

AccELLerate!

The quarterly newsletter of the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition

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English Language Learners with Disabilities: Promising Practices

Welcome to the third issue of *AccELLerate!* This issue takes as its theme the topic of English language learners with disabilities. We are pleased to bring you a number of articles highlighting promising practices from around the nation for this group of students. Although the authors of these articles are able to shine a light on successful strategies for ELLs with disabilities, as always, we caution our readers to remember that strategies which work with one group of students may not work with all groups. English language learners are a diverse group of students, and all educators should attend to the complexities of difference in the cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds of their students.

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National Clearinghouse for
English Language Acquisition
2011 Eye St., NW, Suite 300, Washington, DC 20006
Ph: 202 467 0867 or 1 800 321 6223
Fax: 202 467 4283 or 1 800 531 9347
email: askncela@gwu.edu
www.ncela.gwu.edu

Promising Assessment Practices for English Language Learners with Suspected Disabilities

Margo Gottlieb, Ph.D. & Cristina Sanchez-Lopez, M.S.

States require initial assessment of linguistically and culturally diverse students to identify English language learners (ELLs). Subsequently, districts, language education programs, and schools accrue a body of evidence reflective of ELLs' growth in language development and academic achievement. These data are contextualized with historical information to create distinct learning profiles that help inform decision making. The totality of information forms a comprehensive picture of each and every ELL, with or without disabilities.

Unless initial assessment includes two languages, educators will fail to ascertain the full complement of students' knowledge and skills in order to determine the extent and type of language support needed (Gottlieb, 2006). Research confirms that the more proficient students are in their native language, L1, especially those with a strong literacy foundation, the faster is their pace of acquiring English, L2 (Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, & Christian, 2006). These students more readily transfer concepts from one language to another, apply literacy-related strategies to English, and are more likely to develop metacognitive skills; in essence, these students use their first language as a bridge to their second language.

In order to provide a complete and accurate picture of an individual ELL, our assessment practices involve the gathering, analysis, and interpretation of multiple measures for multiple purposes. Measures include:

- whether a student is an ELL [using an English language proficiency **screeners**, **bilingual measures**, and demographic/historical information];
- the most appropriate language support services [through **diagnostic measures**];
- the most appropriate language(s) of instruction [determined through **bilingual measures**];
- the progress ELLs make annually in listening, speaking, reading, and writing [on a state **summative English language proficiency test**];
- the progress ELLs make periodically in listening, speaking, reading, and writing [through **formative English language proficiency assessment**];
- the progress ELLs make annually in the content areas [on state **summative academic achievement tests**];
- the progress ELLs make periodically in the content areas at designated times [on **benchmark tests**];
- overall progress ELLs make [for example, **student portfolios**]; and
- when ELLs are considered proficient English students and/or when ELLs have disabilities [**a compendium of all the above measures**].

By entering assessment results on a chart (such as the one below) where information on language proficiency is juxtaposed with that for achievement, teachers can readily see the influence of language within and across content areas. In this example, language proficiency levels are presented on a continuum from the least (level 1) to the highest (level 4), in L1 and L2, and the academic designations used by many states reflect the achievement categories.

Language Proficiency	Level 1		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4	
Listening	L1	L2	L1	L2	L1	L2	L1	L2
Speaking	L1	L2	L1	L2	L1	L2	L1	L2
Reading	L1	L2	L1	L2	L1	L2	L1	L2
Writing	L1	L2	L1	L2	L1	L2	L1	L2
Comprehension	L1	L2	L1	L2	L1	L2	L1	L2
Overall language development	L1	L2	L1	L2	L1	L2	L1	L2
Academic Achievement	Minimal		Basic		Proficient		Advanced	
Language Arts/ Reading	L1	L2	L1	L2	L1	L2	L1	L2
Mathematics	L1	L2	L1	L2	L1	L2	L1	L2
Science	L1	L2	L1	L2	L1	L2	L1	L2
Social Studies	L1	L2	L1	L2	L1	L2	L1	L2

The accurate identification of ELLs with learning disabilities always has been a difficult and complex task. This process is complicated due, in part, to similar surface behaviors of students with diagnosed disabilities and those who are acquiring English as an additional language. The explanations for these difficulties, however, are quite different, as illustrated in the example below (Hamayan, Marler, Sanchez-Lopez, & Damico, 2007).

Another factor that has contributed to the issue of identifying ELLs with exceptionalities has been an over-reliance on the use of standardized assessments and procedures. Often these measures have not been conceptualized with ELLs in mind and have not included ELLs in field testing or in the normative data; consequently, linguistic and cultural bias has gone undetected. In addition, measures have been inappropriately translated or administered only in English. As a result, there is not enough valid data on which to make sound educational decisions, resulting in a tendency to over- or under-identify ELLs with disabilities.

Response to Instruction or Intervention (RtI) may be both an innovative approach to supporting ELLs having difficulties in school and a means of diagnosing ELLs who may have disabilities. RtI allows for a multi-tiered system of interventions and monitoring of students prior to referral to special education case

studies. However, unless implemented using reliable and valid measures, coupled with interventions that take linguistic and cultural diversity into account, the results for ELLs, who may exhibit the same surface characteristics as students with disabilities, could be misinterpreted (Genesee, Paradis, & Crago, 2004).

It is misleading to try to decide if students' difficulties are due entirely to difficulties in the second language or if they are due entirely to learning disabilities. Rather, when problem solving for ELLs, it is useful to reframe the issue in terms of ELLs with or without disabilities. In the example below, it is clear that ELLs can be experiencing difficulties related to learning in a second language, without any disability entering the picture. For many ELLs, language support in the bilingual or ESL classroom alone could meet their needs. If, however, these students do not respond to classroom-based interventions, then the team needs to confirm that the difficulty occurs not only in English, but across languages and contexts. In this case, ELLs who also have a disability will need both kinds of support from a bilingual/ ESL special education teacher: that which is associated with learning in a second language, and targeted support for their particular disability. Only then can teams begin to address the wide range of ELLs in our schools.

Given this scenario, the problem-solving team then would consult with special educators, and *add on* interventions to create a continuum of interventions. If these ELLs are diagnosed with a disability through a full case study, then the continuum of interventions can help guide the team in programming for ELLs and writing, learning, and language proficiency goals in the students' Individualized Education Plans.

Promising assessment practices for ELLs suspected of having disabilities include the use of multiple measures of language proficiency and achievement that yield useful and meaningful data. Coupled with historical information, teacher input, and student work samples, a body of evidence is created so that sound decisions are made regarding whether learning disabilities truly are present, and appropriate services are designed for these students.

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Margo Gottlieb is Director, Assessment and Evaluation, Illinois Resource Center, Arlington Heights, and Lead Developer, World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) Consortium, Wisconsin Center for Education Research, University of Wisconsin, Madison.

Cristina Sanchez-Lopez is an Education Specialist at the Illinois Resource Center, Arlington Heights, Illinois.

Observable Difficulty of Student	Possible ELL Explanations	Possible Disability Explanation
Omits words in sentences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct transfer from L1 • Early stages of academic L2 development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Word retrieval • Expressive language difficulties

The Dual Language Assessment: First Language Insights into Second Language Acquisition

Connie Heath Thibeault

The Dual Language Assessment (DLA) is the Fairfax County Public Schools' (FCPS) pre-referral procedure for assessing an English language learner's verbal and literacy skills in both the home language and English. The DLA is a battery of five tests, which are administered to English Language Learners (ELLs) in English and the student's home language(s). The examiner analyzes these results, along with information on the student's culture and personal history, to compile a report summarizing the student's progress along the English language acquisition continuum.

The significance of the DLA is that it allows practitioners to distinguish language differences due to the normal process of second language acquisition from other academic challenges. It serves as an invaluable tool for schools striving to make well-informed ELL placement decisions. When I discover, for example, that Amina's¹ slurred speech on the Urdu portion of the DLA is just as difficult to understand as her classroom English, I can confirm that her articulation problems present themselves in both languages. This can help in determining Amina's future academic needs because research shows that the presence of the same linguistic problem in both the native language and English indicates that second language acquisition is not the core issue (Klingner, Artiles, & Barletta, 2006, p. 111).

A key feature of DLA testing is comparing the performance of one English language learner to other ELLs according to FCPS local norms, based on the length of time the child has spent in U.S. schools. Over 5 years ago, the DLA team collected local norms for the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (receptive vocabulary) and the Expressive One Word Picture Vocabulary Test (expressive vocabulary). The establishment of local FCPS norms for ELLs addresses research findings that nationwide norms "always favor the most numerous group," in this case monolingual students (Fahey & Reid, 2000, p. 195).

The DLA really proves its worth in instances where the student's academic performance is affected by the second language acquisition process. The three vignettes in this article are intended to provide ESOL professionals and classroom teachers with an idea of what can be learned by assessing a student's language skills, not just in English, but in the student's home language as well. The students described, Noi, Albert, and Ibrahim, are among the 21,000 students receiving ESOL services within a large school district in northern Virginia.

Noi

Noi was a third grade student from Thailand with nearly a year in U.S. schools. She was referred for making slow progress in verbal expression, reading, and writing. Her teachers had difficulty getting her to speak in complete sentences, and

her literacy skills lagged behind those of her monolingual classmates. She had particular problems with syntax and grammar. Noi's case highlights the utility of using FCPS local norms for receptive and expressive vocabulary. Using these local norms, I found that even though Noi was performing below her monolingual, English-speaking classmates, her vocabulary acquisition was as expected compared to other ELLs who had been in U.S. schools for the same amount of time.

When tested in Thai, Noi's fluency and readiness to speak were signs that her delays in English speech production were related to the second language acquisition process. I discovered other first-language clues to her English language difficulties when I assessed her English language writing sample. Her inconsistent use of articles and pronouns clearly paralleled Thai's lack of articles and the fact that "he" and "she" are indistinguishable in Thai. Furthermore, her numerous mistakes in using English verbs reflected the fact that Thai verbs take only a single form, regardless of person or tense.

Cases like Noi's illustrate the importance of getting informed input on the student's first language. When the examiner is not fluent in the student's language, that input comes from an interpreter who is a native speaker of the student's home language. A French interpreter helped me put the classroom performance

1. Names have been changed for the purpose of this article.



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of another student, Albert, into the correct cultural context..

Albert

Albert's classroom problems didn't seem related to his status as an English language learner. The second grader, attending his third school in the four months since he'd arrived from West Africa, displayed disturbing behaviors. He didn't make eye contact; he hit and kicked classmates; he paid little attention to verbal and physical cues.

During Albert's DLA, second language acquisition issues and the student's cultural background came to the forefront. Albert's initial demeanor at the testing site was in keeping with the concerns raised in his referral. He avoided eye contact and appeared apprehensive. When the interpreter engaged Albert in French, however, his demeanor changed and he appeared much more at ease, engaging in all the tasks asked of him. During the French portion of the assessment, Albert was fluent and sociable.

The interpreter, a native French speaker from Albert's home country, provided a number of insights into his previous academic environment. She noted that students in Albert's home country are taught that looking an adult in the eye

shows a lack of respect. She further observed that students are urged to respond in kind if someone gets physical with them, causing adjustment problems when they first move to the United States. These observations, along with the fact that Albert's home country school record showed no academic or social problems, led me to recommend monitoring his classroom performance. Albert's experience is consistent with research findings that "some behaviors that appear to indicate learning disabilities might be typical of the child's cultural background or a by-product of the acculturation process" (Klingner, Artiles, & Barletta, 2006, p. 114).

Ibrahim

My final student, Ibrahim, was a North African second grader whose first language was Arabic. Ibrahim's teachers expressed concern about his verbal skills, citing pronunciation problems and poor letter-sound correlation in his writing. These two issues seemed to have strong first-language roots.

During our conversation at the outset of the DLA, I recognized that Ibrahim displayed pronunciation patterns common among Arabic speakers learning English as a second language. Though his speech was indeed accented, I found him

intelligible. Working with the Arabic interpreter, I discovered that Ibrahim had consistent problems distinguishing between /b/ and /p/, and between /v/ and /f/. The interpreter reminded me that Arabic doesn't employ either /p/ or /v/, mentioning that the soft drink "Seven Up" might be pronounced "Sefen Ub" by an Arabic speaker. While this speech error is common among Arabic speakers, it also was reflected in Ibrahim's writing.

The experiences of Noi, Albert, and Ibrahim were selected to highlight those times when investigating the student's home language and culture provides information that puts a student's academic difficulties in a new context. Their cases demonstrate that a teacher's attention to first language and cultural issues (including pronunciation, syntax, and grammar) is a core component of the DLA's success.

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Connie Heath Thibeault is a teacher in Fairfax County Public Schools, and has worked with ESOL students of all ages since 1990.

The Role of Professional Development in Helping English Learners with Disabilities Achieve High Standards

Jana Echevarria, Ph.D.

In the quest to provide high quality instruction for English learners (ELs), including those with disabilities, the focus often is on finding research-based strategies, interventions, and methods that will help these students achieve high standards. However there is another factor that contributes to effective instructional programs: the way teachers implement those effective practices. Ongoing professional development and teacher support are critical for ensuring high levels of implementation so that these best practices have a positive impact on student achievement.

In many cases, special education personnel are not included in general education staff development sessions, and this exclusion perpetuates a perception that special education is a separate entity. In reality, students with disabilities are usually with their grade-level peers in general education for most of the day. General education teachers and special education teachers should participate in professional development alongside one another so that they work in concert to serve all students with best practices.

This article describes the elements of an effective professional development program that was used successfully with English learners with disabilities (Echevarria & Short, 2009). The case study shows that research-based practices coupled with effective professional development ensure high levels of implementation.

Effective Professional Development
Lela Alston Elementary School's population of approximately 400 K–Grade 3 students consisted of 70% English learners and 94% students who qualified for free or reduced breakfast and lunch. It was an inclusion school for special education; approximately 10% of the students had IEPs and were enrolled in the general education program.

In an effort to close the achievement gap between ELs and non-ELs, the goal of their professional development project was to improve the achievement of English learners in reading and oral language. All teachers ($n=23$) received training in the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOPI) Model of instruction (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2000; 2008). The SIOPI Model is a lesson planning and delivery system that shares many of the characteristics of effective instruction for general education and special education students alike, but also addresses the unique linguistic needs of English learners. The SIOPI Model consists of 8 components and 30 features that, when implemented well, have been shown to

increase student achievement (Echevarria, Short, & Powers, 2006; Echevarria, Richards, & Canges, in review; Short, Fidelman, & Louguit, in review).

A team from Alston School, consisting of the principal, the literacy coach, and a lead teacher, attended a SIOPI Institute to learn the model. Afterwards, they designed a professional development plan, through which the coach and lead teacher would train all the teachers at the school on one component of the SIOPI Model per quarter over two years. The elements of their professional development plan were consistent with those reflected in the standards for professional development (National Staff Development Council, 2001).

- Conducting whole staff trainings, including the principal, during quarterly early-release days focusing on one SIOPI component
- Co-planning SIOPI lessons with each teacher and providing individual coaching as needed

Eight Components of the SIOPI Model

Lesson Preparation – language and content objectives
 Building Background – vocabulary development, student connections
 Comprehensible Input – ESL techniques
 Strategies – metacognitive and cognitive strategies, scaffolding
 Interaction – develop oral language
 Practice & Application – practice all 4 language skills
 Lesson Delivery – meet objectives
 Review & Assessment – review lesson's vocabulary and concepts

- Videotaping of teachers' SIOP lessons so the coach and teacher could analyze the lesson together

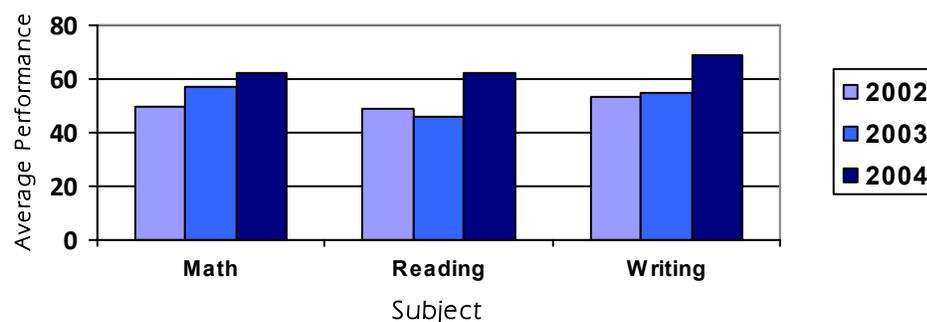
From interview data, we discovered teachers' perceptions of the impact of the SIOP professional development on their teaching and student learning, especially as it related to students with disabilities. The special education teacher who served as a resource specialist in general education classrooms commented:

SIOP has really held me accountable piece by piece of what I need to put in my lesson plans because 9 out of 10 of my special education students are also English learners. So there was a whole aspect of their education that I was missing [as a special education teacher].... The hands-on [activities], the small group interaction—all of the components really lend themselves toward making sure the special education students are active so I don't need to be there to know that they are engaged, to know that they are part of the class.... Any class you go into, a lot of times you can't even tell who the special education students are because they are with a group of students ... and involved in everything. It's been really neat to see that.

A first grade teacher who team taught with the special education teacher added:

The impact that the SIOP has had on children is that it really allows for all children to participate, it allows them to be involved in the lesson. Since I've been using the SIOP, I think students are just more engaged. Now we are ...

Alston School's Average Student Performance on State Tests, 2002–04



touching every child in the room so that they are succeeding.

Teachers' perceptions of the impact on students were reinforced by data from the state's annual standardized assessment, Arizona's Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS). Students made steady growth over the years (2002–04) as the SIOP Model was implemented. Further data analysis showed that when matched with similar neighboring schools, students at Alston School outperformed students in those schools in the areas of reading, writing, and math. Finally, the performance of third graders who had attended Alston since kindergarten (during the years that teachers received professional development and were implementing the SIOP Model) was examined and it was found that 86% of those students who had SIOP-trained teachers exclusively were performing at or above grade level (50% at grade level; 36% above grade level) as measured by the AIMS assessment.

Conclusion

For teachers to learn and implement research-validated practices well, there must be a commitment to ongoing professional development, including teacher support in

the classrooms. In our extensive work on professional development with the SIOP Model (Echevarria, Short, & Vogt, 2008), we have witnessed the academic and social benefits of collaboration between general education and special education teachers, such as that illustrated in the Alston School exemplar.

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Jana Echevarria is Professor Emerita at California State University, Long Beach.

ELLs with Disabilities: National Overview

For school year 2005-06 (the most recent year for which comparable data are available), states reported to the U.S. Department of Education:

- 4,985,120 students classified as ELL
- 6,089,529 students served by IDEA
- 490,949 ELL students served by IDEA

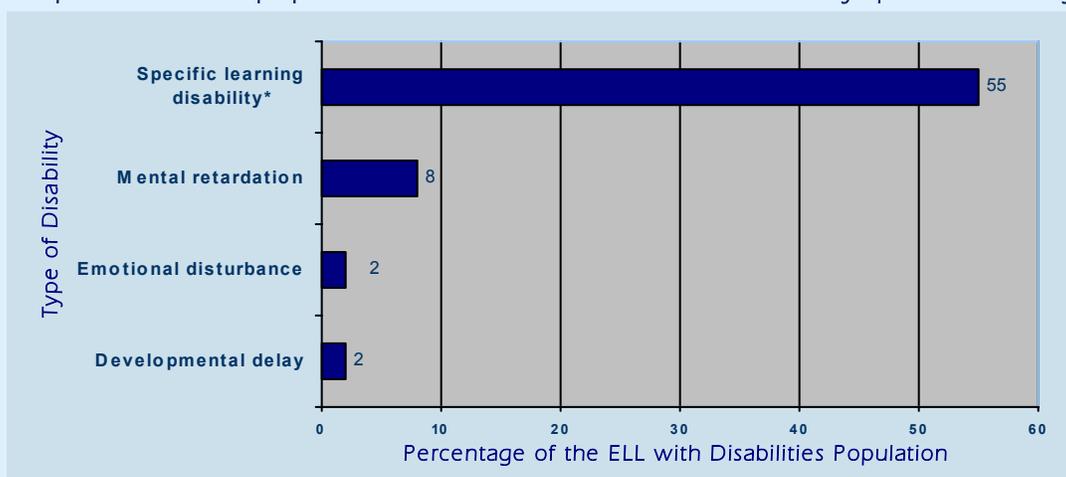
(Data on students classified as ELL from U.S. Department of Education, Office of English Language Acquisition, 2008; data on students served by IDEA from U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, 2008)

The U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) publishes estimates of populations of students based on sampling school districts. Based on these samples, OCR estimates that ELL students are most likely to be categorized as having a specific learning disability. Specific learning disabilities are disorders in the psychological processes involved in using language, including perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia.

ELLs with disabilities: Quick facts

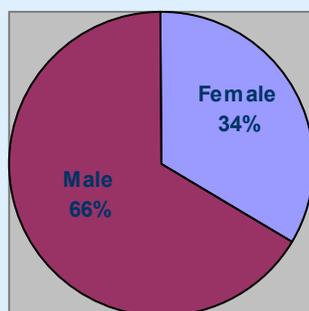
- There were approximately 500,000 ELLs with disabilities served in 2007.
- The number of ELLs with disabilities constitutes around 10% of the total ELL population.
- As with the general population of students with disabilities, ELLs with disabilities are disproportionately male.

2006 Office for Civil Rights estimates on ELL students:
Proportions of the population of ELL students with disabilities, by specific disability



* Refers to a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language.

ELL students with disabilities, by sex



Students with disabilities are disproportionately male, and this trend is reflected among ELL students. Of disabled students enrolled in ELL programs, OCR estimates almost twice as many male students as female.

ELLs with Disabilities: National Overview

Limited English Proficient Children served under IDEA Part B, by state

State	Number of Children	Percentage of Children	State	Number of Children	Percentage of Children
Alabama	1,307	1.54	Montana	931	5.13
Alaska	2,704	15.42	Nebraska	2,229	4.88
Arizona	15,970	12.18	Nevada	8,411	17.40
Arkansas	2,591	3.93	New Hampshire	-	.
California	184,226	27.46	New Jersey	4,380	1.75
Colorado	10,030	12.07	New Mexico	9,513	20.51
Connecticut	3,662	5.31	New York	32,927	7.26
Delaware	51	0.26	North Carolina	7,530	3.93
District of Columbia	564	5.19	North Dakota	122	0.90
Florida	25,987	6.64	Ohio	2,559	0.95
Georgia	5,356	2.83	Oklahoma	2,587	2.71
Hawaii	1,396	6.83	Oregon	7,694	9.83
Idaho	1,510	5.39	Pennsylvania	5,894	2.01
Illinois	5,042	1.57	Rhode Island	869	2.99
Indiana	2,743	1.53	South Carolina	2,461	2.37
Iowa	2,308	3.34	South Dakota	765	4.26
Kansas	2,983	4.54	Tennessee	1,302	1.08
Kentucky	1,118	1.02	Texas	78,009	16.50
Louisiana	594	0.67	Utah	5,592	8.87
Maine	406	1.18	Vermont	-	.
Maryland	3,433	3.28	Virginia	4,154	2.47
Massachusetts	8,626	5.17	Washington	8,458	6.84
Michigan	2,927	1.24	West Virginia	177	0.37
Minnesota	6,433	5.39	Wisconsin	5,708	4.51
Mississippi	366	0.56	Wyoming	2,845	19.96
Missouri	990	0.72	Bureau of Indian Education schools	2,509	35.55
Total				490,949	7.46

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, Data Analysis System (DANS), OMB #1820-0043: "Children with Disabilities Receiving Special Education Under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act," 2007.

- California served the largest number of LEP children in IDEA programs; California is also the state with the largest population of LEP children.
- California was also the state with the highest proportion of LEP children in IDEA programs.

CAUTION: Readers should take care to note that the proportion of children served by IDEA who are classified as LEP is not the same as the proportion of the LEP population who are served by IDEA, and particularly should not interpret a high percentage of LEP children in the above table as evidence of over-representation; it may simply be evidence of a large LEP population in the state.

SOURCES:

U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights. (n.d.). State and National Projections for Disabled Students and Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Students—Selected Items by Sex. Civil Rights Data Collection 2006. Available from <http://ocrdata.ed.gov/ocr2006v30/wdsdata.html>

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Mathematics Think Aloud: Research Findings on a Field-Identified Teaching Strategy for ELLs with Disabilities

Kristin Liu, Manuel Barrera, Ph.D., & Martha Thurlow Ph.D.

Overview

Federal education legislation emphasizes effective and accountable education for all students, including English language learners with disabilities. However, improvement in the standards-based academic achievement of ELLs with disabilities has not kept pace with that of their peers (Albus, Thurlow, Barrera, Guven, & Shyyan, 2004; Albus, Thurlow, & Liu, 2009; Liu, Barrera, Thurlow, Guven, & Shyyan, 2005; Liu, Thurlow, Barrera, Guven, & Shyyan, 2005).

There may be a variety of reasons for low test scores. School systems may not have made needed curriculum adjustments in grade-level content to serve these students (Artiles & Ortiz, 2002). Educators may not have the necessary training to address the interaction between students' language-learning and disability-related characteristics. Educators also may lack information about teaching strategies that support content-learning for ELLs with disabilities.

Research on instructional practices validated for ELLs with disabilities is scarce and often is inferred from practices used with general populations of learners (cf. Thurlow, Albus, Shyyan, Liu, & Barrera, 2004). In the absence of empirically-validated research on teaching strategies for ELLs with disabilities, educators in the field may provide insights based on their current practice. These insights could then form the basis for

more rigorous empirical studies (Shyyan, Thurlow, & Liu, 2008).

This article connects information from two federally-funded projects, conducted by the National Center on Educational Outcomes, in which teacher insights on current practice helped to inform new research. One project identified teaching strategies recommended by successful middle-school teachers nationwide, and a second project collected research data validating one of those strategies: mathematics "think aloud."

Studies and Findings

Study 1: A group of 42 educators, from five schools in urban and suburban Midwestern districts, used a structured brainstorming procedure called Multi-Attribute Consensus Building (MACB; cf. Vanderwood, Ysseldyke, & Thurlow, 1993) to identify recommended reading, mathematics, and science instructional strategies (see Thurlow et al., 2004, for a comprehensive list). Educators in the study identified teacher and student "think alouds" among the most highly recommended strategies. These identified strategies served as a starting point for single subject intervention studies (Barrera, Liu, Thurlow, Shyyan, Yan, & Chamberlain, 2006). In addition, in research studies conducted with over 100 successful middle-school teachers nationwide (Barrera, Shyyan, Liu, & Thurlow, 2008; Thurlow, Shyyan, Barrera, & Liu, 2008), teachers weighted think-aloud strategies among the most important strate-

gies for teaching grade-level, standards-based mathematics to English language learners with disabilities. Finally, the think-aloud strategy resonates with other focus-group studies (Gersten, Baker, & Marks, 1998), but to the best of our knowledge it has not been studied previously with these students.

Study 2: As follow up, we investigated the combination of teacher think aloud and student think aloud in a single-subject study with four middle-school ELLs with learning disabilities; one Hmong student taught individually by an ESL teacher and three Mexican-American students taught in a small group by a special education teacher (Barrera et al., 2006).

We designed a procedure that teachers could implement individually based on "self-regulated" "instructional strategy development" (Moore, Reith, & Ebeling, 1993; Leon & Pepe, 1983). The think-aloud strategy included a series of sequenced questions asked out loud to be answered by the problem solver (e.g., "What does the problem say?"). In this procedure, teachers first modeled the asking and answering of the questions, then gradually allowed the students to ask and answer their own questions.

The research team trained the two middle-school teachers (one English-as-a-second-language [ESL] teacher and one special education

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teacher) in how to implement the strategy based on a grade-level, standards-based mathematics objective written individually for the students involved in the study. Researchers collected pre-assessment data at the beginning of each study and post-assessment data at the end of each intervention. Pre-assessment data included the students' state test results, IEP records, and content-area test results. In addition to frequent teacher observations and reports, the research team conducted three observations of each student during intervention.

The teacher of the Hmong student worked with a team to identify the minimum prerequisite math skills the student needed to achieve the converting of improper to proper fractions. The teacher first imple-

mented the think-aloud strategy with content related to prerequisite skills before moving on to teaching the student how to convert improper fractions.

The teacher of the three Mexican-American students focused on students' limited skill in solving for an unknown variable. This teacher worked with the students together and implemented the think-aloud strategy first with easy, relatively familiar mathematics content. As the students' independent use of the strategy increased, the teacher then moved on to the less familiar content based on her stated objective.

Results

At the end of the study, the Hmong student had made considerable progress despite needing additional

time to master the objective. The Mexican-American students demonstrated some initial fluctuations in outcomes on content-based measures as the think-aloud strategy was introduced. However, they mastered the think-aloud strategy and then showed continuous skill improvement in solving for algebraic unknowns. Our results also provided important information on how teachers adjusted their instruction to match a student's specific needs.

The fact that all of the students (Hmong and Spanish-speaking) registered improvement in the use of the strategy alongside content mastery indicates the potential of this strategy for improving student academic outcomes.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The “think aloud” is a strategy identified by teachers who have worked with ELLs with disabilities (Thurlow et al., 2004) and suggested as a strategy within published scholarship on this issue (Gersten et al., 1998). Yet, little empirical evidence has been provided to validate the use of such strategies with this or other similar groups of learners. We believe that our research begins to provide such a base of knowledge. We hope that the current emphasis on improving instruction through the use of empirically-supported research will include further efforts to validate strategies for use with English language learners who have disabilities.

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Kristin Liu is a Senior Research Fellow at the National Center on Educational Outcomes in Minneapolis, MN.

Manuel Barrera is a Research Associate at the National Center on Educational Outcomes and an Assistant Professor in the Urban Teacher Program at Metropolitan State University in Minneapolis, MN.

Martha Thurlow is the Director of the National Center on Educational Outcomes in Minneapolis, MN.

Introducing the new NCELA Executive Director: Judith Wilde, Ph.D.

We are pleased to announce the return of Judith Wilde to NCELA in the role of Executive Director. Many of you know Judith from her previous work leading NCELA's efforts in the areas of ELL assessment and accountability as described within Title I and Title III of the *No Child Left Behind Act*. Judith spent the last year in the world of higher education accreditation, adding to a career of over 20 years of experience in the education of ELL students, primarily in federally-funded centers. “I am looking forward to this new challenge and to returning to my work with colleagues across the states and at OELA,” Dr. Wilde has said.

Her past work environments include the Evaluation Assistance Center-Western Region, where she provided assistance with the assessment of ELL students and the evaluation of projects serving them in the 26 western states, the Southwest Comprehensive Regional Assistance Center, where she provided technical assistance to state and local Title I, Title III, and Title VII leaders, and NCELA, where she provided leadership and assistance to staff and local and state leaders. She has developed a number of monographs, book chapters, and presentations on the assessment of ELLs' English-language proficiency and academic achievement for NCELA and others, as well as leading evaluation efforts in projects serving ELLs and other students at risk of educational failure. In addition, Judith has been active in research in various local, state, and national venues and has taught graduate level statistics and research classes. As many of you know, Judith also is an active golfer and hot-air balloon pilot.

Research Review: New Study Addresses Impact of the English Only Movement in Boston Public Schools

Tung, R., Uriarte, M., Diez, V., Lavan, N., Agusti, N., Karp, F., & Meschede, T. (2009). *English Learners in Boston Public Schools: Enrollment, Engagement and Academic Outcomes, AY2003–AY2006*. Boston, MA: The Mauricio Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy. Available at http://www.gaston.umb.edu/articles/2009%20Final%20ELL%20Report_online.pdf

The English Only movement started in 1998 with the passage of Proposition 227 in California, followed by Proposition 203 in Arizona (2000), and a similar referendum in Massachusetts (2002), all supported by businessman Ron Unz. In the fall of 2003, the state of Massachusetts implemented changes in instructional practices for English language learners as a result of the passage of this initiative. Prior to the change, Boston Public Schools had in place a wide range of bilingual programs, including Transitional Bilingual Programs (TBE). TBE uses students' home languages to teach grade level appropriate academic content while students are acquiring English. Since the change in the law, limited English proficient (LEP) students have been offered a Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) program, in which simplified English is used to teach academic content, using students' home languages only to assist students in completing a project, to clarify concepts, or to answer questions. Under the new law, students can be placed in SEI

programs for no more than one year and then must be transitioned to mainstream classrooms. Alternatively, parents can "waive" SEI placement and have their students placed immediately in general education classes.

Twenty-nine percent of Massachusetts' English language learners are enrolled in Boston Public Schools, and of the total population of BPS students, ELLs comprise 23%. The outcomes of the changes in instructional programs for ELLs in Boston have yet to be clearly understood, but a report released recently by the Mauricio Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy in collaboration with the Center for Collaborative Education at the University of Massachusetts, Boston attempts to define some of the trends and impacts. The report compares the trends in enrollment and academic outcomes from 2003–06 for limited English proficient students (LEPs), defined as students whose first language is other than English and

who are unable to perform ordinary class work in English; English Learners (ELs), defined as LEPs enrolled in a program for English language development; and native English speakers (NES).

The study notes that the proportion of ELs participating in special education programs has increased at a greater rate than for other populations: from 6.6% to 9.2% in full or partial inclusion programs and from 4.8% to 10.9% in substantially separate programs since the passage of the law. The study recommends that BPS improve the process of assessment of special education needs for English Learners and recruit and retain teachers and staff who have the language, cultural, and academic expertise to assess whether a learning difficulty is a language need or another service need.

Reviewed by Bobbi Ciriza Houtchens, Teaching Fellow, U.S. Department of Education.

To learn more about states with English-only legislation

Parrish, T.B., Perez, M., Merickel, A., & Linqianti, R. (2006). **Effects of the Implementation of Proposition 227 on the Education of English Learners, K-12—Findings from a Five-Year Evaluation: Final Report.** Conclusions from a five-year study of 1.5 million California English learner and 3.5 million English-fluent and native-English speaking students, includes detailed findings and policy implications for education in California and nationwide. Summary and full report available from www.wested.org/cs/we/view/rs/804

Wright, W.E. & Pu, C. (2005). **Academic Achievement of English Language Learners in Post Proposition 203 Arizona.** A study to explore the claims made by Arizona state public education officials that ELLs are thriving under English-only instruction. Also note that the U.S. Supreme Court currently is considering a case related to Proposition 203 and the *Flores Consent Decree*. See www.supremecourt.us/oral_arguments/argument_transcripts/08-289.pdf

Bridging Systems to Address Under-Representation of English Language Learners (ELLs) in Special Education

Elizabeth Watkins

English language learners (ELLs) with disabilities have needs that fall within multiple educational programs. ELLs are members of a school and participate in educational programs that are offered to all students. However, many schools have created separate silos for programs that go above and beyond “regular” programming; ELL services often are contained in one silo and special education services are in another. Educators from all programs must come together with families to meet the needs of ELLs with disabilities. This article outlines how districts in Minnesota are using the regulatory framework for special education to build bridges between separate programs while focusing on student outcomes.

All states currently are required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to analyze numeric student data as well as district practices to determine whether students of various ethnicities are disproportionately represented in special education programs. This is part of each state’s State Performance Plan (SPP). States must report in their Annual Performance Report (APR) on the percentage of districts that have disproportionate representation due to inappropriate identification practices. State agencies and school districts must address both over- and under-representation in special education as a whole and in individual disability categories. Districts that are identified as having concerns must carry out an in-depth review of their poli-

cies, procedures and practices. The National Center for Culturally Responsive Educational Systems (NCCRESt) provides data tables for each state on its website.¹ While these tables are based upon student’s ethnic identification, they provide a starting point for considering ELL issues. The tables report risk ratios for each ethnic group in comparison with the subtotal of all other races. Ratios less than 1.0 indicate that a group is less likely to be identified as having disabilities. Thirteen states have risk ratios less than .70 for Latino students. The lowest risk ratio for Latinos is .51, meaning that Latino students are only half as likely as students of other ethnic groups to be placed in special education. For Asian students, 46 out of 50 states have risk ratios less than .70. The lowest ratio for Asian students is .32, meaning that these students are only one-third as likely as students of other races to be identified as having disabilities.

All states currently are required to report by ethnicity, but some states are examining data by ELL status as well. In Minnesota, data have been disaggregated by ethnicity and home language. This has shown that students of all ethnicities from second language backgrounds are, in general, under represented in special education programs. There is some variation across districts. The districts that have been identified as having disproportionate representation review their practices using a

1. <http://nccrest.eddata.net/maps/index.php>

template for evaluating ELLs. This has opened lines of communication and improved collaboration between ELL and special education programs.

Quantitative data on disability rates of ELLs do not answer the central questions. *Is under-representation a positive or negative factor? Are low special education rates evidence of a problem?* In order to answer these questions, special education leaders must work with lead ELL staff to examine a variety of other data.

- Are ELLs making progress toward proficiency in English?
- Are ELLs achieving in content areas, particularly the critical areas of reading and math?
- Are ELLs graduating from high school? Are they staying in school?
- Are ELLs engaged in the overall school community? Do they have friends and participate in activities? Or, do they have behavior problems, frequent absences, and difficulty adjusting to life in the U.S.?
- Is there evidence that ELLs are having significant problems outside of school?

When students are doing well, few people within special education will insist that more should be identified as having disabilities. However, if there is evidence that ELLs are not doing well, then ELL and special educators should consider the possibility that students are being ex-

cluded from services that could help them. ELL staff and special educators can begin by having a dialogue about some basic questions.

- For schools that are establishing tiered intervention programs for academics and behavior, how are the needs of ELLs being considered at each level?
- Are there written policies or informal barriers within a school district that prevent referrals of ELLs?
- Are there barriers in state criteria for disabilities that prevent identification of ELLs?
- Do special educators need staff development in order to improve their knowledge and skills to work with ELLs? Do other personnel need staff development?
- Do schools have access to the

necessary materials and human resources, including persons with knowledge of students' native language(s)?

In Minnesota, a team of consultants has been trained to help districts work through questions related to ethnic and racial disproportionalities in special education and set priorities for improvement and future actions. This federal reporting requirement thus has become a catalyst for improved communication around the needs of ELLs.

Readers of this article are encouraged to follow up in your own states.

- *Learn about your state's process for identifying districts with dispro-*

portionate representation.

- *Find out where your district stands in relation to disproportionate representation. Calculate the rates of special education identification for ELL and non-ELL in your district.*
- *Begin discussions of the questions found in this article at the building and district level.*

Examination of special education rates is a mandatory process, but it can be a powerful tool to build bridges between ELL and special education.

Elizabeth Watkins is a Special Education Diversity Consultant in the Special Education Policy Division, Minnesota Department of Education.

Federal Funding Opportunities & Information

2009 Foreign Language Assistance Program

The Foreign Language Assistance Program (FLAP) provides grants to local educational agencies (LEAs) for innovative model programs providing for the establishment, improvement, or expansion of foreign language study for elementary and secondary school students. An LEA that receives a grant under this program must use the funds to support programs that show promise of being continued beyond the grant period and demonstrate approaches that can be disseminated to and duplicated in other LEAs. Projects supported under this program may also include a professional development component.

There are six competitive preference priorities under the program, including a priority to support projects which teach Arabic, Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Russian, and languages in the Indic, Iranian, and Turkic language families.

Further details can be found on NCELA's website at <http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/grants/view/flap>

Institute for Education Sciences FY2010 Request For Applications (RFAs)

The five NCER RFAs are: Education Research Grants (84.305A); Postdoctoral Education Research Training Program in the Education Sciences (84.305B); Education Research and Development Center Program (84.305C); Statistical and Research Methodology in Education (84.305D); and Evaluation of State and Local Education Programs and Policies (84.305E).

The three NCSER RFAs are: Special Education Research Grants (84.324A); Special Education Postdoctoral Research Training Program (84.324B); and Special Education Research and Development Center Program (84.324C).

The RFAs are available at: <http://ies.ed.gov/funding/>

For Technical Assistance and Dissemination regarding students with disabilities, check out

OSEP's Placemat

The U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) publishes a directory of technical assistance and dissemination providers. This information is available from www.rrfcnetwork.org/content/view/137/192.

The technical assistance and dissemination network is composed of

- Six regional resource centers;
- Resource centers dedicated to Data Management, Learning Disabilities Initiative, Early Childhood, Outcomes, Diversity, Secondary/Postsecondary, Dispute Resolution, Deaf-Blind, Professional Development/Personnel, Technology, Instruction/Behavior, Leadership, and National Parent Technical Assistance Center;
- Sixteen regional Comprehensive Centers and five Content Centers; and
- Ten Equity Assistance Centers providing support in the fields of race, gender, and national-origin equity to public school districts in order to encourage equal educational opportunities.



To visit the OSEP website, go to www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/osep/index.html.

Compiled by Jong-Hoon Kim, NCELA Intern.

New Resource: The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act: Recommendations for Addressing the Needs of English Language Learners, The Working Group on ELL Policy

The primary purpose of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) is to stimulate economic recovery, including in the education sector. This report offers a set of recommendations that target specific opportunities for improving ELL outcomes through ARRA allocations. The group of researchers making these recommendations has extensive experience in the education of ELL students and a substantial understanding of the research base on effective strategies for this population. The intended audience is the vast national network of administrators and professionals at the federal, state, and local levels who will determine how the ARRA funds will be used. The purpose of these recommendations is to generate discussion and guide decision-making when the question is: "How can we use ARRA funds to better serve the English language learners in our program?"

<http://www.stanford.edu/~hakuta/ARRA/>