.us/gt/idguidebook

Identifying English learners for gifted programming begins with collaboration among classroom teachers, GE and ELD staff. Formal channels of communication between teachers and coordinators are vital to GE EL success. Educators should collaborate to maximize an English learner's ability to express knowledge of content while minimizing their need to rely on English to express it. It is important to remember that it is necessary to complete an English language proficiency assessment and evaluate results prior to any testing in English. Knowing a student's level of English proficiency helps educators decide when to give various cognitive assessments, as well as how to interpret scores. Appropriately administering and reviewing proficiency testing data about the student is equally essential. Understanding the student's ease in acquiring native language and academic abilities in their homeschool system is an indication of their potential.

Research studies published by the U.S. Department of Education and the National Center for Research on Gifted Education (NCRGE) offer some suggestions for identifying gifted English learners. They include:

- Implement a multi-pronged identification process that includes test scores, teacher recommendations, student portfolios and consideration of special variables such as language, socioeconomic background and culture.
- Acceptance that students of high ability might also be Limited English Proficient (LEP) or come from poverty backgrounds.
- Develop and implement intentional outreach to the school community, particularly parents/guardians/caretakers. This process should utilize multiple pathways in languages appropriate to the population.
- Commitment to the long-term benefit of redesigning gifted education to include and meet the needs of LEP students.
- Emphasize collaboration within and across specializations/departments (e.g., general education, English as a second language [ESL], special education, gifted education) so people view themselves as talent scouts.
- Establishment of a clear and coherent vision of inclusive gifted education.
- Adequate teacher training and in-service, including training in identification procedures for bilingual education teachers.

To access the full [NCRGE](https://ncrge.uconn.edu) study, visit ncrge.uconn.edu

For more information about [English Learners and Gifted Programming](#), visit Chapter 4 at www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela/english-learner-toolkit/index.html

For more information about [Gifted Identification FAQs 2020](#), visit www.cde.state.co.us/gt/faqforid-jan21016



Notes



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