Creating Multi-tiered Systems of Support for English Learners Who Struggle Academically

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While you are waiting…

Think-Pair-Share
- Fill out the Anticipation Guide in your handout
- Pair up with someone sitting near you,
  - Introduce yourself and share some of your roles in your school/district
  - Discuss some of your experiences with English learners and Special Education
  - Compare your Anticipation Guide answers
- Be prepared to share your partner’s information with the rest of the group.

Objectives

Participants will be able to:
- Differentiate between second language acquisition issues and a learning disability.
- Overview the RTI/MTSS process and it’s use with second language learners – is it leaving up to it’s promise?
- Discuss how we can use a multi-tiered approach to respond, not only to the academic needs of ELs, but also their linguistic and cultural characteristics in tiers 1, 2, and 3

Percentage of students who were identified as EL

2016-2017 School Year

NOTE: Categories are not mutually exclusive. Incomplete data was included in the State and School District reports. Copyright © 2018 NAEP. All rights reserved. Reproduction of this page is permitted. For more information, please visit naep.org.
During the 2016-2017 School year 700,927 (14.2%) English Learners were identified as having some type of disability and were receiving some type of special education service. Which is above the National Average of 13.6%.

Why the Discrepancies?

- Four challenges that contribute to disproportionate patterns in the identification of learning disabilities among students who are ELs
  - lack of professionals’ knowledge of second language acquisition and language development
  - lack of professionals’ knowledge of disabilities and how they are identified and measured in second language learners
  - poor instructional practices
  - weak intervention strategies (poor implementation of RTI/MTSS)
  - inappropriate assessment tools


Second Language Acquisition

“Everyone who works with English language learners should know how best to support their language acquisition as well as their academic and social development.”

Position Statement on instruction for ELLs with Learning Disabilities
Council on Exceptional Children (CEC) & Division for Learning Disabilities, 2010
Understanding the Process of SLA

- Second language acquisition is the study of how learners create a new language system with only limited exposure to that language (Gass & Selinker, 2001).
- It is defined as the process of becoming competent (proficient) in a second language from its first use to its advanced applications.
- The process of second language acquisition is dependent on the cultural and linguistic environments to which students have been exposed (Valdés & Figueroa, 1995).


Distinguishing SLA from LD

- To distinguish between second language acquisition issues and a learning disability, educators must be able to:
  - Understand the process of second language acquisition
  - Recognize characteristics associated with learning disabilities
  - Assess quality of instruction
  - Determine what interventions work in assisting students to achieve content


Think About It …

The single biggest error made in placing English language learners (ELLs) into special education is misinterpreting language acquisition as a learning or language disability.

Janet Klingner, 2013
NYC Department of English Language Learners and Student Support

Culture & Learning

- As a complex social and societal phenomenon, learning is always situated within one’s experiential context.
- These experiential perspectives are influenced by the values, expectancies, and practices preferred by the students’ cultural contexts.
- When English Learners are in the process of adapting to a new set of norms, values, or points of view, any academic challenges must be interpreted within the context of culture.

Did you know?

- States are required by law to establish a means of identifying students who have learning disabilities.
- However, the problem facing states is that there is no specific definition of what constitutes a learning disability.

Huh…

Did you know?

- The term Learning Disability includes such identifications as:
  - Perceptual motor disabilities
  - Brain injury
  - Minimal brain dysfunction
  - Dyslexia
  - Dyscalculia
  - Dysgraphia
  - Developmental aphasia

The term does not include learning problems that are due to: visual, hearing, or motor impairment, intellectual disabilities, emotional disturbance, or environmental factors, language & cultural differences, or economic disadvantage.

LD vs SLA

- Create a work group of 4 to 5 people.
- Look at the quiz sheet depicting the characteristics of students who demonstrate a possible learning disability or have second language acquisition issues.
- With your partners, read each behavior and identify where it belongs.
- On the behaviors you think depict a learning disability – write LD. On the behaviors you think depict second language acquisition – write SLA
- Discuss what these behaviors look like in the classroom and how a teacher can differentiate between LD and SLA

Keep in Mind

- Because of the longer time required to acquire cognitive academic language, educators may incorrectly identify delays as a learning difficulty rather than a language development/difference issue.
- So, prior to referral & evaluation, we should ask ourselves:
  - Has the student received preliminary (e.g. Tier 1) and intensive (e.g. Tier 2, Tier 3) interventions using appropriate materials/strategies designed for ELs, and have they been implemented with fidelity over time?
  - Does the team have data regarding the rate of learning regarding learning patterns and language use in the home?
  - Are the error patterns seen in L1 similar to the patterns seen in L2?
  - Are the learning difficulties and/or language acquisition patterns manifested over time similar in different settings and in different contexts?

(Cummins, 1984; Ortiz, 1997; Ruiz, 1995; Butterfield, 2014)
Traditional RTI Format

- Identify Problem
- Assess & Measure
- Review & Set Goals
- Brainstorm Interventions
- Plan Intervention & Implementation
- Monitor Response & Collect Data
- Implement Intervention Plan
- Analyze Response Data Modify & Decide

Traditional RTI Focuses on Specific Questions

- Is there a discrepancy between current & expected performance?
- What is the problem and to what extent?
- How much growth is expected? Did we meet our goal?
- How, when, and whom?
- What do we do next?
- How much growth is expected? Should we meet our goal?
- How, when, and whom?
- What can we do in class?
- What do we do next?

RTI 2 - MTSS

- Multi-tier System Support (MTSS) is generally used interchangeably with RTI. However, they are not exactly the same thing.
- MTSS is a more comprehensive system that encompasses the RTI model (e.g. how testing is a subgroup of assessment)

MTSS

MTSS is not only an instructional framework, but it also:
- centers on academic as well as the social, emotional, and behavioral development of children from K-12
- includes multiple levels of support for all learners (struggling through advanced)
- aligns resources and support for students receiving instruction & for educators who are delivering that instruction
- strives to ensure that practices, policies, and programs are aligned on classroom, school, and district levels and standards
- provides continued support for teachers in delivering instruction, utilizing and developing effective curriculum, administering assessment, and using data to guide instruction

Adapted from: Hurst, St. (2014). What is the difference between RTI and MTSS?. Retrieved from Reading Horizons: http://www.readinghorizons.com/blog/what-is-the-difference-between-rti-and-mtss
MTSS

MTSS is not only an instruction framework, but it also:
- requires that teachers, administrators, district personnel, and student support specialists change the way that they have traditionally worked together to include a more collaborative and cohesive culture.
- includes a focus on intervention, but has a stronger goal of prevention than perhaps RTI does.
- is more likely to produce professional development that is aligned across school, district, and state settings.
- is more likely to produce professional development that is aligned with state standards.


Quick Chat

- Take 1 to discuss with an elbow partner what you think about MTSS.
  - How much of what we have talked about describes what you have at your school/district?
  - Which parts would you like to add to what you have in place right now?
- At the next signal, turn to someone else near you and repeat the chat.

What are we looking for?

- A combination of both the academic & cultural...
  - For culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students an intervention model must
    - emphasize more than academic performance
    - modify and expand to include the personal and the social
    - include the processes of enculturation and acculturation


A Tiered Framework that Encompasses All

Tier 1: Universal Interventions
Supportive Environments for Academic, Linguistic, and Personal Growth in the General Education Classroom.

Tier 2: Individualized Interventions
Targeted Intervention Inside/Outside the General Education Classroom.

Tier 3: Intensive Interventions

Tier 4: Intensive Interventions
Supportive Environments for Academic, Linguistic, and Personal Growth in the General Education Classroom with Full-Time/Full Remediation Options.

Handout p. 2
Tier 1 – Intervention Model - Considerations

- Universal tier because it is intended to address the learning needs of all students within the general education classroom.
- General education may include Bilingual Education and/or ESOL pull-out or push-in models, which assist students in accessing grade-level content.
- Classroom-level interventions are delivered by the general education teacher in collaboration with the ESOL teacher, and other school-based specialists.

Tier 2 – Intervention Model - Considerations

- Supplemental instruction; meant to be short-term.
- Desired outcome: students learn the skills they have been struggling with so that they may benefit from Tier 1 instruction alone.
- Instruction and interventions are delivered by the general education teacher, the ESOL teacher, and other school-based specialists or interventionists who are trained in Tier 2 instruction.

Tier 1 – Essential Features and Considerations

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Tier 2 – Essential Features and Considerations

- Supplemental instruction; meant to be short-term.
- Desired outcome: students learn the skills they have been struggling with so that they may benefit from Tier 1 instruction alone.
- Instruction and interventions are delivered by the general education teacher, the ESOL teacher, and other school-based specialists or interventionists who are trained in Tier 2 instruction.

**Tier 3 – Intervention Model - Considerations**

- **Tier 3 School Based Model**
  - Language Proficiency: Lower Levels
  - Language Proficiency: Higher Levels
  - Academic Core Curriculum with modifications from Tier 1 & 2 with ESL support
  - Intensive individual intervention with specific learning needs
  - English Language Acquisition Instruction with service providers & ESL specialists
  - Strategic supplemental Instruction Tier 1 + Tier 2 short term interventions + ESL Support

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**Tier 3 – Essential Features and Considerations**

- Intensive, individual intervention.
- For students failing to meet important academic benchmarks or social/behavioral expectations who have not responded to Tier 1 or Tier 2 efforts.
- Student achievement is at a lower level than true peers and occurs at a substantially slower rate.
- More individualized instruction needed for the student to learn.
- Instruction and interventions delivered by the school-based specialists or interventionists trained in Tier 2 instruction in collaboration with the general education and ESOL teachers.

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**Ok, so that makes sense – however…**

- When do we include special education evaluation and/or students who already have an IEP?
- A large majority of students (80-90%) identified in these models are placed in Tier 3.
- The difficulty here is that students who may not have a disability are being placed with those who have been evaluated, diagnosed, and labeled.
  - ELL
  - SLIFE
  - Social/emotional/cultural differences

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**Let’s go back and take a look…**

**Tier 3 – Intensive support & intervention**

- Tier 3 Intensive Intervention
  - Title I Tutoring
  - After-school programs
  - Reading Recovery
  - Pull out by related service providers
  - ESL/ELL teacher push-in & pull-out
  - Section 504

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**Special Ed Evaluation**
IDEA mandates that…

- All states identify all children with disabilities who qualify for additional supports and services, including English learner (EL) students. However, identifying ELs with disabilities accurately and reliably has proven difficult within PreK–12 education systems. Often, educators overlook or discount the presence of a disability, believing that issues stem from a student's limited English skills. Other times, the opposite occurs: educators falsely conclude that difficulties in language learning indicate a need for special education.

  Janie Tankard Carnock & Elena Silva
  New America - Education Policy; 2019

What do we know?

- The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA, 2004) and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504, 1973) address the rights of students with disabilities in education settings.
- If an English learner (EL) is suspected of having one or more disabilities, the Local Educational Agencies (LEA) must evaluate the English learner promptly to determine eligibility for special education or related services (U.S. Department of Education, 2017).

IEPs & English Learners

- To properly meet the complex needs of students identified as ELs who have disabilities, education professionals from various disciplines must effectively collaborate and involve families in the process.
  - General education teachers
  - Special educators
  - EL specialists
  - Related services providers
  - Parents
  - Administrator
  - Interpreter knowledgeable in the instructional practices & implications
  - Student


IEPs for ELs should include

- Indication of the student bring classified as an English learner
- Information about the student’s current level of English language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing
- Indicates of testing accommodations or modifications needed for the student to take standardized or formative assessments or if the student requires an alternate assessment

IEPs for ELs should include

- Specific interventions which address special education needs.
- Specific language acquisition interventions which address the ELs students L2 goals within the context of their special education needs.
- The IEP team should consider the language needs of the student as related to:
  - Writing the IEP document, especially when developing the long-term and short-term goals
  - Convening meetings to review and/or revise the IEP as it relates to SLA progress and assessments.


IEPs for ELs should include

- In considering the students’ language needs, if the IEP team determines that the student needs a particular device or service (i.e. electronic translator, bilingual service provider, etc.), then a statement must be included in the IEP to this effect.
- For a student identified as a second language learner, the IEP must address whether the services will be provided in a language other than English.
- Identification of the service providers who will be implementing and monitoring the integration of the academic and language goals.


Important Reminder

- The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) and Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) recommends that it would be considered best practice to have the EL teacher/specialist involved in the development and implementation of the IEP for students who are identified as [LEP] second language learners.

Linguistically Appropriate Goals & Objectives

- It is required that the IEP for an English Learner include linguistically appropriate goals and objectives which lead to the development of English language proficiency.
- Linguistically appropriate goals, objectives, and programs means:
  1. Those activities which lead to the development of English language proficiency.
  2. Those instructional systems which lead to the language development of English language proficiency in reading, writing, listening, and speaking.
  3. Those instructional systems which lead to the language development needs of English language learner.

Make Note:

- Although specific ELD goals and objectives are not required, the linguistic needs of the students must be taken into consideration when writing goals for Reading, Writing, Mathematics, and SLA. Those goals may be related to language in content areas.
- Example:
  - By (date), (student) will develop a clear purpose in a short essay (two to three paragraphs) by appropriately using the literary devices (3 to 4 identified by teacher) with 80% accuracy on 3 consecutive trials as demonstrated by a written response to a prompt.
  - By (date) when given comprehensible input (student) will respond to (who, what, where, when, how, and why) questions using short phrases with 80% accuracy as measured by_________ (teacher observation, running records, etc.).

Questions to Ponder

- What should the IEP for an English learner look like?
- What should the goals and objectives include?
- Should we add goals and objectives for second language acquisition?
- How do we develop goals and objectives that are linguistically appropriate?

Case Sample

- Miguel is a thirteen-year-old 7th grade Spanish speaker who migrated from Ponce, Puerto Rico to the U.S. with his family. Back home, he attended school in Spanish and English, but spoke only Spanish at home.
- He entered school in Providence, Rhode Island in the 3rd grade.
- He was provided with ESL in school, and his parents obtained a tutor who worked with him three times a week at home.
- Miguel’s basic English reading comprehension scores range from the 2.8-3.4 grade equivalent. However, his listening comprehension skills range is 8.8-10.1 grade equivalent.
- His areas of strength include oral discourse, debate, story retelling, and inferencing. Although he is able to pinpoint specific facts and details when reading, he has difficulty expressing the main idea of a passage.
Case Sample

- Miguel has great difficulty with writing mechanics, spelling, grammar, and syntax. He is orally capable of composing narratives with great detail.
- In Mathematics, he is able to work with the basic four operations when working with whole numbers, but has great difficulty with fractions, decimals, percentages, and word problems.
- He is also demonstrating difficulty with multiple step directions especially with projects and lab experiments.
- Miguel’s teachers have spoken to his parents, who confirmed that he has had the same difficulties when working in Spanish previously at school in P.R.

WIDA Scores – Composite 2.9
- Reading – 2.1, Writing – 2.8, Listening – 4.2, Speaking – 3.5
- Miguel had gone through Tier 1 interventions in the 4th & 5th grades, and received both Tier 2 & Tier 3 interventions in the 6th & now in the 7th grades. He has made very little progress.
- After being referred for special education evaluation, it was found that Miguel does demonstrate the characteristics of a learning disability.

Question

- What should we take into consideration when we develop Miguel’s IEP?
- What kinds of goals and objectives should we include?
- Turn and talk with some of your colleagues.
- You may take notes on page 3 of your handout.

Thanks for Coming

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Thank you for your participation and for all you do for our students