AccELLerate!

The quarterly review of the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition

English Learners with Special Needs

In this spring issue, we are pleased to offer theory, research, and practice articles that address the characteristics of English learners with special needs (ELSN), effective intervention practices, and recommendations for professional development. Three papers focus on issues related to the identification process: Barker and Grassi discuss the need for culturally responsive practices, Estrada and Lavadenz look at the proportion of ELs identified with specific learning disabilities, and Sanchez et al. compare pre-referral processes among school districts. Two articles—Peña et al. and Cobin et al.—point to the need to distinguish between language impairment and typical language development in elementary and middle-school ELs. Staehr Fenner turns our attention to the perceptions on students with interrupted formal schooling in the special education context; Villareal analyzes the beneficial impact of peer tutoring on tutor learning; and Trainor addresses the needs of ELs with disabilities during transition to adulthood. Two papers deal with professional development issues: Rice Doran provides a description of effective PD practices, and Samson reviews special education teacher preparation programs and coursework relevant to ELSN students. We also have a number of *Success Stories* and *Gems of Wisdom* providing practical implications and guidelines for practitioners in the field. Enjoy!

Culturally Responsive Practices for the Special Education Eligibility Process

Heidi B. Barker and Elizabeth Grassi

Introduction

There are significant gaps in the assessment of ELs with disabilities.
1. Teachers often lack the training to distinguish between a language/cultural acquisition process and a learning or emotional disability.
2. Standardized assessments cannot pinpoint if a child is an EL and has special needs.
3. Standardized assessments are not broad enough to include multiple contexts and multiple situations.
4. The cultural and linguistic voices of parents, families, and children do not always play a role in the assessment process.

Here, we illustrate how the assessment procedures already used to determine special education eligibility can be enhanced to include the families of ELSN students and take into account their language and culture [1].

Step 1—Noticing difficulty in the classroom

When noticing difficulties in the classroom with students who are learning English, it is important to consider that difficulties could stem from the language acquisition process or the cultural acquisition process rather than from a special education need.

Step 2—Teacher interventions

Teachers need to use appropriate intervention strategies, including small groups, more visuals/realia, the native language to support content instruction, three-way (written, spoken, and visual) models, and emphasis on key vocabulary and concepts.

Step 3—Intervention team

The Intervention team should be diversified to include a cultural liaison, the parents or caregivers, and a professional trained in ESL/bilingual education strategies. The cultural liaison should be (a) from the same culture and with the same language as the student to make sure the process is culturally appropriate and (b) an active participant in order to interpret the intervention team process to the parents and the student and to help the parents and the student voice their needs and observations. The ESL/bilingual professional should make recommendations to the student's general education or content-area teacher(s) concerning teaching interventions that might improve his/her academic and linguistic success.

Step 4—Acquiring parent permission

EL parents are often not proficient in English and may not fully know their rights, or understand documents they sign or the form and function of the evaluation [2]. A cultural liaison and an interpreter must have ample time to explain the process and answer questions. If the intervention team deems it necessary to conduct a full evaluation, then language and cultural interpretations and clear documentation become very important means to gain family support [3].

Step 5—Multidisciplinary evaluation

Evaluations should be conducted in the student's strongest language [2; 3]. If a version of the evaluation in the student's language is not available, then the protocol should be adjusted, and the student given more time or modifications that will allow him or her to perform at full capability. This information can be reported in a way that identifies the student's learning style and offers strategies that will help the child learn. Sometimes the information from a test can provide a richer description of the student than just the score.

Evaluators should understand the language acquisition process and be able to differentiate between a speech and/ or language impairment and the language acquisition process. For example, the evaluator should understand that ELs need time to process in more than one language and be familiar with the processes and sequences of SLA, the characteristics of an interlanguage, the intermediate states of a learner's second language[4; 5], and types of errors that EL students typically make [6]. Since ELs are still acquiring the culture, the evaluators should be able to differentiate between appropriate and inappropriate behaviors in the child's first culture [2] and be familiar with the concept of culture shock and associated behaviors, which may resemble the behavior of a student with special needs. In order to rule out the possibility of academic or behavioral struggles as a result of second language and cultural acquisition, it is important that

National Conversations on English Learner Education:
What makes for quality education for English learners in the 21ˢᵗ century?

NCELA is pleased to support the *National Conversations* meetings held this spring in six different locations around the country. The focus of the *National Conversations* is on eliciting information from key stakeholders regarding what we, as a community of educators and learners, (1) are doing best and should expand upon, (2) must change or stop doing completely, and/or (3) should start doing in order to improve the outcomes of the educational experience for EL students. Through frank and open roundtable discussions and question-and-answer sessions, the *National Conversations* aim to achieve the following:

- Highlight key issues,
- Identify promising practices and network, and
- Promote reform.

Primary site: **Dallas, TX**
Satellite site: **Chicago, IL**
February 10-11

Primary site: **Los Angeles, CA**
Satellite site: **Seattle, WA**
March 7-8

Primary site: **New York, NY**
Satellite site: **Charlotte, NC**
April 11-12

The key offices within the US Department of Education that are collaborating in this venture include OELA, OCR, OESE, OSERS, the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics, and the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. In addition, institutions of higher education, state education agencies, intermediate education agencies, local education agencies, advocacy organizations, and professional organizations have been involved in disseminating information and supporting the efforts to improve the quality of education provided to EL students throughout the country.

To register for the New York or Charlotte meeting, or to view the results of the previous meetings, visit http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/meetings/2011elconversation.

Having attended the meetings in both Dallas and Los Angeles, I can attest to the vibrant atmosphere and importance of the discussions. If you haven't considered the *National Conversations* yet, please do so—and join us in New York or Charlotte in April!

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Sometimes "Special" Means "Bilingual"

A fourth-grade EL student, Adrianna, had been in our school for about 3.5 years. She had received all of her instruction in English and intensive help from ESL teachers for reading, but had a history of poor academic performance. At the beginning of fourth grade, she was referred for a special education evaluation and was tested in English and Spanish to give her a fair opportunity to demonstrate knowledge. When Adrianna performed poorly on both tests, the teachers concluded that she had an LD. As logical as this conclusion may seem, certain critical caveats were overlooked. First, Adrianna was assessed in Spanish, with a grade-level test, although she had not been instructed in Spanish since first grade. Second, Adrianna did not have a translator during her first years in the all-English classroom and did not understand much of the content.

Subsequently, the team was encouraged to administer the Bilingual Verbal Abilities Test (BVAT) to obtain more information. Adrianna's performance was much better when she was allowed to use both English and Spanish. Much to the team's surprise, she still relied on Spanish much more than they had realized, and while she possessed basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) in English, she had not yet developed the cognitive academic language skills (CALP), and grade-level tasks in English remained difficult for her. She needed not special education, but ongoing language support and diagnostic interventions to address gaps in her language proficiency and her academic education. Subsequent success with language development interventions strongly supported this conclusion.

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schools evaluate the student's current level of cultural acquisition. We recommend including an *acculturation evaluation* as part of the multidisciplinary evaluation. We also recommend that the evaluators observe the child in multiple settings and at multiple times. Students may perform differently according to their comfort level in different settings. The evaluators should take note of differences in behavior and achievement according to setting [3].

Step 6—Multidisciplinary/IEP meeting

When working with EL students and their families, several points should be considered before and during an IEP meeting (adapted from [7]).

Before the IEP meeting
1. If there is not a bilingual special education program available, the team must decide on the most appropriate setting that provides (a) access to language development; (b) the least restrictive environment; (c) culturally relevant strategies and environment; and (d) support for the child's disability.

2. Make sure stakeholders have established a solid relationship with the family or caregivers first. Make time for informal conversations about the student and parent expectations for school.

3. Meet with the family before the IEP meeting and explain, in detail, the process: who will be there, what they will say, the tests that have been used and what they measure, questions the family can ask and how to ask them. Meeting with the caregivers first does not impede the collaboration of the IEP team, rather, this will encourage the active participation of family members and help them understand the IEP meeting [2].

During the IEP meeting
1. Make sure an interpreter, who is also a cultural liaison, is present. Do not use children to interpret and do not engage in direct translation [1].
2. Involve all stakeholders in decision-making and use terms that are accessible to all present.
3. Make the focus of the meeting on the functionality and the symptoms of the disorder. Do not use terms such as, "disability," "disorder," or "problem." Explain the symptoms, how they affect academic achievement, and detail the steps that can be taken to increase academic achievement.
4. Talk about the symptoms in an appropriate clinical and medical fashion.
5. Consider running the IEP meeting in a different format. It may not be necessary for each professional to summarize and explain their assessment results. Some of the data collected on the child may not be relevant to the issues that the team deems most important. The team should bring forth data that supports the creation of specific learning goals or provides evidence of the child's strengths, not data that emphasize the "problem."

Step 7– Monitoring progress

When reviewing the goals and objectives of a student, the cultural and language acquisition process must be listed in the IEP and continually monitored. It is important that ELSN continue to make growth in language and cultural acquisition and the IEP team must reevaluate this growth annually (at least). If progress in language and culture is not noted, then placement should be reconsidered. Teachers working with the ELSN should be well-versed in strategies to meet the particu-

lar needs of the student, and the teacher's interventions should be adjusted to the growth of the student. These special education eligibility steps can help evaluators determine each student's appropriate placement and the instructional strategies that will best meet his or her needs.

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Terms and Acronyms

NCELA is following the USDE's convention in using the term **English learners with special needs** (ELSN). Other terms which are used in the field to refer to this group of students include ELLWD (English language learners with disabilities) and CLDE (culturally and linguistically diverse students with exceptionalities). It is generally preferred practice to "put people first, not their disability," and to refer to, for example, "students with learning disabilities" and not "learning disabled students" (APA 2007, p. 75).

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Differences in the Processes for Identifying Learning Disabilities in ELs in Three Districts

María Teresa Sánchez, Anna McTigue, Caroline Parker, and Bercem Akbayin

When a student is struggling academically or behaviorally, schools and districts are encouraged to implement early intervention processes to investigate the reasons for the difficulties and to develop solutions [1]. When the struggling student is an EL, schools and districts may not designate a disability unless the data collected in the pre-referral period demonstrate that the challenges are not part of the normal language acquisition process. There are a variety of strategies for implementing early intervention [2], yet disentangling disability-related difficulties from second language development difficulties is challenging, and ELs are often misdiagnosed as having a disability, including an LD, while others are not properly identified and thus do not receive the necessary special education services [3; 4].

This article describes the differences in the processes for identifying LDs among ELs in middle schools in three mid-size districts in New York. While the three districts followed a similar process regardless of the students' native language and potential disability, the differences in four areas among the processes affected how professionals assessed and supported ELs. These areas were: staff organization, child study team roles, supports and interventions, and monitoring progress.

General staff organization for planning and problem solving. The three districts differed in the institutionalization of opportunities to discuss student progress and in access to staff with expertise in second language development, which promoted or hindered teachers' ability to plan instructional interventions effectively. District 2 (D2) and District 3 (D3) had formal structures to identify struggling students and collaboratively plan to address their issues. In D2, teachers discussed struggling students with other teachers and supported personnel in formal daily grade-level content meetings on a case-by-case basis. When struggling students were ELs, these teams had access to support personnel with second language development expertise, such as psychologists, social workers, and ESL teachers. D3 middle schools also were organized around grade-level content teams that met every other day. The ESL and special education teachers had separate grade-level meetings, but they could communicate with the grade-level content teams when needed. District 1 (D1) had no structure in place for teachers to identify struggling students, which reduced their ability to address systemically the specific learning needs of ELs. Instead, they reported discussing struggling students informally, on a case-by-case basis, with colleagues (other teachers, the principal, guidance counselors, a psychologist, social workers), who provided suggestions for instructional modifications and school supports.

Child study team (CST) staffing and roles. CST is a common way of organizing staff for early intervention. Students are referred to the CST when their issues are not resolved with the strategies identified in the grade-level teams. If the student is an EL, the CST should have personnel who understand the learning needs of ELs if they are to plan interventions accurately. In D2, when discussing an EL, the CST invited one or both of the school's bilingual support personnel. When the CST found it difficult to distinguish between second-language development issues and learning disabilities, the team might consult with district special education and EL staff. In D3, the team invited the bilingual community liaisons and consulted guidelines developed collaboratively by the EL and special education departments for additional guidance. At the time of this study, the D1 middle schools did not have a formal CST, so teachers addressed student needs informally with other school personnel.

Supports and interventions. The number of supports and interventions available in each middle school varied across the three districts, directly impacting the ability of teams to accurately assess and support ELs. At the time of the study, D2 was halfway through a three-year RtI pilot. D2 had started to build district and school capacity to provide interventions and program options to all struggling students that were previously available solely to students with IEPs. At the time of data collection, teachers were using a variety of interventions with ELs, and district officials were searching for more. The district was encouraging school personnel to take a problem-solving approach to each student's case and to exhaust all school support systems before suspecting a disability. D3 was in the early stages of RtI implementation. It was being rolled out in K–6 schools, and the leadership teams in the middle schools had received an introduction to the initiative.

One district official said that some of the RtI strategies, such as providing a variety of interventions to students before formally referring them for special education evaluations, were already in place. D1 officials were just getting familiarized with the state's RtI initiative. There was no formalized intervention system in place.

Monitoring student progress in interventions. Although the three districts followed up with all students who received supports and interventions, the approaches to monitoring student progress differed. In D2, the CST was in charge of monitoring student progress and establishing how long students received an intervention. Implementation of RtI has provided formalized channels for monitoring interventions. A few months before this study, D2 launched an online data system to document student progress. Student scores on a monthly reading test were entered into the program, which graphed the results to show students' progress. Teachers documented all interventions in their classrooms. In D3, as in D2, the CST determined how long a student received an intervention. However, progress monitoring occurred informally between teachers and the guidance counselor; if needed, the guidance counselor reconvened the CST to discuss further supports. In D1, each teacher monitored the supports and interventions

for students, and follow-up decisions were made through informal communication between teachers and other school personnel.

Summary. The three districts in the study had different levels of coordination and communication in place for meeting the needs of struggling students who were ELs, which had significant effect on the early intervention process. D2 and D3 were working to create systemic structures and supports that would meet the unique learning needs of ELs. D1 lacked the formal structures to ensure the collaborative expertise to accurately assess, support, and monitor student progress.

To assess and support ELs accurately and to ensure an accurate identification of special needs, teachers need to collaborate with each other, to have access to professionals with expertise in SLA and LDs, and to use a systemic process for intervention and progress monitoring. Districts need to look closely at the opportunities provided to their professionals to learn about second-language development and learning disabilities, and collaborate and problem solve around the issues on a consistent and systemic basis.

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'Recipe' for Success

How can professionals incorporate RtI in the instruction of ELs? One effective technique for both undergraduate teacher preparation candidates and practicing professionals is frequent and short training sessions. The following idea would take about 15 minutes per university class session, teacher collaboration time, or faculty meeting, and can be used over time.

• Develop a series of colored index cards of best -practice techniques for various "areas" of intervention (coded by areas such as cognitive, behavioral, communication, etc.). Also include each RtI tier (1, 2, 3) for which the intervention is appropriate, the "look for" of the current situation, research references, and assessments.

• Discuss a possible RtI at each session. A possible scenario is: a group of 20 educators is divided into four groups; each group receives the same four "intervention" cards, "reports out" each intervention, and discusses one of the four best practices presented. In the end, all participants have note cards to take away for later reference.

An enduring benefit of this approach is the potential for the professional to add new RtI tools for ELs to his/her teacher toolkit (or 'recipes' to their recipe boxes) throughout his/her career.

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Two to Untangle: Language Impairment and Language Differences in Bilinguals

Elizabeth D. Peña, Lisa M. Bedore, and Ronald B. Gillam

English learners are both over- and under-diagnosed with language impairment (LI). Educators struggle with making appropriate assessments and referrals of ELs when they appear to have difficulties with language learning. The question of whether a child's error patterns are associated with typical second language learning vs. indicators of LI is difficult to answer.

Over the last five years, we have been conducting a study sponsored by the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders to identify markers of LI in bilingual (Spanish-English) children.[1] Children in our study include simultaneous and sequential bilinguals. We screened 1,200 children before the beginning of kindergarten [1] using the Bilingual English Spanish Oral Screener (BESOS) [2]. The BESOS includes morphosyntax and semantics subtests, in Spanish and English, for a total of four subtests. A sample of 183 children who used both English and Spanish at least 20% of the time and scored below the 30th percentile on at least two of the four subtests were enrolled in a two-year longitudinal study of language development in English and Spanish.

We administered a language test battery in English and Spanish in kindergarten and first grade. After testing was completed, expert bilingual speech-language pathologists (SLPs) reviewed the language data and judged the children's language abilities in English and Spanish. A subset of 21 children was identified with language impairment via this process. While we are still in the process of analyzing our findings from this study, we have begun to identify guidelines that can be helpful in distinguishing between language impairment and typical language development in this population. Here we present two of these guidelines, focusing on understanding the context of language learning in bilinguals and use of a dual language approach for decision-making. We expand on each of these points via a case study of a young girl with LI and a same-age child with typical language development who had the same level of exposure to Spanish and English.

Case study: Preschool performance and language background

Two girls, each aged 67 months, with similar language experiences and exposure are included here. Both used Spanish at home and had early exposure to English. Table 1 displays their language background information. ALI was identified as having LI based on test and language sample data in Spanish and English in first grade; BNL was judged to have normal language (NL) development based on the same data collected when she was in first grade.

Both children's BESOS scores are displayed in Table 2. While ALI demonstrated more severe difficulties compared to BNL before kindergarten, BNL nonetheless demonstrated areas of difficulty that could be indicators of either language impairment or variation associated with normal second language learning. ALI had considerable discrepancies between morphosyntax and semantics in both languages. BNL on the other hand showed much stronger English semantics skills compared to her morphosyntactic skills in English. These discrepancies are sometimes considered to be an indicator of difficulty with language learning [3].

Case study: Kindergarten and first grade performance

Table 3 shows the two children's increasing differences in their test scores on the Bilingual English Spanish Assessment (BESA) [4] at kindergarten and first grade. Patterns of growth over time and errors can be understood in the context of their language experiences.

Influence of language experiences

The language learning environment is a critical first step to interpreting EL children's language performance. Age of exposure [5] and current time listening to and using each language [1] partially explain patterns of performance on language tests. Children with more long-term experience with both languages may have more stability of performance while those with more recent exposure to a second language may display more instability in both their languages. Both girls start with very low English morphosyntax scores. Acquisition of English morphosyntax is challenging and dual language input (near 50% for both girls) may lead to only partial knowledge of

Table 1. Demographic Data for ALI and BNL

Child	Diagnosis	Sex	Socioeconomic Status	Age (months)	Spanish PK Input/ Output (%)	English PK Input/ Output (%)	Age of First English Exposure
ALI	LI	female	free lunch	67	47/47	53/53	3
BNL	NL	female	free lunch	67	50/50	50/50	1

Table 2. Screening Score Outcomes

	BESOS English		BESOS Spanish	
	Morphosyntax	Semantics	Morphosyntax	Semantics
ALI	6%	64%	6%	33%
BNL	0%	45%	56%	67%
Fluent speaker norm*	56%	65%	67%	68%

*The norms are the means for bilingual and monolingual children between 66 and 71 months of age. They are based on the stronger language of bilingual children and include both Spanish and English for balanced bilingual children.

the two languages early on. Over time BNL makes large gains in Spanish and steady gains in English. In contrast, ALI is less able to take advantage of input in each language and her gains are slower. Cumulative input may interact with ability and opportunity to use the two languages. Only by collecting information about language history can we account for these patterns.

Test scores together
It is well-documented that bilinguals have knowledge distributed across two languages. At the same time many U.S. EL children shift in dominance as English exposure increases over time. But these are not wholesale changes. For example, ELs in a cross-sectional sample showed dominance in English on a measure of receptive vocabulary at an earlier age than expressive dominance [5;6].

Thus, across domains of languages it is important to examine both languages. An important consideration is how to include both languages in the decision-making process. With psychometrically parallel tests, it is possible to compare each test or subtest in a language battery and to use the score in the better language.

In the current case we see that, if we focus on the child's stronger language, we can make decisions about the child's language learning ability as a whole. In ALI's case we see that her skills are consistently low and that English is lower than Spanish. In BNL's case we see change in first grade showing a shift to English with a higher English semantics score but higher Spanish morphosyntax and phonology scores.

Summary
The case studies of ALI and BNL illustrate a common question faced by educators deciding whether a bilingual child should be referred for further testing for language learning difficulties. They demonstrate low scores, particularly in morphosyntax, in the face of reduced input. Two principles that inform the decision-making process about their language skills are (1) the influence of language experience and (2) taking test scores together. We see in the case of both girls that variable scores are associated with divided input. But even with divided input, BNL is able to make gains so that by grade 1 her scores on the BESA are in the expected range in Spanish and approaching the expected range in English. We see a gradual shift toward English dominance in BNL with a split between Spanish and English. Systematically collecting data about the history and testing current language skills must be a part of language assessment.

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Table 3. Kindergarten and First Grade BESA Percentage Scores

	ALI				BNL			
	Kindergarten		First Grade		Kindergarten		First Grade	
Subtest	English	Spanish	English	Spanish	English	Spanish	English	Spanish
Semantics	60%	57%	60%	76%	67%	69%	83%	78%
Grammatical Cloze	3%	13%	16%	22%	28%	74%	38%	65%
Sentence Repetition	3%	35%	32%	55%	35%	63%	26%	76%
Phonology	75%	83%	83%	91%	90%	92%	94%	98%

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Incorporating Home Language and Culture Reports

The historical overrepresentation of ELs in special education causes educators to question monolingual-based practices [1] and remind themselves that "not all cultures define behaviors considered problematic in U.S. schools as deviant or abnormal" [1: 61]. The view of cognitive development as emerging from a sociocultural context highlights the importance of educators' learning more about the cultures of ELs [2].

When interpreting the behaviors and academic performance of ELs and planning interventions, educators should consider the dynamic factors inherent in ELs' lives [3;4]. While native language and literacy skills can support second-language learning and predict academic success [5;6], shifts in the home, community, and school that decrease native language input can result in the loss of resources to ELs [7] and decreased opportunities to process academic concepts. To differentiate disability from difference, to identify ELs with special needs accurately and sensitively, and to improve special education evaluation, our school district incorporated Home Language and Culture Reports (HLCR).

The HLCR begins with a family interview, conducted by a bilingual specialist, in the home if possible, at school, or over the phone. Beginning with the premise that families are experts and resources, the HLC Family Interview elicits their perspective of their culture, their language, and their child. The interviewer listens with an open mind, posing open-ended questions related to: home language/literacy history, use, and practices; views on social/emotional development, discipline, self-help, health, learning, and disability; the child's strengths and needs; and the family's long-term goals for the child as a developing bilingual person.

Following the HLCR interview, the bilingual specialist summarizes the information and makes recommendations to the educational team regarding linguistic and cultural consideration to take into account when interpreting student performance and designing and administering the student evaluation. The team then can add their own recommendations. The incorporation of the HLCR is a critical first step in the district's efforts to learn more about our diverse students [8] and enhance the competence of our staff. It has allowed us to make responsible decisions and build a cross-disciplinary collaboration that better supports our EL population.

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ELs with Special Needs: National Overview

Quick Facts

- Estimates of the size of the overall EL population for the 2008 school year ranged from 4.7 to 5.1 million students.
- Special education child counts for 2008 indicated that there were 500,964 ELSN in the 50 states, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) schools.
- The greatest number of ELSNs were students with specific learning disabilities and speech/language impairments.
- There are high incidences of ELSNs in states with higher numbers of ELs, including California, Texas, Florida, and New York.

English Learners Served under *IDEA* Part B, by State, 2008
(including the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and BIE schools)

State	Number of ELs with Disabilities	Percentage of EL Students with Disabilities	State	Number of ELs with Disabilities	Percentage of EL Students with Disabilities
Alabama	1,452	1.75	Nebraska	1,960	4.45
Alaska	2,117	11.99	Nevada	8,069	16.70
Arizona	14,093	11.29	New Hampshire	188	0.62
Arkansas	2,869	4.43	New Jersey	2,867	1.28
California	190,302	28.36	New Mexico	9,419	20.50
Colorado	9,465	11.32	New York	33,036	7.43
Connecticut	3,894	5.66	North Carolina	9,198	4.90
Delaware	828	4.34	North Dakota	279	2.10
District of Columbia	605	5.67	Ohio	2,981	1.13
Florida	25,965	6.74	Oklahoma	2,706	2.88
Georgia	5,455	3.04	Oregon	6,336	7.98
Hawaii	1,527	7.59	Pennsylvania	5,796	1.97
Idaho	1,661	5.95	Rhode Island	821	2.98
Illinois	12,968	4.07	South Carolina	5,186	5.09
Indiana	3,064	1.74	South Dakota	759	4.25
Iowa	2,118	3.14	Tennessee	1,041	0.88
Kansas	3,006	4.57	Texas	69,879	15.45
Kentucky	1,118	1.04	Utah	5,607	8.62
Louisiana	667	0.78	Vermont	No data	No data
Maine	409	1.23	Virginia	4,856	2.91
Maryland	4,382	4.24	Washington	9,223	7.36
Massachusetts	9,132	5.42	West Virginia	166	0.35
Michigan	3,004	1.29	Wisconsin	5,998	4.79
Minnesota	6,791	5.66	Wyoming	389	2.63
Mississippi	359	0.56	Puerto Rico	231	0.22
Missouri	3,752	2.82	BIE Schools	2,336	34.71
Montana	634	3.59	50 states, D.C., P.R., BIE	500,964	7.60

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

Type of Disability

Specific learning disability*	55
Mental retardation	8
Emotional disturbance	2
Developmental delay	2

0   20   40   60   80   100

Percentage of the EL with Disabilities Population

*Refers to a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or using language.
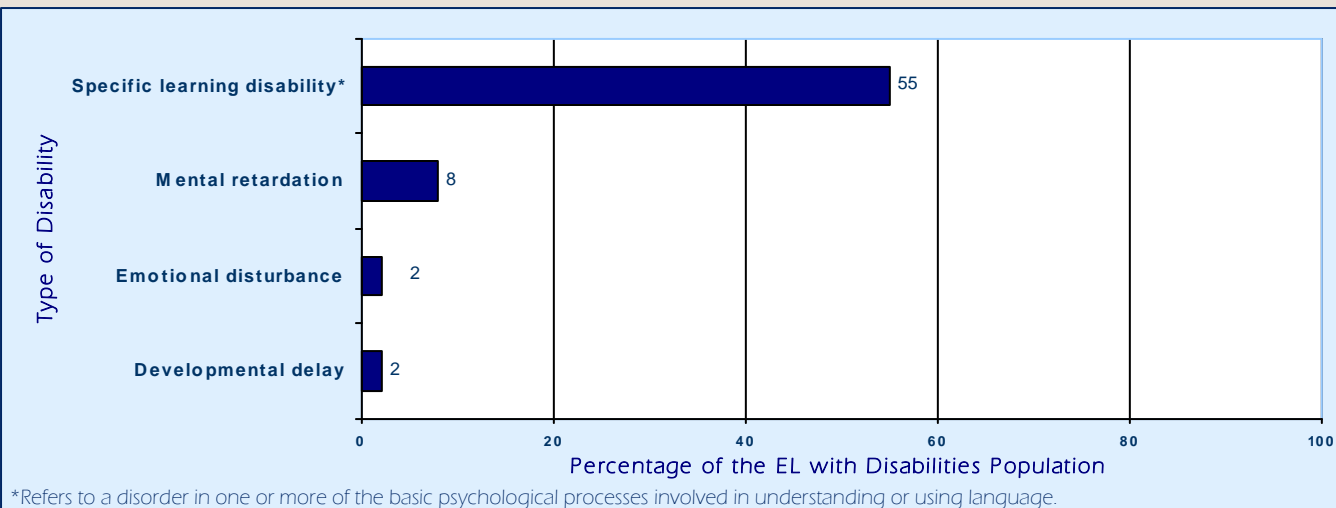
EL students with disabilities, by sex

Female 34%

Male 66%
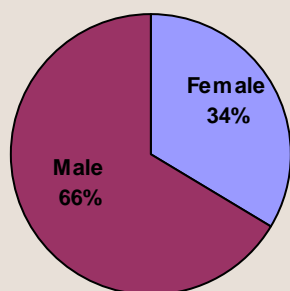
Students with disabilities are disproportionately male, and this trend is reflected among EL students. Of disabled students enrolled in EL programs, OCR estimates almost twice as many male students as female.

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ask*NCELA*'s Inbox
in which we highlight the answers to commonly asked questions that appear in our e-mail inbox.

Q: What resources are available to practitioners working with ELs with special needs ?

USDE's Office for Special Education Programs (OSEP) sponsors centers that provide technical assistance and resources to practitioners working with ELSN students. Information is available at: http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/t3sis/state/national/sped.

The IRIS Center for Training Enhancements has free online interactive resources that translate research about the education of students with disabilities (including ELs) into practice. The materials cover a wide variety of topics (e.g., behavior, learning strategies, progress monitoring, and various components of RtI) and are available at http://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/index.html.

Worry or Wait?
The Dilemma to Refer English Learners for Special Education
Peter Cobin, Shane Templeton, and Kendall Burner

The decision to refer an EL for special education is a difficult one. In our district, we have conducted the Student Oral Proficiency Assessment (SOPA) interviews [1] with more than 100 students of concern. About three-quarters of these students are at the intermediate-mid level—they use sentences that are descriptive and sometimes complex, but are not able to use paragraph-like language. This is hardly a random sample, so we are not generalizing from these results, but they do raise the following questions. Why are so many students of concern at this particular level? Is the sentence-mid level where students get stuck, or is this where teachers begin to worry?

In our district we have examples of teachers who worry early and others who wait for development to run its course. In this article we explore the reasoning behind the worriers and the waiters and suggest that the way out of the dilemma is to focus on where students are getting stuck in their language development, the point where teachers often wonder whether a learning disability might be involved.

The Worriers
Some teachers may expect that ELs' ELD will proceed in a similar trajectory to the language development of their English-fluent peers. Teachers then may interpret ELs' performance as consistently below standard. Even with language interventions, ELs' ELP and developmental trajectory in English will not resemble that of fluent English speakers. To the worrier, this confirms that the intervention "didn't work" and that there must be a learning disability.

The Waiters
Other teachers are inclined to give ELs more time. They may be convinced by the following factors:

- PD resources indicating that it takes at least 4 years to develop academic language [e.g., 2];
- Personal experience with ELs who struggled but eventually became proficient; and
- The lack of a viable alternative—the teacher already uses "best practices."

Moving into paragraphs
Our student interviews show that a large number of ELs get stuck as they move toward paragraph-level discourse. Yet, paragraphs are critical for academic success:
- Instruction is mostly in paragraphs;
- Paragraph-level language is important for moving from "word literacy" to "text literacy," a major concern for ELs [3];
- Standardized tests include questions in paragraph form; and
- Academic discourse involves choosing how to sequence information (in sentences) to describe and explain complex ideas (in paragraphs).

Developing paragraph-level language can be difficult.
- There is limited time to practice extended discourse. In whole group instruction, we observed students speaking at the paragraph level only 2% of the time. This means that ELs depend on small group formats, such as ESL time, to practice speaking in paragraphs.
- Moving into the paragraph level entails extending vocabulary instruction beyond learning word meanings to using words as a means to compare and elaborate ideas [4] and to connect them in discourse. It also requires control over syntactic and discourse structures—and lack of this control is a major factor hindering second language learners' speech production [e.g., 5].

Teachers may be attuned to factors indirectly related to the stages of language development. Students who give correct answers, are eager to participate, and use an occasional sophisticated word may impress teachers. Success (or lack thereof) in these areas may mask the actual course of language development.

Looking for unexplained, atypical development
For students who do in fact display atypical language development for ELs, we suggest a three-step process:
1. Find atypical development early;
2. Try problem-solving to correct it; and
3. If the problem remains unresolved, look for evidence of LD.
Perhaps not surprisingly, this is an outline of the RTI process[6], but implementation depends on recognizing typical and atypical language development. This is not the same distinction as "meeting standards" vs. "below standards." We can do more to promote awareness of what makes language development typical or atypical. We also can do more to ensure that systematic, targeted ESL instruction is available for every student who needs it [7]. And we can do more to prepare students for using paragraph-level language in academic discourse.

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Promising Practices for ELs with Special Needs

The majority of ELs are educated in urban schools where they often face substandard learning opportunities, under-qualified teachers, unchallenging curricula, lack of specialized resources, culturally irrelevant assessment and instructional practices, prejudice, and *de facto* racial segregation [1]. To improve academic and social outcomes for this population of students, educators working with ELs with suspected or identified LDs should focus on the following three areas.

Identification and assessment

When EL students fall behind academically, educators must be able to distinguish LD from SLA issues and from issues related to poor educational opportunities. ELs may be misidentified as having disabilities because traditional identification and norm-based evaluation practices are often inappropriate for ELs [2] and can be highly subjective reflecting the judgments of educators. Instead, schools should employ preventative and diagnostic interventions that are evaluated by a school-based multidisciplinary team including teachers, family members, advocates, an interpreter, and an expert in bilingual development [3]. Student evaluations also should assess continuously the quality of EL learning opportunities, support systems, and disciplinary practices.

Effective instructional strategies

The following strategies are believed to be effective in teaching ELSNs.

- The use of chunking and questioning aloud in teaching reading comprehension [4]: Teachers divide a reading passage into chunks to allow students to ask questions and make predictions based on individual chunks, and piece together the information provided by the passage following these steps: (1) students read the title of the passage and make predictions, (2) students read the first chunk of text and confirm, refine or reject predictions, (3) students repeat the previous procedure throughout the reading, and (4) teacher provides a follow up activity to bring together the text and solidify comprehension.

- The use of visual aids and real-life examples in teaching math [5]: Teachers can use diagrams, photographs, and drawings to make abstract concepts more tangible, to build and maintain vocabulary, and to process word problems. Real-life examples enhance comprehension and make content relevant to daily life situations.

Parental involvement in school plays a significant role in increasing ELs' academic achievement. Parents should be used as a resource to learn about ELs' backgrounds and should be included in the decision-making [6].

Creating a nurturing environment, with challenging content, high expectations, effective instructional support, and culturally responsive educational practices may facilitate ELs' access to general education curriculum and bring forth positive academic and social outcomes.

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Students with Interrupted Formal Schooling in Special Education
Diane Staehr Fenner

Among the growing numbers of ELs in U.S. schools is a distinct subgroup of students who have not had the benefit of continuous schooling in their home countries and have limited first-language literacy. These students are frequently referred to as students with interrupted formal education (SIFE) or students with limited formal schooling [1;2].

SIFE typically require more time than their more educated EL counterparts to acquire English language and literacy [3], yet, even after receiving quality instruction during an extended period of time, these students may not make expected academic progress. One of the most difficult tasks educators then face is discerning between a student's English language acquisition process and a condition that could warrant a referral to special education. In addition, services for ELs who have been found to have disabilities may not be well conceived [4]. SIFE with disabilities present a particular challenge: they represent an "extreme" case of the nexus of ELs and students with disabilities as their complex backgrounds add another layer to the already challenging construct of ELs with disabilities.

The purpose of this article is to share the findings of a study of SIFE who received special education services and to provide recommendations to practitioners. The study focuses on the perceptions and experiences of a set of SIFE in a metropolitan school district placed in self-contained special education classrooms for students with mental retardation (MR) and their teachers. The students were selected for the case study after searching the district database for students who (i) were receiving special education services; (ii) had a disability other than a physical disability; (iii) were assessed at the lowest level for ELP; and (iv) were speakers of Spanish. The study did not address placement issues or the assessments that determined placement in the self-contained classroom. The following research questions guided the study:
1. What was the nature of adolescent Latino SIFE's school and family experiences before entering special education?
2. What were the perceptions of SIFE students and teachers regarding the students' membership in MR classrooms and their academic English instruction?

The study was conducted in a large metropolitan school district located on the East Coast of the U.S. [5]. Five adolescent Latino SIFE from three different high schools and four of their teachers (three special education teachers who taught English Language Arts and one dually certified ESL/Special Education teacher) participated in the study.

Data were gathered from multiple sources, and included students' numerical scores on bi-yearly reading, writing, and oral ELP assessments; student and teacher interviews; students' special education IEPs; ESL records; dual language assessment reports; entry assessment records; and classroom observations. The students were interviewed in Spanish, and each one was observed at least once for a 90-minute block of time in his or her classroom setting. Cross-case, variable-oriented analysis was used to explore themes and commonalities that emerged across the three schools.

Findings indicated that although students came from different regions in Central America, they shared many similar home and school experiences prior to their placement in special education, which included notable physical illness, repeated grades, disrupted family life (i.e., they were raised for multiple years in their home country by members of their extended family), and rote-like instruction in the school setting.

The students' attitudes toward receiving instruction in a special education setting were influenced by their friends' negative opinions. However, three students expressed fondness for their teachers on a personal and/or academic level and seemed more willing to put forth effort in their special education classrooms, because the teachers were helping them learn. Although one student said he did not like being in special education, he did respond positively to the academic challenge provided by his ESL/special education teacher and wished she could teach him more often. One student described her relationship with her two teachers, saying they were *buena gente* (good people), contrasting them with some Americans she described as *racistas* (racist) toward Latinos. The teacher-student relationship was found to be central to student learning.

The teachers' beliefs regarding the appropriateness of placing these students in special education formed a continuum. One teacher expressed strong concern that the MR classroom was a "dumping ground" for SIFE—the other teachers expressed more acceptance of SIFE in special education. All teachers had a somewhat negative perception of the students' response to instruction, with a sense that the students wanted to be "spoon fed" information instead of constructing it

themselves. Teachers also questioned the accuracy of using diagnostic assessments for special education on ELs in general.

Instructional practices in the special education classroom also influenced student attitudes. Students appeared more engaged with their lessons when teachers previewed key vocabulary, supplemented worksheets with concept and word maps, and gave thematically-based lessons that were related to students' lives. Conversely, students appeared bored and had to be redirected to their tasks when they spent their time independently filling out worksheets and were not provided opportunities to interact with each other. All teacher participants expressed a desire for more training on working with ELs and more collaboration with each other and ESL teachers.

The study demonstrated that (1) traumatic experiences are common among SIFE, and may have influenced their academic progress in the U.S. school setting prior to their placement in special education; (2) SIFE's strong relationships with special needs teachers on the educational and personal levels is an important factor affecting their attitudes to learning; (3) teachers working with SIFE and other ELs in the special education context need more training and opportunities for collaboration; and (4) SIFE appear to be more en-gaged in the instruction of academic English when they are provided scaffolded instruction, content related to their experiences, and interaction opportunities.

These findings suggest some practical ways in which the instruction of SIFE within the context of special education could be improved:

• Obtain as much information as possible about students' history in their home countries, including school, family, and community life before and after their immigration to the U.S.;
• Emphasize the home-to-school connection;
• Provide culturally competent counseling for all SIFE upon enrollment in school due to their complex background experiences;
• Provide SIFE ample opportunities to learn by setting high, attainable academic goals, scaffolding instruction, and engaging their attention through cooperative learning;
• Weave high-quality academic English instruction throughout content area instruction;
• Support special education teachers who work with SIFE by providing PD and a sustainable framework to collaborate with ESL teachers and each other; and
• Explore different pre-referral options such as RtI and use multiple means of assessment to avoid linguistic and/or cultural bias.

Furthermore, one of the most important outcomes of this study was that it provided these often-marginalized students the opportunity to share their experiences and have their voices heard.

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What's New at NCELA?

NCELA has a number of exciting products available this spring:
• Our mini-poster *The Growing Number of English Learner Students* has been updated with the most recent student numbers for school year 2008-09 and can be found at www.ncela.gwu.edu/files/uploads/9/growingLEP_0809.pdf.
• We have new information for applicants for discretionary grant programs.
  • For the National Professional Development grant program, go to http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/grants/npdp/
  • For the Native American Alaska Native Children in Schools program, go to http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/grants/nam/
• We have county-by-county maps of EL student numbers, proportion, and growth. Go to http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/content/28_maps08_09
• For all this and more, go to NCELA's website at www.ncela.gwu.edu. For up-to-date announcements of our new products, sign up to the NCELA list (http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/listserv/) or look for @NCELA on Twitter!

Effective Interventions for Teaching Language
Peer Tutoring: Gains for the Tutor
Donna Villareal

Introduction

The French essayist Joseph Joubert (1754-1824) wrote "to teach is to learn twice"[1]. While reciprocal peer tutoring has demonstrated effectiveness for ELs [2] and ELSN students [e.g.,3], few empirical studies have isolated the learning that occurs when students serve in the role of tutor [e.g.,4]. The use of peer tutoring to provide ELs with additional opportunities to develop English language skills is not new [e.g.,5]. The USDE Institute of Education Sciences has identified peer-assisted learning strategies (PALS) and reciprocal peer tutoring as potentially positive ways to support ELs' linguistic and academic achievement [6;7]. Research has demonstrated vocabulary gains [8], increases in post-test reading scores [9], and social and academic gains for both student tutors and their tutees [10] as a result of formal tutoring sessions. The purpose of this article is to explore variables that may contribute to tutor learning.

Equal opportunities to tutor

Selecting peer tutors promotes equal opportunity and a sense of confidence, particularly for at-risk students [11]. ELs with behavioral and/or learning challenges may benefit from tutor training that integrates English language instruction (e.g., vocabulary building, sentence expansion activities, and scripts to show how tutors and tutees should interact) [12]. Peer tutoring gives these students an opportunity to develop knowledge, linguistic skills, and appropriate dispositions [3]. Teachers can assist by (1) selecting suitable curricular materials, (2) including visual cues for the tutor to check his/

her tutees' responses, and (3) providing tutors with additional content preparation, positive teacher attention and learning support, and ongoing training checks.

Training

Trainers should instruct tutors in how they should respond to tutees during the tutoring process, and model this for them [13]. Are peer tutors helping partners practice skills that already have been introduced, for example, identifying vocabulary words or completing one-word response exercises? If so, tutors should be trained in how to (1) provide positive, age-appropriate verbal feedback; (2) detect and correct errors; and (3) monitor progress, including their own, by recording results [8]. Furthermore, there is little research about tutor learning that occurs as a result of responding to and asking questions, developing meta-cognitive skills, and explaining knowledge processes [4]. Young adolescent students who tutor more complex activities involving analysis or solving multi-step problems might benefit from training that includes (1) question-asking skills; (2) knowledge-building skills; and (3) self-monitoring strategies that enhance tutor and tutee learning [14].

Curriculum and sequence

Large-scale research with class-wide reciprocal tutoring [e.g.,2] suggests that what students tutor is as important as what they do while tutoring. Student tutors benefit from opportunities to review and practice prerequisite skills (e.g., when student tutors who were low achievers in reading were trained to provide error correction to ELs, they developed a self-

monitoring skill that may have contributed to their improved reading scores at the end of the program [9]). In the same way, tutors benefit from practicing skills that improve their linguistic, academic, and/or social competence. Teachers should analyze the vocabulary and sentence structures needed for ELs to help their partners. Linguistic accommodations to consider include: (1) teaching tutors how to praise, encourage, and correct partners, (2) purposefully integrating students' home language, and (3) providing tutors access to technology e.g., to check responses.

Along with a meaningful curriculum, teachers should consider the sequence of tutoring activities. Deliberate placement of tutoring after teacher-led classroom instruction may increase tutor learning by extending instruction and practice. In the same way, peer tutoring may be followed with opportunities for the tutor to continue to practice skills in a different context (e.g., students with challenging behaviors in [15] were given opportunities to practice delivering and accepting compliments by playing a game after academic tutoring).

Sociolinguistic considerations

When pairing student dyads, teachers should be sensitive to students' cultural perceptions. Some may feel uncomfortable with, for example, tutoring a peer due to age, gender, or other social markers. On the other hand, others might show increased academic engagement when tutoring younger peers. If needed, expectations regarding language use might be clarified before tutoring by,

for instance, rewarding tutors and tutees with points and positive praise for interacting in English or the target language. Teachers should monitor student interactions to encourage tutors to yoke the success of their partners with their own. Letting pairs select names may encourage unity and make it easier to provide corrections. Tutor motivation may be strengthened by (1) providing public posting of results; (2) creating whole group incentives; and (3) informing staff and families of students about tutor team achievements.

Conclusion

The strategy of peer tutoring has been shown to increase the effectiveness of instruction for ELSN students as it helps students' tutors "learn twice." Components of successful tutoring programs include planning and providing tutor training, analyzing curriculum objectives, and pairing student dyads effectively.

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The Transition to Adulthood for ELs with Special Needs

Audrey A. Trainor

Like children from all other subgroups of the population, ELs sometimes have learning, social/emotional, intellectual/developmental, or physical disabilities. The *IDEA* (2004) requires that once an EL is identified as having special needs (SN)—be that a physical disability, a learning disability, or any of several other diagnoses—the youth's IEP be developed by a team that includes the youth, family members, teachers, principal, and any other relevant contributors (e.g., school psychologists, social workers) to address the transition from high school to adulthood (known as "postsecondary transition"). Student and family input is particularly essential to IEPs to identify strategies and goals for life after high school [1].

Special education postsecondary transition services

Research and practice in special education transition, a subfield that began in the mid-1980s, grew from concerns about the post-school

outcomes for youth with SN [2;3]. Although youth with SN have made gains in recent decades, data from the second National Longitudinal Transition Study (NLTS2) demonstrate enduring problems such as lower rates of employment and enrollment in postsecondary education settings when compared to their peers without SN. For example, while 66% of young adults without SN are employed, the same is true for only 57% of young adults with SN [4].

Transition services, as defined in *IDEA* §1401, include the following.
• *A coordinated set of activities.* This means that services may extend beyond the walls of the classroom or beyond the reach of the teacher. For example, a vocational rehabilitation specialist may meet with an ELSN to help administer vocational assessments.
• *IEP-based.* All documentation of transition services must be recorded on the IEP. Transition services must be included on the first IEP in effect when the youth is 16 years old. Additionally, at a minimum of one year before the youth reaches legal adulthood (in most states, age 18), he or she must be informed of his or her rights as an adult. At the age of legal adulthood, rights such as signing one's own special education documents are transferred to the young adult with SN.
• *Results-oriented.* The focus is on the measurable improvement of academic and functional achievement in three key areas: post-secondary education, employment, and community participation.
• *Individualized.* Both long- and short-term transition goals, and the implementation of services to achieve those goals, must be based on the preferences, needs, and strengths of the youth and his or her family.
• *Assessment-driven.* Transition goals must be linked to assessment of

strengths and needs in the areas of post-secondary education, employment, and community participation. For instance, most employment goals have embedded transportation issues. If a student has a goal of getting a job that would require bus transportation, teachers would use assessment tools to determine both the current level of performance and what the student needs to learn to use public transportation.

Transition services and ELSN students

Are the preferences, strengths, and needs, and thus the transition services, unique for ELSNs? The needs of ELSNs encompass the typical needs of all young adults as well as the needs of youth with SN. For example, many ELSNs will need to be informed about post-secondary education options and requirements (e.g., which colleges or universities offer needed special services, how to register for college entrance exams, how to receive testing accommodations such as extended time once in college). The *IDEA* requires special educators to focus on transitions to postsecondary education, employment, and community participation. Taken together, these are broad areas that may include knowledge, attitudes, and skills in the areas of vocational awareness, self-determination, and communication, to name only a few. For instance, if an ELSN is transitioning to employment after high school, he or she must be prepared to submit applications, interview, uphold work policies, get along with supervisors and co-workers, and perform job-specific tasks. While this is true for all youth who are becoming young adults, regardless of disability and language, *IDEA* recognizes poor post-school outcomes for youth with SN and requires that additional and purposeful effort be devoted to transition instruction.

Additionally, ELSN students may have specific preferences, strengths, and needs that stem from complex social, political, historical, and personal histories. In the U.S., documentation of citizenship becomes an issue during transition for children who have attended school and received special education without documentation. As these young adults leave high school and seek work or health care and other social services, they may have difficulty with eligibility.

Unlike the entitlement programs in U.S. public schools, adult services for people with SN are eligibility-based. This obstacle could prove to be very serious for ELs with significant SN and their families who received extensive or intensive supports such as disability-related technology, respite care, etc., during their attendance in the public school system. Currently, very little is known about the extent to which program eligibility requires documentation. Clearly—eligibility for disability-related services notwithstanding—finding employment without documentation in the current political climate for ELSNs can be a challenge. Beyond issues of documentation, ELSNs may have other specific preferences, strengths, and needs. Many of these are anchored to cultural beliefs and practices of both schools and families. For example, U.S. education policy and practice is based on the idea that living independently is one goal in the transition to adulthood [2]. Independence, though, is culturally constructed. [5]. While U.S. educators often maintain a dominant view of independence (i.e., living separately from immediate family members), youth and their families may have different goals, making the discussion of transition in each IEP very important. At these meetings, the ELSN and the family identify goals, and educators use their expertise to

Coping Day to Day

The debate continues. Are the tools we use to identify ELSNs fair and accurate? Which model is most effective? Push-in? Pull-out? Is it best practice to spend a large part of a language-disordered child's academic day preparing for state-mandated tests? Those of us actually in the trenches teaching ESL to this unique population are left with an equally unique problem: How do we help these students achieve success while we wait for a solution?

- Do your homework. Learn about the challenges your students face. Research and practice literature should guide you as you look for alternative ways to reach challenging students (e.g., [1] and [2]).
- Become familiar with the exam used in your area for measuring progress in English language acquisition and rehearse your students in the skills they will need. For example, in the speaking section of the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT), students must be able to complete sentences, make inferences, tell a story using picture cues, and make predictions. Keep track of what types of questions are difficult for each student. Then, rehearse! This is not "teaching-for-the-test;" rather, these are skills all students need for academic success. Students with similar language backgrounds and similar special needs will ultimately need frequent opportunities to practice similar skills.
- Begin "rehearsing" with every lesson from day one. Students need not only repetition but predictability in order to be comfortable when assessment time comes around.
- Remember to focus on the students' strengths. These children may learn slowly in one area, but rapidly in another. Praise liberally!

So, while we wait for decision-makers to make decisions, enjoy your 'conundrum kids'[2]!

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share information and assemble supports that will make goal attainment possible.

Unfortunately, little is known about the post-school outcomes for ELSN students. We do know that some ELs without SN are marginalized by limited access to high-quality instruction and by institutionalized racism and other forms of discrimination [6]. We also know that some people with SN face ableism and discrimination in the workplace [7]. The needs of ELSN students during transition are not sufficiently studied; and without a deep understanding of the complex preferences, strengths, and needs of the population it is unlikely that these are being addressed effectively and systematically. At the same time, the difference that teachers make should not be overlooked. Educators can and do make differences in these students' lives by listening, individualizing instruction, and supporting transition goal attainment in culturally responsive ways.

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Professional Development for Teachers of ELSN Students
Patricia Rice Doran

For schools seeking to raise the achievement of students in low-performing subgroups, teacher PD plays a crucial role. In providing teachers with continual, up-to-date training, schools can ensure that their staff are able to respond to the latest legal requirements, policies, and service delivery and placement trends for ELSN students. Yet, despite this pressing need, there is little published research on best practices for PD related to the unique needs of ELSN students. The following topics that have attracted the attention of practitioners and researchers in the field can serve as a guide to potential focus areas for PD initiatives:

• Identification and special education eligibility determination requirements [e.g.,1];
• Modifications and accommodations [e.g., 2];
• Culturally responsive assessment and instruction [e.g., 3];
• Acculturation and impact of second-language instruction [3] as well as impact of students' disabilities on achievement [e.g., 4];
• Collaboration with colleagues and families [e.g., 5]; and
• RtI [e.g., 6].

A broad base of knowledge will help educators facilitate effective identification and intervention practices for ELSN students. Effective PD should accomplish the following:
1. Focus on both the appropriate content and effective delivery strategies, identify teacher prior knowledge, differentiate instruction according to different levels of expertise [7], and connect research, policies and theories to school-based situations [8];
2. Draw upon a foundation of equity, social justice, and cultural responsiveness [9], exploring the issues through case studies and reflective discussions;
3. Build collaborative skills [e.g.,11], especially because ELSN students frequently receive services from several service providers or teachers;
4. Develop teachers' understanding of their students' backgrounds [12] by encouraging them to hear from their students or students' families directly, or designing sessions around community members; and
5. Focus on basics of language accessibility to provide teachers with fundamental tools to make instruction accessible to students with different needs [13], particularly students who may have language-based disabilities in addition to being in the process of learning a new language.

In planning for PD delivery, administrators should consider formal or informal pre-assessment of teachers' existing knowledge, perceptions of their students, and learning styles, and should integrate opportunities for teachers across professional domains to work together and learn from one another to develop diverse and specialized skills to serve ELSN students effectively.

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Are They Ready to Teach All Students?
A Preliminary Review of Special-Education-Teacher-Preparation Programs and Coursework Relevant to ELs with Special Needs

Jennifer F. Samson

There is a shortage of teachers nation-wide who are trained adequately to meet specialized language and learning needs of ELSN [1]. With 75 percent of school districts reporting a shortage of trained staff [2], it is not surprising that most teachers experience great confusion about how to identify, assess, and teach these students [3; 4; 5]. ELs are over- and under-represented in special education [6; 7] and face significant academic challenges [8]. Evidently, teacher-education programs need to do a better job of preparing teachers for work with ELSN. In particular, while most special-education-teacher-preparation (SETP) programs may prepare educators to work with students with special needs, they often do not prepare them to work with ELs, and, in particular, with ELSN who come from diverse language backgrounds and have needs related to developing ELP *and* accommodating their disability. Teaching ELSN students requires that teachers be trained to distinguish between both types of needs and address them. Special education teachers are at the frontlines of identification, placement, and instruction of students who struggle with learning due to special needs, and lack of adequate teacher preparation means that many children will receive substandard support for their academic advancement and face an uncertain future.

It is estimated that there are approximately 713 campus-based special-education certification programs across the nation. In addition, 106 online special education certification programs are available. Unfortunately, it is not known whether most SETP programs include specific course content or relevant training to support ELSN students, and for those that do, what that content entails. Historically, teacher-education programs rely on readings, written assignments, and lesson planning [9] which may be insufficient for preparing teachers to meet the needs of all of the students they will encounter in their classrooms.

In a brief examination of coursework requirements for SETP, we looked at the online course catalogs of graduate SETP programs to determine whether courses devoted to ELSN students were offered (see Table 1).

Table 1. Survey of Coursework on ELSN in a Sample of Special-Education-Teacher-Preparation Programs

School	State	>200% EL Growth	>100,000 ELs	Masters Credits	Type of Programs	ELD Specific Coursework
Vanderbilt University (Peabody)	TN	X		40	BS, MEd, MS, PhD	None
University of Kansas	KS			30	BS, MSE, PhD, EdD	None
University of Oregon	OR	X		45	MA, MS, MEd, DEd., PhD	1 course - Diversity in Education
University of Florida	FL		X	39	BA, MEd, EdS, EdD, PhD	None
University of Texas–Austin	TX		X	36	MA, MEd, EdD, PhD	Program in Multicultural Special Ed
University of Virginia (Curry)	VA	X	X	62	PG/MT, MEd, EdS PhD, EdD	None
University of Illinois–Urbana-Champaign	IL		X	77	BS, MS, EdM, PhD	None
University of Minnesota–Twin Cities	MN			36	MA, PhD	None
University of Washington	WA			59-70	BA, MA, MEd, EdD, PhD	None, but optional courses: -Teaching the Bilingual-Bicultural Student -Education of Ethnic Minority Youth
University of Wisconsin–Madison	WI			30-40	MS, MA, PhD	None

Table 1 provides information on the top ten SETP programs in the U.S. (according to *U.S. News and World Report* 2010 rankings). This review reveals a wide range of required course credits (30-77) and that the majority lack a course related to ELSN students. Of the ten programs sampled, eight programs do not require specific coursework on ELSN students, one offers a full degree in multicultural special education, and one requires a course on diversity in education. One program offers optional courses in "Teaching the bilingual/bicultural student" or "Education of ethnic minority youth." These courses did not appear to address specifically the complexities of identification, assessment, placement, and instruction relevant to ELSNs. Among the SETP programs sampled, four are located in states known to have greater than 100,000 ELs (FL, TX, VA, IL) and three states were cited as having greater than 200% growth in the number of ELs over the past 10 years (TN, OR, VA) [10].

In light of these preliminary findings, additional research is needed to determine whether this same trend holds true for an expanded sample of SETP programs that include large state teacher-preparation programs. In addition, it is important to investigate what is being taught. Because ELSN populations are at high risk for poor academic outcomes, and because they often require specialized instruction that goes beyond what typical teacher training programs offer, it is essential that special education teachers receive sufficient training and support to be able to meet these students' unique needs. Cross-disciplinary domains of knowledge include a foundational understanding for typical child development, family/home background, language acquisition, SLA, literacy development, and learning disabilities. Truly comprehensive SETP programs would include coverage of each of these domains, and ideally, these training programs would do so in a manner that is engaging and effective at improving teacher candidates' knowledge and skills. And so, a bigger question remains: can teachers really reach and teach all students if they are not adequately prepared to do so?

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What's New at OELA?

Dr. Joanne Urrutia is the newly appointed deputy director of OELA. In this role, she provides support and advice to Assistant Deputy Secretary Rosalinda Barrera on all matters related to the education of the nation's ELs and is spearheading the Special Initiatives Division within OELA. This Division interacts and collaborates with other offices within the Department to support not only special programs for ELs and foreign language instruction but also to ensure that ED's new educational initiatives address the needs of ELs and promote high-quality instruction for them. Dr. Urrutia brings 35 years' experience from the Miami–Dade County Public Schools, where, under her leadership, the infusion of technology into ESOL instruction became an integral part of the district's program.

Factors Influencing the Disproportionality of ELs with Specific Learning Disability

Karla Estrada and Magaly Lavadenz

The rapid growth of the culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) population of ELs in U.S. public schools [1] leads to a concern regarding their representation in special education [2]. At the national level, ELs are not overrepresented in the special learning disability (SLD) category[1] [3] or special education [4], yet when the data are analyzed at the local level, the issue of disproportionality and its relationship to CLD populations is clear [2]. We focus on factors that may influence the identification of ELs with an SLD.

Native language literacy
Literacy in ELs' primary language is a strong predictor of literacy development in English [5]. However, the number of bilingual programs being offered in public schools has decreased in recent years, leading to larger achievement gaps between ELs and their English proficient peers. Given the relationship between instructional practices and test scores for ELs, there is growing evidence that the lack of effective instruction influences ELs' performance on assessments [6].

Types and quality of assessments
Performance on standardized English and native-language proficiency assessments add to the complexity in school personnel's ability to distinguish between language acquisition issues and learning disabilities [7] and may account for the higher incidence of ELs' classification in the SLD category [2].

Language and cultural differences
Language and cultural differences have been viewed as problems or deficits in education by some. The academic limitations that CLD students are experiencing may be based on hegemonic ideologies in which "those that are expected to fail—poor children, especially those from the inner city and whose primary language is not English—tend to be more likely to fail" [8: 228]. Embracing and valuing cultural and linguistic contributions greatly affects student and parent experiences at school, increases school success, and reduces special education misdiagnosis [3].

Conclusions
When students are labeled with a disability, this labeling stays with them, and exiting the special education placement is unlikely [3]. Multiple forms of assessment, appropriate instructional support, and culturally and linguistically responsive programs for ELs are essential in preventing their disproportionality with SLD.

Notes
1. SLD is defined by IDEA as "a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations" (IDEA, 2004, §300.8, 10).

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Culture and Foreign Language Programs

The USDE declares the importance of foreign languages in ensuring a complete, well-rounded education in its *Blueprint for Reform* of ESEA. The ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines, as well as the *National Standards for Foreign Language Education,* refer specifically to *culture,* signifying that it is a facet of language proficiency. How does culture manifest in foreign language programs? What does "culture" refer to, exactly, in the context of foreign language teaching and learning?

In many, if not most cases, when people think of "culture," they envision the artifacts of a society—its music, visual arts, clothing, cooking, and the like. Cultural awareness certainly encompasses knowledge of these things, and the ways in which they are similar or different in one's own culture.

At least ten of the 2010 LEA Foreign Language Assistance Program (FLAP) grantees make specific mention of "culture" in the abstracts that summarize their program goals. Included in that group are the Upper Darby School District's (UDSD) program for middle and high school Mandarin Chinese and Culver City Unified School District's (CCUSD) K-12 Spanish Language Program (SLP).

Martha Menz, director of curriculum and PD for the UDSD in Pennsylvania, discussed how culture is incorporated in the Chinese language program. At the middle school level, UDSD has a Saturday program in which students can learn calligraphy and cooking, as well as some basic Chinese. This year serves as a planning year, but next year they plan to implement a bimonthly after-school cultural program at the high school level that they hope will not only bolster learning for students enrolled in Chinese language classes, but also garner additional student interest in these classes. A native of China who works for the district will lead this program, and Menz noted that being just outside of Philadelphia puts them in close proximity to a variety of cultural events and attractions, including Chinatown.

CCUSD, in California, seeks to promote Spanish language proficiency and positive cross-cultural attitudes. CCSD K-12 FLAP Coordinator, Mina Shiratori, notes that the district is in the planning phase, but the goal is to connect culture to content standards and integrate culture into everyday class work; for example, if a class is studying ecosystems, students would look at culture through the lens of ecosystems—those of Mexico or Ecuador, perhaps. There also will be a visual and performing arts component in the program.

Culturally appropriate behaviors are also an important aspect of foreign language teaching and learning. Cultures vary in the ways they take turns when speaking, make eye contact, and ask questions; while one culture may value directness in conversation, another may value indirectness as a face-saving measure. Understanding these types of differences is part and parcel to understanding a culture; grammatically correct language may result in communicative breakdown if it is used in culturally inappropriate ways.

When asked about the sociocultural/sociolinguistic aspects of the program in CCUSD, Shiratori indicated that in the lower grades they were evident in the *way* that the language is taught; in grades 3-5, they are more explicitly taught. The district also encourages cooperative learning groups, in which native and non-native speakers interact; in this way, the non-native speakers pick up more colloquial language. (Shiratori noted, anecdotally, that native Spanish speakers in these groups have started using the English filler "um" in speech.)

Cultural awareness can be implicitly and explicitly incorporated in foreign language classes. Peterson and Coltrane (2003) specify a number of strategies that may be employed to promote cultural awareness and culturally appropriate language use, including: the use of authentic materials, implementation of role-playing activities in which miscommunications arise from cultural differences, and ethnographic interviews with members of the native speech community.

The Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA), a Title VI Language Resource Center, offers summer institutes for second language teachers. Workshop offerings for July 2011 include, "Culture as Core in the Second Language Classroom," and "Language and Culture in Sync: Developing Learners' Sociocultural Competence." Additional information on the CARLA Summer Institutes 2011 can be found here: http://www.carla.umn.edu/institutes/index.html.

Reference
Peterson, E. & Coltrane, B. (2003). *Culture in Second Language Testing Digest* EDO-FL-03-09. Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics. Available from http://www.cal.org/resources/digest/digest_pdfs/0309peterson.pdf

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