Advancing ALTELLA

Assessing English Learners with Disabilities: A Glossary of Terms

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Project Background

The Advancing Alternate English Language Learning Assessment: Alternate Assessment Redesign (Advancing ALTELLA) project is a federally funded grant project that applies lessons learned from research on successful instructional practices, accommodations, and assessments of English learners with the most significant cognitive disabilities to inform the development of alternate English language proficiency assessments. It builds on the initial ALTELLA project and the past decade of research on assessing English learners and students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.

Contents

Introduction

Multilingual learners with disabilities are a unique group of students who have diverse and ever-changing educational needs. Educators of multilingual learners with disabilities, especially educators who teach those with the most significant cognitive disabilities, must ensure that these students are getting their language-, disability-, and content-related needs met. For this reason, collaboration among English language teachers, special education teachers, and general educators is critical to providing the best instruction.

Providing quality instruction to multilingual learners with disabilities requires a clear understanding of the terms used in working with this important group of students. Through the work of the Alternate English Language Learning Assessment (ALTELLA) project, researchers learned that groups of educators may have different understandings of terms used. For example, "expressive language" to an English language educator may mean the speaking and writing domains, whereas a special educator may understand "expressive language" to be more inclusive of other modes of communication, including symbols and other augmentative and alternative communication. Similarly, acronyms may vary across the field, (e.g., PLD may stand for "performance level descriptors" or "proficiency level descriptors"). Educators who serve multilingual learners with disabilities may be unaware of the terms used in fields where they do not provide services.

The purpose of this glossary is to provide clarification of the terms and abbreviations used in the fields of English language development, special education, and assessment. Advancing ALTELLA researchers generated a list of terms used across these fields, and these terms were defined using information collected from technical reports and manuals, peer-reviewed publications, and education or research organization websites. In some cases, Advancing ALTELLA researchers created a definition drawing upon their internal expertise and input from external experts. After finalizing the terms and definitions, Advancing ALTELLA researchers categorized the terms as follows:

- Accessibility and accommodations
- Assessment
- Braille
- Federal legislation and regulations
- Language development
- Multilingualism
- Program models
- Special education
- Tools and instruments
- Visual communication systems
- Additional important terminology

Finally, the glossary underwent an internal review by WIDA staff who work in the assessment department as well as an external review by project partners with expertise in the topic areas represented in the glossary. Advancing ALTELLA researchers made edits to the glossary based on feedback from these reviews.

The following sections provide the lists of terms alphabetically by category. Each entry includes the full term, the appropriate abbreviation if applicable, and the full definition.

Accessibility and Accommodations

Augmentative and Alternative Communication Device (AAC device)

Augmentative and alternative communication devices are aided methods of communication used to support persons with developmental disabilities whose speech is insufficient to meet their daily communication needs. Augmentative and alternative communication devices may include displays (e.g., picture books), assistive technology, or computerized speech generating devices.[1]

Accessibility

Accessibility is a system of approaches and supports that ensures fair and equitable access to instructional and assessment content, processes, and procedures by meeting the individual needs and preferences of all students, regardless of their characteristics. Such characteristics can include but are not limited to age, beliefs, disability, education, ethnicity, gender, language, nationality, neurodiversity, place of origin, race, sexual orientation, physical appearance, Indigenous or Native status, socioeconomic status, professional experience, and communication style.[2]

Accommodations

Accommodations are changes in procedures or materials that increase equitable access during testing and generate valid assessment results for students who need the changes. Accommodations allow for variation in instructional and assessment materials so that students can show what they know and can do. Assessment accommodations should not violate the construct being measured.[3]

Assistive Technology

Assistive technology devices are identified in the Assistive Technology Act of 2004 as "any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities." Assistive technology can refer to any low- or high-tech tool (or set of tools) required to support an individual's communicative,

academic, and/or adaptive needs, along with resources required by the individual and their caregivers to choose and use that technology as needed.[4]

Assistive Listening Device (ALD)

An assistive listening device is any device that helps a person to hear clearly. Assistive listening devices can help individuals with sound discrimination and/or focus when there is background noise and "can be used with or without hearing aids or a cochlear implant."[5]

Color Contrast

Color contrast is a feature of a computer-based assessment, allowing changes to the colors of text and background to support the needs of students who have issues with visual impairments or text-based disabilities.[3]

Custom Overlays

Custom overlays are flexible, adaptable layers placed on top of a programmable input device, such as a membrane keyboard. With the custom overlay, the user is able to display any symbols, colors, numbers, or words to suit their needs.[5]

Masking

For computer-delivered assessments, masking is an embedded support that allows students to block off content that is unnecessary or potentially distracting. Students can focus their attention on a specific part of the test item by masking.[3]

Modifications

Modifications are changes to the quality and/or quantity of content and related assessments provided to students. These changes can significantly decrease students' access to the full range of standards-based instruction that peers receive, and invalidate assessments based on those standards. Modifications can involve eliminating objectives or significant parts of content, removing the most difficult questions on an assessment, providing support with a skill that is being assessed (e.g., using read-aloud on a reading assessment), or providing students with substantive help with an assignment or assessment.[3]

Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)

The Picture Exchange Communication System uses picture symbols and applied behavior analysis to teach communication skills. Individuals with autism and other disabilities can use the Picture Exchange Communication System to communicate requests, responses, and comments via cards with pictures and/or symbols. The Picture Exchange Communication System can be used in low- and high-tech formats.[6]

Read Aloud

Read aloud is an accommodation that allows a qualified educator or proctor to read assessment content.[3]

Scribe

A scribe typically is an experienced educator who records verbatim students' responses to an assessment or other classroom task on an electronic device or on paper. Scribes may be used by students who need support with creation of texts because of motor or neurological disabilities, (e.g., dyslexia) or who have had an injury that temporarily makes it difficult to create text physically.[3]

Simplified Syntax

Simplified syntax refers to one clause output that contains a subject and predicate. Simplified syntax is also known as simple syntax.[7]

Speech-Generating Device (SGD)

A speech-generating device is a portable device that produces previously recorded or digitized messages when activated by the individual. Speech generating devices support a variety of communicative functions, including making requests and answering questions. Speech-generating devices vary in the number of communicative options and the methods in which messages are activated. For example, a speech generating device may include one button that can be pressed to request a single stimulus or multiple buttons that allow an individual to select a message from a wider array of options.[8]

Speech-to-Text (STT)

Speech-to-text is a function on an app, word processing program, or assistive technology device that allows a student to create text for test responses and other purposes. It may be used by students who need support with creation of texts because of motor or neurological disabilities (e.g., dyslexia) or who have had an injury that temporarily makes it difficult to create text physically.[3]

Supplementary Aids and Services

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 defines supplementary aids and services as "aids, services, and other supports that are provided in regular education classes, other education-related settings, and in extracurricular and nonacademic settings, to enable children with disabilities to be educated with non-disabled children to the maximum extent appropriate."[9]

Switches

Switches, or adaptive switches, are assistive devices that enhance the lives of persons with limited motor skills by allowing for their increased and/or improved involvement in everyday activities. (e.g., communicating, eating, playing).[10]

Symbol-Based Augmentative and Alternative Communication System (Symbol-Based AAC)

The use of a symbol-based augmentative and alternative communication system (text) may start with an augmentative and alternative communication system that has symbols and crucial words for communication. Over time, people with extensive communication needs may begin to use text in a way that makes keyboarding an effective way to communicate.[11]

Text-to-Speech (TTS)

Text-to-speech is a type of speech-synthesis assistive technology that makes text accessible by reading it aloud. Text-to-speech may be used by students instructionally or during assessments.[12]

Universal Design for Assessment (UDA)

Universal design for assessment is a field within the broader universal design movement that applies the principles of universal design specifically to assessments. The goal of universal design for assessment is to ensure that the assessments are accurate and equally fair for all student populations, including English learners and students with significant disabilities. The National Center on Educational Outcomes "developed seven elements of universally designed assessments" that can be implemented "to increase assessment validity" and improve tests for all students.[13]

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

Universal design for learning, also known as universal design for instruction, stemmed from the field of universal design. It provides a framework that calls for creating learning materials that are usable by all students and offers multiple ways of learning information, demonstrating knowledge, and engaging learners by integrating their interests, preferences, and abilities.[14]

Assessment

Achievement Level Descriptors (ALDs)

Achievement level descriptors connect a specific ability/task with the varying levels of performance on an assessment and show how one level of achievement is different from another.[15]

Achievement Level Indicators (ALIs)

Achievement level indicators are the labels given to each performance level (e.g., entering, bridging, reaching). Achievement level indicators are often determined by standard setting.[15]

Alternate Assessment Based on Alternate Achievement Standards (AA-AAS)

Alternate assessment based on alternate achievement standards is for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. This assessment is based on the same content assessed by grade-level peers but with changes to depth, breadth, and/or complexity. These assessments describe achievement based on state determination of high expectations for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.[16]

Alternate Assessment Based on Grade-Level Achievement Standards (AA-GLAS)

Alternate assessments based on grade-level achievement standards addresses the same content and the same expectations as a general assessment for eligible students. States are required to document that the results from an alternative assessment based on grade-level achievement standards are comparable in meaning to results from the general assessment for the same grade level.[17]

Alternate English Language Proficiency Assessment (AELPA or Alt-ELPA)

Alternate English language proficiency assessments are for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who are also English learners. These assessments measure alternate achievement standards in English language proficiency.[18]

Assessment

Assessment is a broad term that can refer to formal or informal attempts to understand what a student can do academically and/or functionally. Assessment can be used to learn about and support student strengths and areas of growth so that educators can individualize academic and other supports. Depending upon need and function, assessments can be created by a variety of educators, local/state educational agencies, universities, and private companies.[19] Additionally, federal legislation guides the use of assessments to meet accountability measures.

Bias, Sensitivity, and Content Review (BSC)

Bias, sensitivity, and content review is a process within assessment development that helps to ensure items are fair and equitable so that the assessment is as inclusive as possible so that all participants can demonstrate their knowledge and skills. The purpose of a bias, sensitivity, and content review is to ensure that items do not contain irrelevant information that can be distracting or confusing to any subgroup of the population tested.[20]

Common Core State Standards (CCSS)

Common Core State Standards are developed from a 2010 educational initiative that sought to better prepare students for college and careers. This initiative was sponsored by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School officers. The standards detail what K–12 students are expected to know in English language arts and mathematics at the conclusion of each grade level.[21]

Computerized Adaptive Test (CAT)

A computerized adaptive test successfully selects questions based on what is known about the examinee from previous questions. For example, if an examinee performs well on one item of intermediate difficulty, the examinee will then be presented with a more difficult question. Or, if the examinee performs poorly, the examinee will then be presented with an easier question. Compared to static multiple-choice tests with a fixed set of items administered to all examinees, computer-adaptive tests usually require fewer test items to arrive at equally precise scores.[22]

Criterion-Referenced Test (CRT)

A criterion-referenced test measures how well an individual performs in relation to a specific standard or a set of standards, rather than in relation to a group of test-takers.[23]

Cut Score

Cut scores refer to a specified point on a score scale, such that scores at or above that point are reported, interpreted, or acted upon differently from scores below that point. Cut scores may be used to categorize a number of participants or to classify participants into distinct categories (e.g., diagnostic categories, proficiency levels, or proficient/nonproficient).[24]

Differential Item Functioning (DIF)

Differential item functioning is a statistical method used to detect bias in test items. When an item is labeled as having differential item functioning, persons belonging to different groups who have the same level of ability do not have the same probability of choosing the correct response.[25]

Formative Assessment

Formative assessment is a set of formal and informal actions that educators make during teaching to determine necessary changes in their practice for improved student learning. The main purpose of formative assessment is to help keep track of student progress. With results from formative assessments, educators can note where students might be having difficulty so that problems can be addressed quickly.[26]

Interim Assessment

An interim assessment is a form of assessment that educators use to evaluate student learning and progress that can help predict students' ability to succeed on future educational tasks, such as standardized tests. Interim assessments can also help educators diagnose gaps in students' learning.[26]

Item Template

Item templates provide specifications for writing items when developing an assessment. Examples of these specifications include item format, variables that can be altered, and scoring criteria. Item templates are the basis for multiple assessment items.[27]

Norm-Referenced Test

A norm-referenced test shows a student's performance in relationship to others who have previously taken the assessment. The intent of a norm-referenced test is to measure a construct. (e.g., language proficiency) and identify students' relative rank within that construct.[28] Score interpretations are a comparison of a test-taker's performance with the distribution of performance in a specified reference population.[24]

Performance Level Descriptors (PLDs)

Performance level descriptors describe the level of knowledge and skills required of students at each performance level for a given content area and grade level. Performance level descriptors provide a snapshot of students' academic characteristics based on performance on any given assessment. Performance level descriptors assist teachers and schools in better understanding students' performance on assessments and help families gain insights into their child's academic progress and performance.

Performance Standards/Performance Indicators

Performance standards (also known as performance indicators), describe what level of performance is sufficient for students to be described as meeting some performance level (e.g., exceeds standards, meets standards, needs improvement).[29]

Proficiency Level Descriptors (PLDs)

Proficiency level descriptors provide explanations of the levels of English language knowledge and the skills associated with each proficiency level. They provide an overview of the stages of English language development through which English learners are expected to progress.[30]

Standards

Standards describe what students are expected to know and be able to do at a specific stage in their education, (i.e., each grade level). An example of standards includes the WIDA English Language Development Standards Framework, 2020 edition.[31]

Summative Assessment

Summative assessments are given to students periodically, typically annually, to evaluate their performance against defined set of standards. In the K–12 system, summative assessments are given in English language arts, mathematics, and other content areas at the end of specific grades.[26]

Test Blueprint

A test blueprint is created at the onset of developing an assessment. It provides a map of what is assessed by aligning assessment items with specific content and appropriate skills. It also maps the different levels of learning being assessed, such as comprehension of content and application of content.[32]

Testlet

A testlet is defined as an aggregation of items that are based on a single large stimulus, such as a reading passage or a table of numbers.[33]

User Acceptance Testing (UAT)

User acceptance testing is a process that helps verify that an intervention or assessment works as intended. It focuses on the user experience. User acceptance testing is typically done for online assessments.[34]

Braille

Braille

Braille is a tactile writing and reading code typically used by people who are blind or have low vision.[35]

Contracted Braille (Braille, as in Grade 2 braille)

Contracted braille permits contractions that combine letters and symbols to represent high-frequency words or groups of letters. There are 180 braille contractions in Unified English Braille (UEB).[36]

English Braille American Edition (EBAE)

English Braille American Edition was the official literary code of braille used in the United States prior to January 2016.[37]

Nemeth Code

Nemeth Code is a technical braille code used in mathematical or scientific notation. Nemeth Code was the official technical code in the United States prior to January 2016. This code may still be used alongside Unified English Braille; however, Unified English Braille is also able to render mathematical and scientific notation and is now considered an official technical braille code in addition to Nemeth Code.[38]

Refreshable Braille Display

Refreshable braille display uses a device with pins that raise and lower within braille cells to render information from a computer screen in a tactile manner for individuals who are blind or have low vision. The refreshable braille display is used in conjunction with screen reader software. The individual uses a braille keyboard, command keys, cursor routing keys, or screen reader commands to read the information on the screen and input information.[39]

Tactile Graphic

Tactile graphics are a means of conveying non-textual information to people who are blind or have low vision, and may include tactile representations of pictures, maps, graphs, diagrams, and other images.[40]

Uncontracted Braille (Braille, as in Grade 1 braille)

Uncontracted braille uses an individual braille character for each letter, number, or punctuation mark and does not permit the use of braille contractions. Uncontracted braille is useful when braille readers are not yet proficient in contracted braille or when contracted braille may cause confusion.[36]

Unified English Braille (UEB)

Unified English Braille is a braille code used in many English-speaking countries. It was developed by the International Council on English Braille. All subject matter, with the exception of music, can be coded using Unified English Braille. The United States fully implemented Unified English Braille in January 2016, replacing the English Braille American Edition. Technical materials in Unified English Braille, such as mathematics and science, can be referred to as Unified English, Braille Math/Science, or Unified English Braille Technical.[41][42]

Federal Legislation and Regulations

Brookhart v. Illinois State Board of Education (Brookhart decision)

The 1983 Brookhart v. Illinois State Board of Education decision addresses competency standards for attaining a high school diploma for students with disabilities. This case ruled that students with disabilities are entitled to assessment accommodations that consider their specific disabilities.[43]

Castañeda v. Pickard

The Castañeda v. Pickard case was initially tried in the United States District Court for the southern District of Texas in 1978. In 1981, an appeals court found in favor of Roy Castañeda, the father of two Mexican-American students, and against the Raymondville Independent School District. A major outcome from this case is the Castañeda standard, which requires programs for English learners to be "(1) based on sound educational theory, (2) implemented effectively with sufficient resources and personnel," and (3) evaluated to determine whether they are effective in helping students overcome language barriers.[44]

Child Find

Child Find is a federal mandate in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004. This requires states to have procedures in place to identify, locate, and evaluate all children under 21 who are suspected of having a disability. A variety of methods may be used to locate and identify these children, including physical and electronic mail, publicity, and/or face-to-face outreach designed to reach the intended population.[45][46]

Child with a Disability (CWD)

According to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004, a child with a disability has "intellectual disabilities, hearing impairments (including deafness), speech or language impairments, visual impairments (including blindness), serious emotional disturbance (also referred to as 'emotional disturbance'), orthopedic impairments, autism, traumatic brain injury, other health impairments, or specific learning disabilities" and, as a result, requires special education services.[47]

Disability Categories

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 lists 13 disability categories under which children and youth aged 3–21 may be eligible for services:

- Autism
- Deaf-blindness
- Deafness
- Emotional disturbance
- Hearing impairment
- Intellectual disability
- Multiple disabilities
- Orthopedic impairment
- Other health impairment
- Specific learning disability
- Speech or language impairment
- Traumatic brain injury
- Visual impairment (including blindness)

IDEA also uses developmental delay as a category that can be designated for students ages 3–9.[48]

Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act is the primary federal law guiding K–12 education. Originally enacted in 1965, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act has been reauthorized several times, including in 2001 as the No Child Left Behind Act. In 2015, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act was reauthorized and amended as the Every Student Succeeds Act, which replaced No Child Left Behind.[49]

Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District (Endrew F. decision)

The Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District case was litigated in 2017. In this case, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that individualized education programs must provide students who have disabilities with more than the minimal education benefit, and that a "child's educational program must be appropriately ambitious in light of their circumstances."[50]

English Language Proficiency Indicator (ELP Indicator)

An English language proficiency indicator is a measure of student progress in achieving English language proficiency. It is one of the five accountability indicators that are part of the Every Student Succeeds Act.[51]

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

The Every Student Succeeds Act was enacted in 2015 as a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Among the provisions of the Every Student Succeeds Act is the requirement, for the first time, "that all students be taught to high academic standards that will prepare them to succeed in college and careers."[51]

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

Originally enacted in 1975, as the Education of Handicapped Children Act, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act was most recently reauthorized in 2004, and amended through the Every Student Succeeds Act in December of 2015. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act ensures that eligible children with disabilities have access to free, appropriate public education via individualized special education and related services. Part A of the act covers the general provisions of the law; Part B addresses assistance for the education of all children with disabilities; Part C includes a range of programs, (e.g., Child Find) and services for infants and toddlers (up to age three); and Part D consists of programs administered at the federal level.[52]

Individualized Education Program (IEP)

An individualized education program is required for children in public schools who receive special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. The individualized education program is created through a collaborative process involving parents, administrators, service providers and students, (when possible). It guides the delivery of supports and services for individual students. The individualized education program is required to be reviewed for appropriateness to student needs and revised accordingly at least once per year.[53]

Lau v. Nichols

Lau v. Nichols was a 1974 decision of the U.S. Supreme Court that held that schools that did not teach English to non-English speaking students were in violation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.[54]

Measurable Annual Goals

The Every Student Succeeds Act requires annual reporting by states on specified accountability standards. The three main reports include:

1. Progress on long-term and interim progress goals.
2. Progress on summative, systematic measures and on specific indicators within school and subgroups.
3. Finding schools that require "Comprehensive and Targeted Support and Intervention."[55]

No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 was the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. The act required states to provide standards-based assessments for students in order to receive federal funding. The No Child Left Behind Act was replaced by the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015.[56]

Peer Review

Title I of the elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended, requires peer review of the technical quality of state assessment systems. The peer review process requires states to show the "technical soundness" of their annual assessments. States submit their assessment systems for review after the first time they are administered, using a response template that reflects seven critical elements and associated sub-elements. Peer reviewers apply to the U.S. Department of Education to participate and are assigned based on their expertise and qualifications.[18]

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504)

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is the first federal disability civil rights law. It prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in any program or activity receiving federal funding. Section 504 was the foundation for the enactment of the American with Disabilities Act. It protects children with disabilities from exclusion and unequal treatment in schools.[57]

Language Development

Academic English/Academic Language

Academic English refers to the language used in the learning of content areas in the formal schooling context for the purpose of communication of social expectations and academic learning, as well as the language of textbooks, assessments, and other curricular materials.[58]

English Language Development (ELD)

English language development refers to the process by which students develop English proficiency and to the instruction specifically designed for English learners to improve their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills.[59]

English Language Proficiency (ELP)

English language proficiency refers to a student's ability to use English across a variety of settings. English language proficiency is often described as using the four domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Expressive Language

In the field of English language acquisition, expressive language refers to the domains of speaking and writing (sometimes referred to as productive language). In the field of special education, expressive language is a cognitive process that is involved in the transmission of oral, symbolic, or written language. Examples include verbalizations, sign language, gestures, pictures, written words, or communication with the aid of a device. Expressive language is viewed as a component of communication.[60 61]

First Language (L1)

First language refers to the language first acquired by a student. It is sometimes used interchangeably with "native language" or "mother tongue."

Home Language

Home language refers to the language most spoken in the home of a student.

Interpretive Communication

Interpretive communication refers to the skills necessary to understand, interpret, and analyze information obtained through listening, reading, and viewing.[62]

Language Acquisition

Language acquisition comprises the developmental processes by which students develop into proficient users of a first or additional language.[63]

Language Domain

A language domain is a smaller unit that represents the interpretive or expressive communication mode. These four independent language domains —speaking, listening, reading, and writing— are required in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.[29]

Limited English Proficient (LEP)

Limited English proficient was a term used to describe students who are English learners and who receive English language services in the United States. Limited English proficient was first used after Lau v. Nichols, (1974) and was replaced with the term "English learner" in the Every Student Succeeds Act.[64]

Native Language

Native language refers to the language to which a student is first exposed. It is sometimes used interchangeably with "first language" or "mother tongue."

Receptive Language

In the field of English language learning, receptive language refers to the domains of listening and reading. In the field of special education, it is the ability to understand and interpret information that is being conveyed through speech or other forms of communication.[65]

Second Language (L2)

Second language refers to a language acquired that is not a student's first or home language.

Sociocultural Competence

Sociocultural competence is the ability to accomplish cross-cultural communication and the knowledge of customs, rules, beliefs, and principles in a new cultural environment.[66]

Multilingualism

Balanced Bilingual

A balanced bilingual is a person who uses two languages with equal fluency. A balanced bilingual is often differentiated from others who are also bilingual but dominant in one of their languages.[67]

Biculturalism

Biculturalism is the orientation to both dominant and heritage cultures. Individuals who are bicultural may differ in how they negotiate or combine their two cultures.[68]

Bilingual Language User/Bilingual

A bilingual language user is an individual who understands and uses two languages.[69]

Code Switching

Code switching refers to when speakers alternate between using one language and another. Teachers sometimes use code switching to scaffold the teaching of other languages.[70]

Dialect

A dialect is a way to describe the variations in a language influenced by a variety of geographic and/or sociocultural factors.[71]

English Learner (EL)

The term English learner is defined in the Every Student Succeeds Act, as students (aged 3–21) enrolled in elementary or secondary school whose difficulties in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language may be sufficient to deny the individual (i) the ability to meet the challenging State academic standards; (ii) the ability to successfully achieve in classrooms where the language of instruction is English; or (iii) the opportunity to participate fully in society. English learner replaces the usage of previous terms, such as English language learner and limited English proficient in federal guidance and legislation.[72]

Multilingual Learner (MLL)

Multilingual learners are "students who are participating in early care and education and in K–12 settings who are learning two or more languages at a time."[73]

Nonverbal Communication

Nonverbal communication includes actions that do not involve spoken communication. Such actions include eye contact, facial expressions, gestures, tone, touch, and turn-taking.[74]

Translanguaging

Translanguaging is a way of describing "how multilingual learners access and use their full linguistic repertoires in communication and learning, including by using more than one language."[29]

Program Models

Consultative Model/Collaborative Consultative Model

In the consultative model, also called the collaborative consultative model, a special education teacher works with a student's general education teacher to provide specially designed and/or supplemental instruction that helps students with disabilities participate in the general education classroom.[75]

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)

Content and language integrated learning is an educational approach in which multiple languages are used to teach both content and language.[76]

Content Area Tutoring

Content area tutoring typically refers to small group instructional intervention in schools that use a Response to Intervention approach. The tutoring often includes additional instruction on foundational reading skills, vocabulary development, and listening and reading comprehension.[77]

Developmental Bilingual Education

Developmental bilingual education is an English learner program model that gradually increases the amount of English instruction in the classroom. The allocation of instructional time in the home language and in English may vary across programs. For example, in the first year, the home language may be used up to 90% of the time and by the 4th grade, 50% of content instruction can be in English.[78]

Dual Immersion/Dual Language Programs

Dual immersion, or dual language, programs are educational programs in which students learn literacy and academic content in a partner language (such as Spanish, Mandarin, or Arabic) and in English.[79] There are several types of dual language programs, such as "one-way immersion" and "two-way immersion" that reflect the characteristics of students in the program and the planned instructional outcomes.

English Learner-Specific with English-Only Support

English learner-specific with English-only support is a program type in which English proficiency and content are the focus of instruction. The student's home language is not used for instruction or as support. The class is composed of only English learners.[80]

English Learner-Specific Transitional Instruction

English learner-specific transitional instruction is a type of program in which a student's home language is used to support English proficiency acquisition, but learning the home language is not a program goal. The class composition is only English learners.[80]

Heritage Language Education

Heritage language education seeks to help learners regain, develop, or maintain their heritage language and to gain a deeper understanding of their cultural heritage. A heritage language is usually a minority language that is often spoken in the home, but it is not fully developed.[81]

Inclusionary Support

Inclusionary support provides individualized special education, language, and other accommodations that allow full participation of English learners with disabilities in the general education classroom.[82]

Mixed Bilingual

Mixed bilingual is a program type in which there is an equal focus on English and another language, including content instruction in the non-English language. In this type of program, English learners and non-English learners share a classroom.[80]

Mixed Classes with English-Only Support

Mixed classes with English-only support is a program type in which English proficiency and content are the focus of instruction. The student's home language is not used in instruction or as support. Support is provided either inside or outside of the regular classroom. In these classes, English learners and non-English learners share a classroom.[80]

Mixed Classes with Native Language Support

Mixed classes with native language support is a program type in which the student's native language or home language is used to support English proficiency acquisition, but most instruction is provided in English, either inside or outside of the regular classroom. The class composition is English learners and non-English learners.[80]

Pull-Out Instruction

Pull-out instruction is an approach to intervention that provides support to English learners, one-on-one or in small groups outside of the general education classroom. This type of intervention can be provided by teachers or paraprofessionals and can consist of heterogeneous or homogeneous groupings according to students' proficiency levels or other needs.[83]

Push-In Instruction

Push-in instruction is an approach to intervention that provides language and other support to students by a trained interventionist (teacher or paraprofessional) in the students' general education class.[83]

Sheltered Instruction

Sheltered instruction supports English learners by simultaneously providing support with academic content and linguistic needs through differentiation of texts and assignments and use of visuals, realia, and other high-engagement instructional practices.[84]

Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE)

Specially designed academic instruction in English is an approach to teaching academic content (e.g., English language arts, mathematics, science, social studies) intended for students who are still learning English. This approach typically works best when students have at least an intermediate proficiency in English.[85]

Structured English Immersion (SEI)

Structured English immersion is a teaching technique used for the rapid acquisition of English for English learners. This teaching technique immerses students in English, and it is not intended to surpass one year. After participation in this program for one academic year, students are expected to be transferred to English-language mainstream classrooms.[86]

Transitional Bilingual Education Programs (TBE)

Transitional bilingual education programs aim to transition a student from learning content in their home language to all-English instruction over time.[87]

Special Education

Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 requires that schools provide each eligible child with a disability a "free appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet the child's unique needs and that prepares the child for further education, employment, and independent living." The child's individualized education program describes how free appropriate public education will be provided.[88][47]

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)

Multi-tiered systems of support is a comprehensive, tiered approach to supporting students' academic, behavioral, and social-emotional needs. It is intended as a system inclusive of all students, including struggling students, students with disabilities, and English Learners through an integrated, differentiated system of instruction, assessment, and behavior supports. MTSS was cited in the Every Student Succeeds Act as a model that could improve overall teacher effectiveness.[89]

Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP, PLEP, PLOP, or PLP)

The present levels of academic achievement and functional performance statement describes a student's current abilities, skills, weaknesses, and strengths academically, socially, and physically. Each year, the individualized educational program team updates each student's program to reflect the student's present levels of academic achievement and functional performance. This update explains how learning issues affect the student's ability to learn the general education curriculum. It also describes how the student handles academic subjects and everyday functional activities. To write the present levels of academic achievement and functional performance statement the individualized education program team draws on several sources, including student/family interviews, teacher observations, and data such as test results and scores.[90][91]

Progress Monitoring

Progress monitoring is the process in which educators evaluate students' progress using scientifically based practices administrated on a regular basis. Student progress is then systematically tracked and frequently graphed. This process aids teachers in determining what the students know and what they still need to learn as well as informing instructional practices. Progress monitoring can be done with entire classes as well as individual students. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 indicates that an individualized education program must contain information about progress monitoring that indicates how progress will be measured and how frequently reports will be provided.[92][93]

Response to Intervention (RTI)

Response to Intervention is a model for supporting students who are struggling in school by providing inclusive, research-based instruction, regular progress checks, and screening for academic and/or behavior difficulties. More intensive supports are provided for students who need them. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 requires that a Response to Intervention model be used to identify students who may qualify for special education services.[89]

Significant Cognitive Disability (SCD)

A significant cognitive disability is a designation that is used when a student requires extensive, direct individualized instruction and substantial supports to achieve measurable gains on the challenging state academic content standards for the grade in which the student is enrolled. There is currently no established federal definition and specific definitions vary by state.[94]

Special Education

Special education programs serve students with mental, physical, and emotional disabilities. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 provides free and appropriate education to students with disabilities from the ages of 3–21. The legislation mandates that students with disabilities are educated alongside children without disabilities in the least restrictive environment that is possible. Schools are also required to identify and evaluate students with disabilities. Students with disabilities are eligible to receive an individualized education program to meet their educational needs. Schools are required to engage parents in decision making for their child's special education services and individualized education program objectives.[95]

Transition

Transition or transition planning is an individualized education program team process that plans for and supports students with goals related to post-secondary education, employment, and independent living. According to federal law, the voices of students and family members should be central to this process.[96]

Tools and Instruments

First Contact Survey

The First Contact Survey is a web-based tool designed to inform the assessment systems about students who participate in the alternate assessment developed by Dynamic Learning Maps. The survey will help test developers and the dynamic assessment prepare and present the appropriate items to each individual student. It also informs the development of a personal needs profile as it collects information on the characteristics, education, and communication needs of students participating in the alternate assessment.[97]

Home Language Survey (HLS)

A home language survey is a locally adapted questionnaire used throughout the United States and territories to meet a requirement in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act to identify students who might be English learners. Completion of a home language survey typically takes place during school enrollment in the school district.[98]

Individual Characteristics Questionnaire (ICQ)

The Individual Characteristics Questionnaire gathers key information about the characteristics of English learners with significant cognitive disabilities. It is completed by educators to provide data about students that informs the development of an alternate English language proficiency assessment.[99]

Learner Characteristics Inventory (LCI)

The Learner Characteristics Inventory is an online checklist of student characteristics that is completed by educators to create a population profile of the students who participate in states' alternate assessments. Data are collected about students' expressive communication; receptive language; health issues; attendance; use of augmentative communication systems; vision, hearing, and motor skills; engagement with others; primary instructional setting; skills in reading and mathematics; and English learner status.[100]

Screener

A screener is an assessment tool used to identify students who may have specific educational needs. Screeners are typically administered to many children at one time. As a result, they tend to be brief, easy to administer, and easy to interpret. There are various kinds of screeners that assess different skills and that are administered for a variety of purposes. Screeners can assess school readiness skills, developmental screening, behavior skills, math skills, early literacy skills and language skills.[101]

Visual Communication Systems

American Sign Language (ASL)

American Sign Language is a complex language that incorporates visual and spatial components such as hand signs, facial expressions, body movements, and body postures. The origin of American Sign Language dates to more than 200 years ago, and it is the first language of many young children who are deaf as well as some hearing children born into deaf families.[102]

Conceptually Accurate Signed English (CASE)

Conceptually Accurate Signed English is a form of communication between people who are deaf or hard-of-hearing and use American Sign Language and other individuals who are hearing and speak English.[103]

Cued Speech

Cued speech is a form of communication support that uses a variety of visual cues (lip-reading, symbols made with the hand, etc.) to assist individuals who are deaf or hard-of-hearing in their understanding of spoken language.[104]

Signed English (SE)

Signed English is an English-based, manual signing system that uses many conceptual signs from American Sign Language in addition to 14 sign markers (e.g., –s, –ed, –er, –ly). Signed English is designed to be simple and flexible while following an English word order.[105] [106]

Signed Language

Signed languages refer to natural human languages that deaf individuals and other individuals use as their narrative or primary language. Signed languages do not only consist of depictive gestures. Rather, signed languages are distinct languages and are linguistically structured with their own vocabularies and grammars. The number of signed languages in existence is unknown. There are likely hundreds of signed languages, with more being discovered and documented each year.[107]

Signing Exact English (SEE)

Signing Exact English is an English-based, manual signing system that uses some signs from American Sign Language in conjunction with additional symbols that represent words and structures not present in American Sign Language (e.g., prefixes, suffixes, articles, tenses). Signing Exact English follows the grammatical structure of English.[105] [106]

Additional Important Terminology

The Advancing Alternate English Language Learning Assessment: Alternate Assessment Redesign Project (Advancing ALTELLA)

The Advancing Alternate English Language Learning Assessment: Alternate Assessment Redesign project is a collaboration among WIDA staff, the WIDA consortium (including the Minnesota Department of Education as the lead state), the Texas Education Agency, and national experts. The project includes a revamp of Alternate ACCESS for ELLs (now WIDA Alternate ACCESS). It also includes the development of a screener that appropriately identifies English learners with significant cognitive disabilities so that they can participate in WIDA Alternate ACCESS, the development of professional learning materials that support the implementation and administration of the new and updated assessments, research that informs assessment development, and dissemination of project findings.[108]

The Alternate English Language Learning Assessment Project (ALTELLA)

The Alternate English Language Learning Assessment project is an Enhanced Assessment Grant-funded project that builds on the lessons learned from the past decade of research on assessing English learners and students with significant cognitive disabilities as separate groups. The project seeks to examine instructional practices and policies for English learners with significant cognitive disabilities to develop an evidence-centered design approach. The project examines current English language proficiency standards with the goal of developing a foundational knowledge base and furthering the inclusion of students in English language instruction. This work is critical to inform the development of an alternate English language proficiency assessment.[109]

Collaborative for Alternate Assessment of English Language Proficiency (CAAELP)

The Collaborative for Alternate Assessment of English language Proficiency is an effort led by the Iowa Department of Education in coordination with the National Center for Research Evaluation Standards and Student Testing at the University of California, Los Angeles. Its main objective is to develop an alternate English language proficiency assessment for English learners with the most significant cognitive disabilities.[110]

Early Childhood Development (ECD)

Early childhood development describes the early and crucial years in the life of a child (especially up to age 5) when appropriate supports (including nutrition, healthcare, and emotional care) can help to prepare the child for success in an educational system and for longer term well-being. Early childhood development begins with early caregivers and can extend to childcare, school, and other settings.[111]

English Learners with Disabilities

English learners with disabilities are individuals who have one or more disabilities as documented in their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) or 504 Plans, and who are progressing toward English language proficiency in speaking, reading, writing, and understanding the English language.[48]

English Learners with Significant Cognitive Disabilities

English learners with significant cognitive disabilities are individuals with difficulties in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language as they are progressing toward English language proficiency, and who have one or more disabilities that significantly impact their intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior.[112]

Request for Information (RFI)

A request for information is a procurement term used when an organization wants to gather preliminary information from potential vendors.

Request for Proposal (RFP)

A request for proposal is a bidding solicitation in which a company or organization announces funding is available for a project or program, and individuals or companies can place bids for the project's completion. It is a document an organization issues when it wants to buy a product or service and it wants to make its specifications available to the public.[113]

WIDA

WIDA is a consortium that provides language development resources to those who support the academic success of multilingual learners. It offers a comprehensive, research-based system of language standards, assessment, professional learning, and educator assistance. Its resources are used by many domestic states, territories, and international schools. WIDA is housed in the Wisconsin Center for Education Research at the University of Wisconsin–Madison.[114]

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