**Culturally and Linguistic Diversity and Special Education**

Critical Questions About the Special Education Process for Culturally and/or Linguistically Diverse Learners (CDE Fast Facts)

When learners who are Culturally and/or Linguistically Diverse (CLD) are referred for special education it is necessary to use caution so as not to discriminate because of language or cultural differences. The following questions provide a framework for considering the relationship of culture and language to a possible disability as the child moves through the Special Education process.

**Before a formal referral is made to Special Education *Ask: Is this an appropriate referral? Have we answered the following questions satisfactorily?***

 Has the student had appropriate support, structure, instruction for sufficient time, with enough intensity, to acquire necessary language, academic, and behavioral skills?

 Have we used appropriate accommodations in the classroom?

 Have we considered the child’s academic history and personal experiences?

**Before beginning the assessment process *Ask: Have we considered the important* *factors to design the assessment?***

 What do we already know? What do we want to learn?

 What are the English language skills of this student? How do we know?

 Which informal tools will be useful? Who will use them?

 Are there appropriate tests in this child’s native language? Are the norms appropriate? Does the child require the tests in his/her first language?

 If we will use an interpreter, who will it be? Has he/she been trained in the special education assessment process and interpreting procedures?

 Have parents received notification of rights and procedural safeguards in a language they understand?

**Before determining eligibility for special education *Ask: Do we have sufficient, unbiased information to make a decision?***

 Can diversity or language factors be ruled out as a **primary** cause of the student’s difficulties?

 Can we document that there is a disability (most likely without the use of standardized test scores)?

 Does the student need special education services to benefit from the general education curriculum?

 Will parents need an interpreter for the staffing?

**Before designing services *Ask: How will we coordinate to meet the* *complex needs of this child?***

 What are the language needs of this child?

 Who will be involved in meeting the language and the special education needs of this child?

 How will these folks collaborate?

 Where will services be delivered?

 Who will monitor progress for which areas?

 Have we ensured that parents were knowledgeable partners in decision making and planning?

IEP documentation for initial evaluations need to include the following documentation: that evaluations are performed in both languages; the impact of multiple languages; parent input; and that their skills are not typical responses of second language learners of the student is eligible for services.

IEP documentation for annual reviews needs to document how language acquisition affects the student within their environment and their services

Special Education Documentation for Students learning English as a Second Language Guidelines

1. Referral to special education documentation:

Documentation and Practice reflect

The student had appropriate support, structure, instruction for sufficient time, with enough intensity to acquire necessary language. Examples below can be considered to document what has worked or has not worked for the student and how instruction to meet needs as ELL occurred:

* Describe instructional modifications based on Level of English Proficiency (bilingual support, provision of meaningful language practice, use of illustrations and diagrams, use of simple and direct language, use of variety –substitutions/expansions/paraphrasing/repetition)
* Describe vocabulary supports (explaining key concepts, use of word walls, vocabulary improvement strategies used, explaining vocabulary with context clues)
* Use of visuals and graphic organizers (outline notes for note taking)
* Use of interactive strategies and cooperative learning settings (think/pair/share, role play, group projects/reports, jigsaw, summarizing strategies, think aloud strategies).
* Describe student’s ability to utilize instructional vocabulary

Appropriate accommodations’ in the classroom

Consideration of child’s academic history and personal experiences

Indicate if direct ELL services have been provided, will continue to be provided or if they occur as part of classroom instruction.

2. Evaluation Documentation:

What we know and what we need to know (Permission to evaluate and referral)

Current English skills of the student: Review WIDA results.

Appropriate tests in the child’s native language with consideration of norms of the test

Parents informed in their native language

Statements of native language abilities compared to peers/age. (From teacher/s, parents).

Proficiency data of child’s ability in native language.

3. Eligibility Documentation

Documentation that disability is NOT due to lack of instruction, diversity or language factors as primary cause.

The team must clearly document the impact that the student’s second language has on the student’s level of performance in order to substantiate a true disability.

4. Initial Services/ Annual IEP

Language needs of the student. Document how instruction for ELL needs by considering some of the following:

Describe instructional modifications based on Level of English Proficiency (bilingual support, provision of meaningful language practice, use of illustrations and diagrams, use of simple and direct language, use of variety –substitutions/expansions/paraphrasing/repetition)

Describe vocabulary supports (explaining key concepts, use of word walls, vocabulary improvement strategies used, explaining vocabulary with context clues)

Use of visuals and graphic organizers (outline notes for note taking)

Use of interactive strategies and cooperative learning settings (think/pair/share, role play, group projects/reports, jigsaw, summarizing strategies, think aloud strategies).

Consider academic language and vocabulary needs

* Who will be involved in meeting the language and special education needs of the student
* The team must clearly document the impact that the student’s second language has on the student’s level of performance, describing disability and the relationship with language. Examples are:
* Parents report that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_, has not progressed in language spoken at home at the same level as older siblings. \_\_\_\_\_ uses fewer words, does not follow directions as well as siblings.
* ELL instructor reports that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ has delays in Spanish as noted by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
* Compared to peers in the same grade, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ is not ......(reading, writing, math skills). With (describe ELL strategies utilized).....the student continues to perform at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_levels.

5. Annual Review: Documentation reflects

* Appropriate accommodations in the classroom/Language needs of the student
  + Describe instructional modifications based on Level of English Proficiency (bilingual support, provision of meaningful language practice, use of illustrations and diagrams, use of simple and direct language, use of variety –substitutions/expansions/paraphrasing/repetition)
  + Describe vocabulary supports (explaining key concepts, use of word walls, vocabulary improvement strategies used, explaining vocabulary with context clues)
  + Use of visuals and graphic organizers (outline notes for note taking,
  + Use of interactive strategies and cooperative learning settings (think/pair/share, role play, group projects/reports, jigsaw, summarizing strategies, think aloud strategies).
* Who will be involved in meeting the language and special education needs of the student
* Annual documentation the impact that the student’s second language has on the student’s level of performance, describing disability and the relationship with language. Examples are:
  + Parents report that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_, has not progressed in language spoken at home at the same level as older siblings. \_\_\_\_\_ uses fewer words, does not follow directions as well as siblings.
  + ELL instructor reports that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ has delays in Spanish as noted by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
  + Compared to peers in the same grade, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ is not ......(reading, writing, math skills). With (describe ELL strategies utilized).....the student continues to perform at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_levels.