

MEETING THE NEEDS OF ENGLISH LEARNERS WITH AND WITHOUT DISABILITIES

BRIEF 3

English Learners With Significant Learning Difficulties or Disabilities: Recommendations for Practice

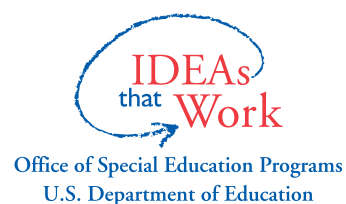


English Learner Literacy Intervention
Programs and Strategies
ENSURING SUCCESS



Support

The series *Meeting the Needs of English Learners With and Without Disabilities* was developed and funded by U.S. Office of Special Education Programs grants H326M160005, H326M160003, and H326M160008.



Preferred Citation

Project ELLIPSES, Project ELITE², & Project LEE. (2021). *Meeting the needs of English learners with and without disabilities: Brief 3, English learners with significant learning difficulties or disabilities: Recommendations for practice*. U.S. Office of Special Education Programs.

Contributors to This Brief



English Learner Literacy Intervention
Programs and Strategies
ENSURING SUCCESS

Project ELLIPSES

Linda O. Cavazos
Alba Ortiz
Elsa Cardenas-Hagan



Project ELITE²

Leticia Romero Grimaldo
Shannon Giroir



Project LEE

Julie Esparza-Brown
Amanda K. Sanford

Multitiered Instructional Frameworks

When implemented effectively, multitiered instructional frameworks support educators in providing high-quality culturally and linguistically responsive instruction for English learners, including those in need of supplemental instruction in language and literacy. Further, when a multitiered system of supports includes assessment procedures that are linguistically aligned (i.e., the language of intervention matches the language of core instruction) and informed by educators' knowledge of the language-acquisition process, students with disabilities are accurately identified.

In this third brief in the series, three model demonstration projects describe their work implementing multitiered instructional models and present recommendations for practice for English learners with significant learning difficulties or disabilities.

Overview

This is the third brief in the series Meeting the Needs of English Learners With and Without Disabilities. It features the work of three model demonstration projects that support the language and literacy needs of English learners (ELs) with and without reading-related disabilities in grades 3 to 5. This brief focuses on a culturally and linguistically responsive multitiered system of supports (MTSS) framework, with an emphasis on effective interventions and decision-making for ELs with significant learning difficulties or disabilities.



Who Should Read This Brief?

This brief is for school leaders, educators, and policymakers charged with implementing and supporting multitiered instructional frameworks that respond to the needs of ELs. It provides support in the following:

- Identification of ELs who need Tier 3 intervention
- Design and delivery of Tier 3 language and reading interventions for ELs
- Special education referral decisions
- Culturally and linguistically responsive special education services

Structure of This Brief

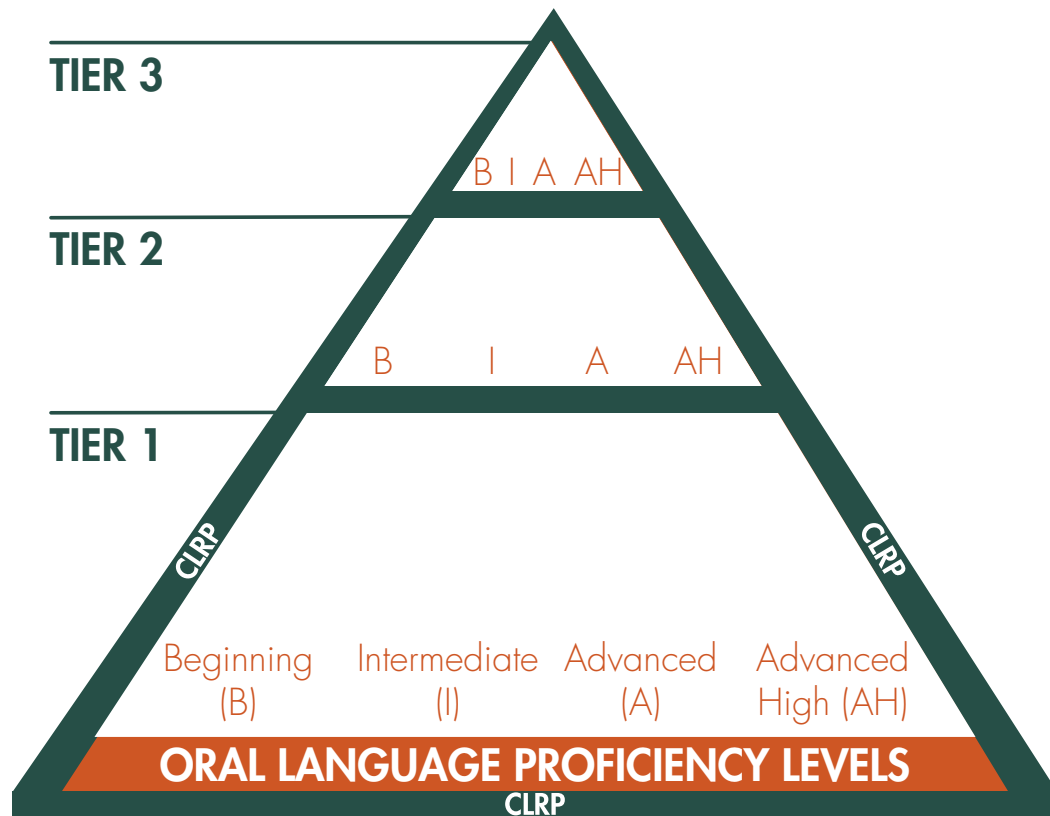
We begin this brief by presenting features of a culturally and linguistically responsive MTSS framework that are common across the three model demonstration projects. Tier 3 of the framework represents supplemental culturally and linguistically responsive language and reading intervention for ELs with significant reading difficulties or disabilities. We provide guidance for identifying students who may benefit from referral to special education and for making special education eligibility determinations. We also make recommendations for designing Tier 3 interventions that simultaneously address language- and reading-related needs.

Rather than describing or promoting any particular intervention program, we discuss evidence-based practices that can be applied to Tier 3 interventions. To demonstrate how practitioners can implement the evidence-based strategies described, the three model demonstration projects also provide “in-action” examples from their participating schools. These examples illustrate how a specific set of strategies related to Tier 3 instruction and decision-making can be implemented systematically in the contexts in which educators work.

MTSS Framework for ELs

In MTSS, students with significant learning difficulties or disabilities are provided Tier 3 interventions (see Figure 1). In some school districts, only students in special education receive Tier 3 interventions. In other school districts, students with disabilities are served by special educators and students with significant learning difficulties are served by general education teachers or interventionists. In still others, students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms receive Tier 3 interventions in groups with peers without disabilities who have similar needs. Interventions at every level must accommodate each EL's language proficiency level.

Figure 1: Culturally and Linguistically Responsive MTSS Framework



Notes: Tier 3 intervention is provided to ELs without disabilities who are experiencing significant learning difficulties and to ELs with disabilities; CLRP refers to culturally and linguistically responsive practices; language proficiency refers to students' oral language classification in the language of intervention (e.g., beginning, intermediate, advanced, or advanced high in the native language or English).

Schools and districts use different criteria for identifying students for Tier 3 intervention. Typically, students who score in the bottom 5% on universal screening or benchmark assessments or those who meet specific performance standards or cut scores on these measures are eligible for Tier 3 intervention. For example, students are eligible if they are performing two or more years below grade level or have not met performance criteria for Tier 2 intervention. Tier 3 students may include, among others, ELs with limited, interrupted, or no formal education; long-term ELs who are struggling academically; and ELs with disabilities.

Tier 3 interventions are more intensive than Tier 2 interventions and are adapted to address individual student needs (e.g., increased duration or frequency, smaller group size, change in instructional delivery or type of intervention). These changes are made in an iterative manner based on students’ progress-monitoring data and their response to intervention. Interventions are culturally and linguistically responsive, consistently aligned with students’ instructional needs, and provided by well-trained staff experienced in individualizing instruction based on student data.¹

Table 1: Tier 3 Components for ELs With Significant Learning Difficulties

| Tier 3 Component | Recommendations |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Eligible Students | In bottom 5% of universal screenings or benchmark assessments Performing two or more years below grade level Identified based on performance standards or cut scores on universal screenings and benchmark assessments |
| Time Allotted for Intervention | 45–60 minutes daily, 4 or 5 days/week |
| Flexible Grouping | Individual or small group (1–3 students) Language proficiency <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Similar language needs • Varying proficiency levels to provide language models Similar reading level and needs |
| Interventionists | Personnel with expertise specific to the intersection of language acquisition/development and learning difficulties or disabilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General education teachers and language or reading interventionists • Bilingual education and English as a second language (ESL) or English language development (ELD) teachers • Special educators and related-services personnel |
| Language of Intervention | Typically, the language of core instruction If core instruction is in English: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate ESL/ELD scaffolds, including native language support • Provide native language support, as appropriate, to facilitate transfer of skills to English |
| Progress Monitoring | Curriculum-based assessments administered biweekly or weekly |

1 Project LEE et al., 2021

Assessment and Data-Based Decision-Making

Universal screenings, benchmark assessments, and progress-monitoring measures should be used to document what ELs can do, regardless of the language in which knowledge and skills are demonstrated. Assessments should be validated for ELs and be equivalent across languages so that performance in each language can be compared and a comprehensive profile of skills, across languages, can be established. Students should receive credit for expressing ideas effectively, even when they incorporate translanguaging or codeswitching practices or apply grammatical structures from their native language (L1) to the target language (L2) or vice versa. Similarly, the reading development of ELs in bilingual education programs is best assessed by documenting reading and writing skills in L1 and L2, while at the same time documenting how students use the two languages together in the process of becoming biliterate.² When making decisions within MTSS, ELs should be compared to peers from similar language and cultural backgrounds.³ Assessment data should be used to identify students who are having significant language- or reading-related difficulties and for planning Tier 3 interventions.

Differentiated Authentic Assessment

Assessments should align with learning outcomes, measure what has been taught, and provide data about students' application of knowledge and skills. Authentic assessments can be differentiated for different reading ability and language proficiency levels. For example, ELs with beginning English skills can respond in their L1, point to the correct answer, respond with one or two words, or choose from among several response options. For more information, refer to Brief 2 in our previous series, *Assessment and Data-Based Decision-Making*.⁴

Language Proficiency Assessment

Oral language assessments are not routinely included in MTSS frameworks for ELs, so teachers may not have sufficient information about students' L1 or L2 proficiency to plan and deliver lessons. To judge whether students are making expected progress toward mastery of the target language(s), teachers should administer classroom-based assessments to evaluate receptive and expressive skills in the context of authentic communication. These assessments can include, for example, rating scales, checklists, language sample analyses (e.g., conversation or narrative analysis), cloze tests, or dictation tasks.

2 Project ELITE et al., 2015

3 Brown & Doolittle, 2008

4 Project ELITE et al., 2015

In-Action Example: Assessing and Monitoring Oral Language Proficiency

Project ELLIPSES and Project ELITE²: *English Learner Oral Narrative Scale*

Project ELLIPSES and Project ELITE² refined the English Learner Oral Narrative Scale (ELONS; see Figure 2) to assess and monitor oral language proficiency. The ELONS is an informal rating scale for evaluating students' personal narrative skills (i.e., recounts of experiences or events in their lives) in L1 and L2. ELs are asked to respond to open-ended prompts involving topics familiar to them. Example prompts include, "Tell me all about what you do when you get home from school," or "Dime todo sobre algo que leíste y te gustó" ("Tell me all about something you read and liked"). Using the ELONS, educators rate students' listening comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar skills using a Likert scale, with 0 indicating no response or a response that was too limited to rate and 5 indicating advanced-high skills in the language of assessment. Subskill scores are summed to produce an overall score and to classify students into one of four narrative proficiency levels: beginning, intermediate, advanced, or advanced high. Results of the ELONS can help teachers support ELs who are not making expected progress toward mastery of oral language standards and can identify skill areas for differentiated instruction or supplemental intervention.

Figure 2: English Learner Oral Narrative Scale

| English Learners' Oral Narrative Scale (ELONS) | | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|--|---|
| Student Name: | Grade: | Rater: | Language Observed: | Date: | |
| For each column, circle the 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 box to score in each category. | | | | | |
| Comprehension | Vocabulary | Grammar | Fluency | Pronunciation | |
| 0 | No response, too limited to score, or not in the target language. | | | | |
| 1 | Does not understand the instructions. | Only names common concepts (e.g., objects and people). | Uses single words or phrases to express actions or ideas. | Speech interrupted by frequent and long pauses. Abandons attempts to communicate. | Speech unintelligible . |
| 2 | Understands some of the instructions. Frequently needs clarification, repetition, or rephrasing. | Frequently makes vocabulary errors or uses non-specific vocabulary. Expresses ideas using limited number or variety of words. | Uses simple sentences. Most sentences contain grammar/syntax errors. | Slow, halting speech. Frequent revisions, repetitions, and/or hesitations. | Speech frequently difficult to understand. Frequently repeats to be understood. |
| 3 | Understands the instructions. Occasionally needs clarification, repetition, or rephrasing. | Occasionally makes vocabulary errors. Elaborates with some description and detail. | Uses simple or more complex sentences. Occasionally makes grammar/syntax errors. | Moderate revisions, repetitions, and/or hesitations. | Occasionally difficult to understand. |
| 4 | Understands the instructions. Rarely needs clarification, repetition, or rephrasing. | Rarely makes vocabulary errors. Elaborates with adequate description and detail. | Uses more complex sentences. Rarely makes grammar/syntax errors. | Generally fluent speech, with infrequent disruptions or hesitations. | Rarely difficult to understand. Mispronunciations may occur. |
| 5 | Understands the instructions without support . | No vocabulary errors; uses topic-specific vocabulary. Sophisticated descriptions and details. | Uses complex sentences. Ideas are cohesive and organized. Grammar and syntax are correct. | Fluent speech. Rhythm and rate do not distract. | Always understood. Dialectal variations may be evident. |
| Column Total: | Column Total: | Column Total: | Column Total: | Column Total: | |
| Beginner 0-10 | Intermediate 11-17 | Advanced 18-21 | Advanced High 22-25 | Global Score-total of columns above: | |

Literacy Assessment

Assessment data should describe both home and school literacy practices. Data about family literacy practices and the availability of L1 and L2 materials can be obtained using procedures such as parent and child interviews or observations in the home. At school, informal assessments in L1 and L2, such as reading inventories, graded word lists, and running records, help establish students' current reading ability and identify strengths and needs related to phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Analyses of written products provide descriptions of the type of writing the students produce (e.g., narrative, descriptive, expository, persuasive), quantity of writing, quality of ideas, organization, vocabulary use, and mechanics such as sentence structure, grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

In-Action Example: Language Considerations for Data-Based Decision-Making

Project ELITE²: *Structured Data-Meetings for English Learners*

Documenting a system for educational decision-making is an essential step in a culturally and linguistically responsive MTSS framework. It is also key to building schools' capacity to accurately identify students with significant learning difficulties and disabilities and to provide interventions that match the needs of ELs who need Tier 3 intervention. For ELs, a focus on language skills is critical to identifying instructional needs and planning interventions.

The system for data-based decision making (DBDM) developed and implemented by Project ELITE², in collaboration with three model demonstration schools, incorporates key principles for assessment and data-based decision-making for structured data-meetings. Specific protocols to enhance the DBDM process for ELs were developed, highlighting key practices for intervention decision-making, including for students who will receive Tier 3 intervention.

- An asset-based approach to identifying students' strengths and needs
- Linguistically aligned assessment practices that provide information about students' learning within and across languages (L1, L2, or both)
- Analysis of language proficiency data in L1 and L2, alongside reading data to accurately determine intervention needs
- Progress monitoring of language and reading development
- Collaboration and communication with parents and families
- Practitioner evaluation of students' progress after interventions
- Data-informed instructional adjustments

Educators are guided through a series of procedures for conducting beginning-, middle-, and end-of-year data meetings for determining students' intervention needs and working collaboratively to allocate available resources accordingly. During data reviews, practitioners follow meeting agendas and have important discussions around data. Guided prompts are used to direct them to consider the role of students'

language development when grouping students for intensive interventions, establishing criteria for the movement of students across tiers, and planning for instruction across tiers.

Table 2: Example Prompts Practitioners Use During Data Meetings

| Key Practice | Example Discussion Prompts |
|--|--|
| Identifying Student Strengths and Needs Through Multiple Data Sources | <p>Is there a disproportionate number of ELs identified as needing Tier 3 intervention? In special education?</p> <p>What do the data show about students' strengths and areas of need after targeted or intensive intervention?</p> <p>What are students' proficiency levels in each language domain?</p> |
| Identifying Instructional Practices to Address Student Needs | <p>On which skills do we need to focus our instruction this period?</p> <p>Which interventions best match this student's needs?</p> <p>Does instruction address this student's language needs in the native language and English?</p> |
| Evaluating Progress in Interventions and Making Instructional Adjustments | <p>In what concepts/skills did students progress with Tier 3 interventions?</p> <p>What concepts/skills did we struggle to teach successfully?</p> <p>What instructional changes should be made to accelerate the progress of students and how will we determine adequate progress?</p> |
| Making Intervention Decisions | <p>Which students need to continue at the current level of support, move to more intensive intervention, or exit the intervention?</p> <p>For students who are not responding to high-quality Tier 3 interventions, is a special education referral appropriate?</p> <p>For ELs with disabilities who are not responding to Tier 3 intervention, what changes need to be made to their Individualized Education Program (IEP)?</p> |

Incorporating a documented system for data-based decision-making allows educators to carefully and consciously create and implement instructional plans that consider and align with students' instructional needs. For more information and additional educator resources, please visit <https://www.elitetexas.org/resources-el/implementing-structured-data-meetings-for-english-learners>.

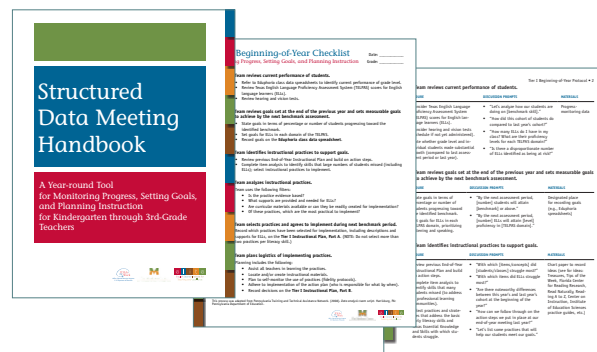


Figure 3. Sample pages from Project ELITE's Implementing Structured Data Meetings

Essential Components of Tier 3 Intervention for ELs

Students with significant language or reading difficulties should be provided Tier 3 intervention to address their instructional needs and help them access grade-level curricula and instruction. Although we do not discuss specific programs or approaches in this brief, we identify features of effective interventions. The intervention practices described in Brief 2 of this series, *Evidence-Based Strategies for Tier 2 Intervention for English Learners*,⁵ can also be used to support Tier 3 intervention for ELs; however, they must be adapted and consistently aligned with the nature and severity of the students' difficulties or disabilities (e.g., target fewer skills and monitor progress more frequently). Typically, the language of Tier 3 interventions is aligned with the language of core instruction (native language or English). If instruction is in English, teachers should use ESL/ELD scaffolds to ensure that ELs understand lesson content. If students have had L1 instruction, it may be helpful to provide intervention in L1 to address skill gaps and support the transfer of skills from L1 to L2. Documentation of the specific nature of these interventions, as well as student progress, provides evidence that students have had appropriate instruction and helps identify effective interventions and students who should be referred to special education.

Table 3: Components of Tier 3 Interventions for ELs With Reading-Related Difficulties or Disabilities

| Tier 3 Component | Characteristics |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Intervention Plan | Specific, measurable goals and objectives based on identified needs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oral language development • Reading |
| Evidence-Based Interventions | Culturally and linguistically responsive intervention, materials, and activities that do the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the students' individual needs • Carefully sequence tasks • Differentiate supports • Use an explicit instructional approach • Align with ELs' oral proficiency and reading levels Intervention at students' language performance level <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beginning, intermediate, advanced, advanced high • Listening comprehension, speaking, vocabulary, syntax/grammar, fluency Intervention at students' reading instructional level in phonological awareness, phonology, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension Intervention targeting specific oral language and reading skills that facilitate access to grade-level content |

5 Project ELLIPSES et al., 2020

| Tier 3 Component | Characteristics |
|---|--|
| Features of Effective Intervention | <p>General</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activate students' funds of knowledge • Target specific skills • Provide meaningful, relevant, and engaging instruction • Build background knowledge • Teach to mastery <p>Oral language and reading connections</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate listening, speaking, reading, and writing • Connect language components with reading components (e.g., phonology-phonological awareness, vocabulary/morphology-reading comprehension) • Focus on crosslinguistic features and transfer skills <p>Strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scaffolds (e.g., linguistic support, visuals, manipulatives, graphic organizers, sentence frames) • Multiple opportunities for review, repetition, and practice • Sufficient wait time for response • Corrective/affirming feedback specific to students' responses • Model, paraphrase, and elaborate • Constructive feedback (e.g., I do. We do. You do.) |
| Progress Monitoring | <p>Use progress-monitoring data to do the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan intervention • Direct or redirect language and reading goals and instruction • Establish and implement criteria for movement between tiers |

Special Education Referral

Special education referral committees for ELs should always include personnel with expertise specific to the education of ELs. Personnel may be, for example, the bilingual education teacher, the ESL/ELD teacher, or a bilingual interventionist. Referral committees should carefully examine the student's enrollment history; significant events that influence school performance (e.g., absences, disciplinary actions, family factors, health history); results of oral language and reading assessments, within and across grade levels; and outcomes of tiered interventions.⁶ A referral decision should be supported by documentation that (a) there was a lack of progress in core instruction (Tier 1), (b) difficulties persist after supplemental intervention (Tiers 2 or 3); and (c) the student's behavior or academic performance differs from true peers who are making expected progress in response to instruction and intervention.

6 Ortiz et al., 2011

Special Education Eligibility Determinations

Given the limited availability of valid and reliable special education assessments for ELs, special education eligibility determinations should always incorporate MTSS data and informal assessment procedures. Such data include (a) an overview of the student's school enrollment, programs and services, and progress data; (b) documentation of significant events that may have negatively influenced their progress (e.g., illness or trauma); (c) available assessment data documenting progress, over time, in areas of concern to referral committees; and (d) interventions provided to address learning difficulties and the student's response to these interventions.⁷

The special education assessment guidelines in this brief apply to full and individual evaluations. Assessment personnel should consider data gathered about language use and literacy practices in the home context and parents/family members should always be involved in the evaluation process. MTSS data and results of curriculum-based assessments should corroborate results of standardized tests. Behavior/performance data should point to symptoms or conditions typically associated with language disorders or reading-related disabilities, and parents should confirm that problems noted at school are also present at home. Documentation must be presented to show that difficulties are not primarily the result of (a) linguistic or cultural differences or (b) lack of access to appropriate instruction.⁸

Tier 3 Intervention for ELs With Disabilities

IEPs for ELs with disabilities incorporate the features of Tier 3 interventions described in Tables 1 and 3. In addition, they indicate specially designed instruction that will be provided to address disability-related needs (see Table 4). IEPs should indicate which instructional needs will be addressed in the contexts of general education and special education.

Table 4: Additional Components of Tier 3 Intervention for ELs With Disabilities

| Component | Characteristics |
|---|--|
| Individualized Education Program | Statement of special education, related services, and supplementary aides/services Accommodations, modifications, or other specialized supports to address disability-related needs IEP goals and objectives for all settings (e.g., special education, bilingual education, ESL/ELD, intervention programs) |
| Culturally and linguistically appropriate intervention | Incorporates Tier 3 instructional features (as detailed in Tables 1 and 3) |

7 Ortiz et al., 2018

8 IDEA, 2004

In-Action Example: Using the ELONS to Inform Interventions

Project ELLIPSES: *Oral Language Intervention for a Fifth-Grade EL With a Reading Disability*

As described earlier in this brief, Project ELLIPSES and Project ELITE² refined the English Learner Oral Narrative Scale (ELONS; see Figure 2) to assess and monitor oral language proficiency. The following fifth-grade language sample was collected, and the ELONS was used to assess the student's language skills (see Figure 2). Suggestions for oral language intervention are provided based on the assessment results.

Teacher: Daniel, tell me all about what you are going to do this Saturday and Sunday.

Daniel: I'm going to move to, with my dad, for now. We're gonna to move all the stuff from my grandma, cause we live in my grandma. So me and my mom and my brothers are gonna move everything from there. And then after we finish with that, we might go to Six Flags, and there and play in the water park. And then we come back. I don't know what else we're going to do this summer. I like the rides and the water parks. I got a paper from my school to go to Six Flags free cause of my AR [Accelerated Reader score], so now I get to go free and my parents have to pay by themselves, and my brother.

Teacher: Tell me about your favorite thing to do for fun.

Daniel: I like to play with my neighbors. Hide and Seek. I just hide under, under my couch. I like to go under my couch, so they won't see me. And they never find me.

Daniel received an English ELONS global score of 20 (advanced narrative proficiency). He clearly comprehended the prompt and had no pronunciation problems (score of 5 for comprehension and pronunciation) but needs to improve vocabulary and grammar skills (score of 3 in each) and fluency (score of 4). Daniel used nonspecific vocabulary (e.g., stuff) and omitted descriptive information and details in his personal narrative (e.g., "we're gonna to move all the stuff from my grandma, cause we live in my grandma."). He used basic sentence structures, such as, "I like to play with my neighbors. Hide and Seek."

Strategies for Oral Language Development

Teachers can use a variety of strategies to help students like Daniel improve their vocabulary, grammar, and fluency skills. They can ask questions that help students organize their ideas and fill in details (i.e., who, what, when, where, why). They can paraphrase to model elaborated responses or ask follow-up questions that provide opportunities for students to use target vocabulary. In the context of lessons, teachers can model use of more complex sentences or use sentence frames to help students organize and express their ideas with more complex sentence structures (e.g., When I play Hide and Seek with _____, one of my favorite places to hide is _____ because _____). Teachers can introduce new vocabulary and use semantic analysis to map related words. Multiple, extended opportunities for authentic discussion about topics and ideas (e.g., think-pair-share and oral presentations that involve summarizing a movie that students have seen or a book read) also support vocabulary development. In some cases, students may need explicit instruction (e.g., lessons focused on word-learning strategies, such as prefixes or suffixes) or on addressing specific grammatical or syntactical structures (e.g., to help students distinguish pronoun use).

In-Action Example: Tier 3 Special Education Vignettes

In the following sections, two of the model demonstration projects share how they have enhanced Tier 3 interventions for ELs with reading disabilities. Through these implementation examples of intervention instruction provided in English, the projects describe how strategies were incorporated into an intervention lesson to meet the language and literacy needs of students.

Project ELLIPSES: *Third-Grade ELs With Reading Disabilities*

The reading intervention described in this example lesson featured a phonics syllable type, opportunities for students to practice the syllable in connected text, preteaching of vocabulary, and a read-aloud. The teacher began with a review of the English syllable types and how these affect the production of long- and short-vowel sounds. Every student practiced producing and discriminating vowel sounds. The teacher then explicitly introduced the final stable syllable *-fle* and gave students multiple opportunities to practice reading words with a final *-fle*. The repeated readings focused on speed and accuracy, the meaning of the words, and practice reading sentences with targeted vocabulary. During sentence reading, an emphasis was placed on punctuation, phrasing, and prosody. The teacher provided corrective feedback and used the gradual release approach to provide guided and independent practice. Following the phonics lesson, the students read a short passage featuring words with *-fle*.

The teacher introduced a vocabulary word, *masking*, and discussed the difference between *mask* and *masking*. She provided the cognate *máscara*. Students named different types of masks, such as face mask, gas mask, ski mask, facial mask, and Halloween mask, and they reviewed internet images illustrating different types of masks. Students did repeated readings of the passage for accuracy, fluency, and comprehension and then answered explicit and implicit comprehension questions. They created a three-sentence summary of the passage using a graphic organizer.

The final activity was a read-aloud about animals that camouflage their appearance. The teacher made connections to the passage on masking and masks, activated students' background knowledge, and extended newly learned vocabulary. Students were provided *Wh* question cards (i.e., *who, what, when, where, why*) as a scaffold and they moved the respective *Wh* card aside as they answered the comprehension questions during the read-aloud. They later used the *Wh* cards to summarize the content of the read-aloud. In this lesson, the teacher integrated reading foundational skills with fluency and comprehen-

Strategies Incorporated Into the Tier 3 Lesson

- Explicit instruction
- Gradual release (model, guided practice, and independent application)
- Multiple opportunities to practice
- Repeated reading
- Scaffolding
- Activating background knowledge
- Cognates
- Use of visuals (i.e., internet, graphic organizer, *Wh* cards)
- Making connections
- Summarizing
- Multiple opportunities to respond orally

sion strategies. Every student was successful because the instruction was differentiated and appropriate language and reading scaffolds were provided.

Project LEE: Third Grade ELs With Reading Disabilities

Project LEE uses the PLUSS framework⁹ to ensure CLRP are included in Tier 2 and 3 interventions, as well as in core instruction. This framework, derived from research-based practices for instructing ELs, scaffolds language and cultural/background knowledge during instruction and intervention. Here we describe how one bilingual reading intervention teacher used the framework (see Figure 4 on the next page) to enhance a lesson from a research-based intensive intervention program.

Mr. Franco's Tier 3 third-grade intervention group included two Spanish-speaking ELs with a specific learning disability and one native English speaker with a communication disorder. Both ELs were identified as "emerging English speakers - Level 2" (on a 1–5 scale, with 5 being fully proficient). The students were reading at the first-grade reading level. Mr. Franco taught the adopted intervention program with fidelity, but used the PLUSS framework to add additional scaffolding and language practice for his students.

Integrating PLUSS Components Into the Intervention Lesson

Mr. Franco previewed the lesson to (a) determine whether additional language or background support was needed to meet the unique needs of the students, (b) identify content objective(s), and (c) create a language objective (see components 1 & 2 in Figure 4).

Preteach critical vocabulary and prime background knowledge (component 3). Mr. Franco determined that the vocabulary was familiar to the students, but results of their language assessment indicated that they needed to learn to change verbs from present to past tense. He taught the students that adding *-ed* changed a verb to something that happened in the past. He made picture and word cards for *walk*, *talk*, *call*, and *jump* and gave each child a sticky note with "ed" on it so they could change the verbs from present to past tense.

Systematic and explicit instruction (component 4). Sounds, decoding and word reading, story reading, and answering comprehension questions orally and in writing were explicitly taught as prescribed in the intervention program. Mr. Franco added instruction on past-tense verbs using the gradual release strategy: model (I do), guided practice (We do), and independent application (You do). After the students read the story twice (first to give them practice accurately decoding the text and then to build automaticity and answer comprehension questions), he modeled and had students practice reading the story with expression. Even when students are developing foundational reading skills, it is important for ELs to hear the story read with prosody (expression) and fluency because they are developing these linguistic skills. They can then practice reading text at their instructional level and with prosody.

PLUSS Framework

Preteach critical vocabulary and prime background knowledge

Language modeling and opportunities to practice

Use visuals and graphic organizers

Systematic, explicit instruction

Strategic use of native language and teaching for transfer

9 Sanford et al., 2012

Figure 4: Sample PLUSS Lesson Plan

| | | | |
|--|--|--|---|
| <p>1 Content Objective: When presented with decodable words ending with -ed, students will read 9 out of 10 correctly.</p> <p>2 Language Objective: When presented with four decodable verbs (walk, talk, call, jump), students will be able to add the past tense ending (-ed) and use 4 out of 4 correctly in a complete sentence orally showing their understanding that -ed means it happened in the past.</p> | <p>L - Language modeling & opportunities for practice; prime background knowledge</p> | <p>U- Use visuals & graphic organizers</p> | <p>S- Strategic use of Native language & teaching for transfer</p> |
| <p>3</p> <p>P Pre-teach critical vocabulary & prime background knowledge</p> <p>Strategies:</p> <p>Opening Activity: Before beginning the lesson, use pre-made picture cards (with word written on back) to quickly move through the verbs of the lesson with the group (walk, talk, call, jump).</p> <p>I do/You do: Model word (students repeat) I do/You do: Model word with -ed (students repeat) I do/we do: Model defining word and using in a sentence</p> <p>You do: Students define word, use in a sentence using sentence frames</p> | <p>Provide each student with a picture/word card with a sticky note with -ed written on it that they can add to change words to past tense.</p> <p>Sentence frames: . "The verb (verb) means (definition) and "The verb (word + -ed) means to (word) in the past." e.g. "Today, I walk to the store." Yesterday I (word+ - ed) to the store."</p> | <p>Picture/word cards, sticky note with -ed</p> <p>Sentence frames written on sentence strips or worksheet: for students to convert to past tense</p> | <p>Teach present and past tense translations to bridge to native language: camino/caminé hablo/hablé llamo/llamé brinco/brinqué</p> |
| <p>4</p> <p>S Systematic & explicit instruction</p> <p>The lesson format was: *Sounds (choral and independent test) *Decoding/word reading practice (choral responses) *Story reading (quotation finding, first and second reading, story and picture comprehension) *Independent activity</p> <p>Closing activity: additional written practice adding the correct tense words to show past or present:</p> <p>Today, I _____ my mom (call) Yesterday I _____ my mom (called) Today I _____ in the pool (jump) Yesterday, I _____ in the pool. (jumped) Today I _____ to my teacher. (talk) Yesterday I _____ to my teacher. (talked)</p> | <p>Practice: have students respond chorally to most questions requiring a short response.</p> <p>Practice: have students hold up appropriate picture cards after teacher/other students read the word</p> <p>Practice: after first two story readings, teacher models reading with expression and fluency, then has each child practice reading text with expression and to build fluency</p> | <p>Picture/word cards to add -ed endings</p> <p>Use TPR to define words since they are all visible actions (e.g. could demonstrate jumping)</p> | <p>Native Language: If students have confusion about a word, ask other students to share the word in their native language if they know it.</p> |

Strategies: Language, visuals, native language and teaching for transfer (components 5–7).

Mr. Franco modeled each target verb using the total physical response (TPR) approach and visuals (i.e., picture cards). Then he added *-ed* endings on a sticky note as he said the words in the past tense. Finally, he provided sentence frames for students to use the target word in the past tense. “[verb] means [definition]” and “[verb + *-ed*] means to [verb] in the past.” These visuals made the language concepts comprehensible to students. To make a connection to the students’ native language, he provided the present and past-tense conjugations of the words in Spanish. As a motivator to complete their work, Mr. Franco read aloud a culturally relevant book. This reinforced that reading is for both learning and enjoyment.

Conclusion

An overview of Tier 3 intervention has been presented, along with evidence-based culturally and linguistically responsive practices for oral language and reading intervention for ELs with reading difficulties or learning disabilities. A process for data-based decision making that facilitates planning of Tier 3 intervention has been shared, including guidelines for identifying ELs who may benefit from referral to special education. Recommendations were offered for CLRP special education services for ELs with disabilities. Throughout the brief, CLRP principles in action were illustrated, emphasizing the importance of integrating oral language and reading goals in Tier 3 intervention.

References

- Brown, J. E., & Doolittle, J. (2008). A cultural, linguistic, and ecological framework for response to intervention with English language learners. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 40(5), 66–72.
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Pub. L. No 94-142, 20 U.S.C. §1415 (2004). <http://www.copyright.gov/legislation/pl108-446.pdf>
- Ortiz, A. A., Robertson, P. M., & Wilkinson, C. Y. (2018). Language and Literacy Assessment Record for English Learners in bilingual education: A framework for instructional planning and decision-making. *Preventing School Failure: Alternative Education for Children and Youth*, 62(4), 250–265.
- Ortiz, A. A., Robertson, P. M., Wilkinson, C. Y., Liu, J., & McGhee, B. D. (2011). The role of bilingual education teachers in preventing inappropriate referrals of ELLs to special education: Implications for response to intervention. *Bilingual Research Journal: Journal of the Association for Bilingual Education*, 34, 316–333.
- Project ELITE, Project ESTRE²LLA, & Project REME. (2015). *Effective practices for English learners: Brief 2, Assessment and data-based decision-making*. U.S. Office of Special Education Programs.
- Project ELLIPSES, Project LEE, & Project ELITE². (2020). *Meeting the needs of English learners with and without disabilities: Brief 2, Evidence-based Tier 2 intervention practices for English learners*. U.S. Office of Special Education Programs.
- Project LEE, Project ELLIPSES, & Project ELITE² (2021). *Multitiered system of supports for English learners: Literacy implementation rubric*. U.S. Office of Special Education Programs.
- Sanford, A., Brown, J. E., & Turner, M. (2012). Enhancing instruction for English learners in RTI systems: The PLUS model. *Multiple Voices for Ethnically Diverse Exceptional Learners*, 13, 56–70.





English Learner Literacy Intervention
Programs and Strategies
ENSURING SUCCESS

