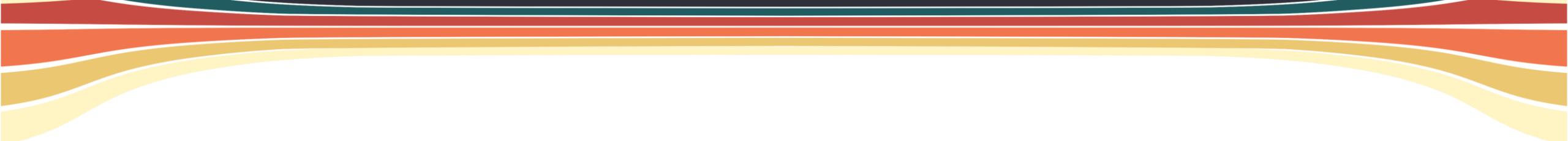


A Special Education Director's Guide to Supporting EL Students with Disabilities

Kirsi Laine, Senior Manager
Student, School, and Family Support Bureau

Special Education Winter Director's Academy
January 15, 2026



Your Family

Think back three generations in your family.

What are the languages and cultures in your family?

- Think time: two minutes
- Share with your neighbor.
- Share one thought with the whole group.

General Terms to Keep in Mind

Initial Fluent English Proficient (IFEP) “never ELL” - May refer to a student whose language usage survey (LUS) indicated that there is no influence of languages other than English in the student’s home (Native English speaker) OR it may refer to a student who scored proficient on the English language proficiency (ELP) screener (WIDA Screener for Kindergarten or Grades 1-12).

English Learner (EL) - These are students whose home or heritage language influence is not English, and who are unable to speak, read, write, and understand English at a level comparable to their grade-level English proficient peers, as determined by objective measures of proficiency. The term EL replaces ELL.

Reclassified Fluent English Proficient (RFEP) “exited ELL” - It refers to a student who has reached proficiency in the annual ELP assessment and is thus no longer classified as an EL.

Bilingual

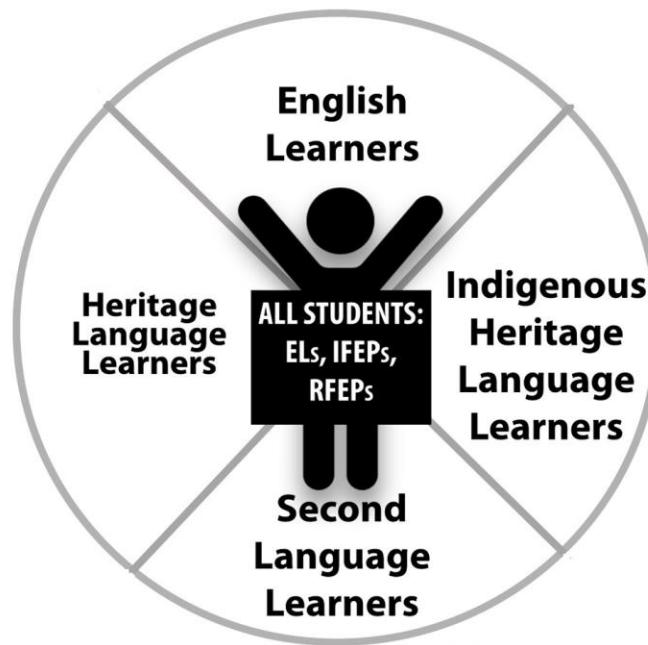
A person using two language with fluency.

In public education this could mean any of the students:

- Initial Fluent English Proficient
- English Learner
- Reclassified Fluent English Proficient



Connections to Language



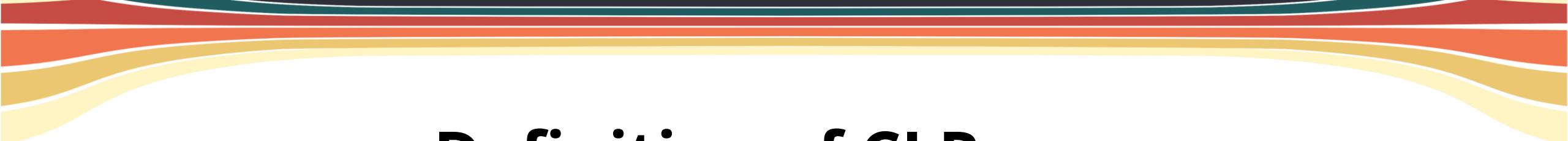


Definition of CLR

Culturally and Linguistically Responsive (CLR) - validating and affirming an individual's home culture and language to create connections with other cultures and languages in various social contexts.

VALIDATE - The intentional and purposeful legitimization of the home culture and language of the student.

AFFIRM - The intentional and purposeful effort to reverse the negative stereotypes, images, and representations of marginalized cultures and languages promoted by corporate mainstream media.



Definition of CLR

BUILD - Create the connections between the home culture/language and the school culture/language through instruction for success in school and the broader social context.

BRIDGE - Create opportunities for situational appropriateness that provides the academic and social skills that students will need to have success beyond school culture.

Your School Experience

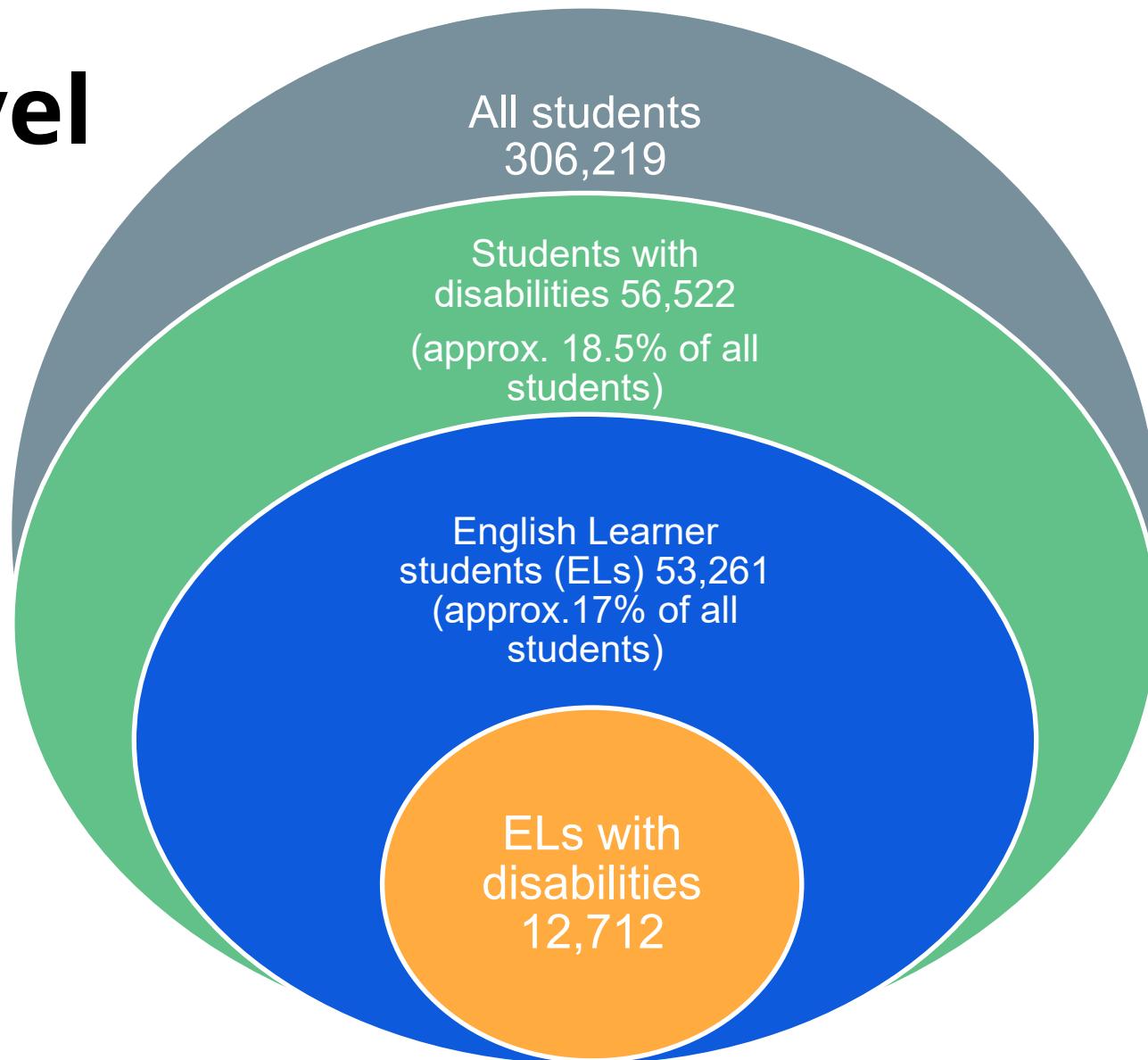
How was I validated and affirmed?



How was I supported in building and bridging?



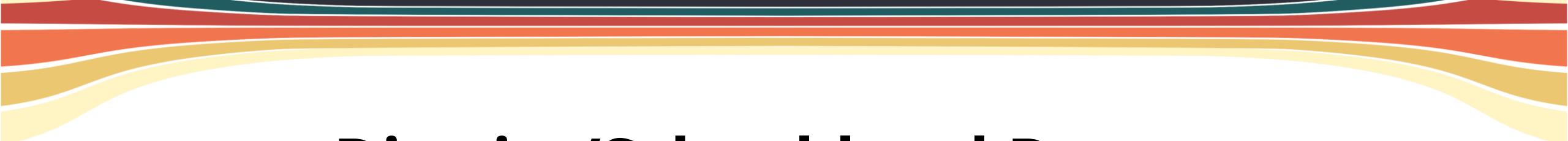
State-level Data



24% of EL students are students with disabilities

22.5% of students with disabilities are EL students

Source: 40th day data for school year 2024-25



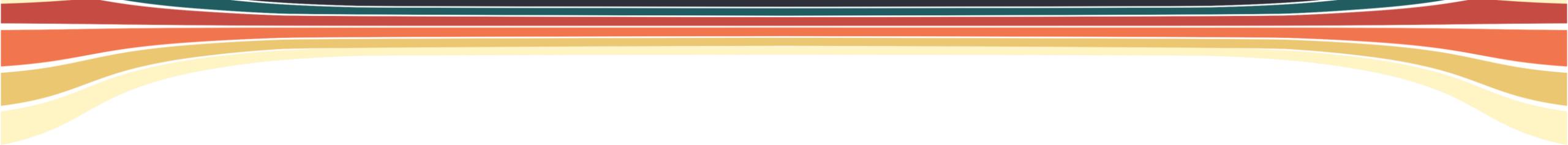
District/School-level Data

How many students with disabilities are at your district/school?

How many EL students?

- How many students speak Navajo?
- How many speak Spanish?
- How many speak Keres?
- What other languages are spoken by students?

How many EL students with disabilities are at your district/school?



Who Are English Learner Students?

Federal Definition

Definition of English learner is included in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as amended, section 8101(20):

The term “English learner”, when used with respect to an individual, means an individual

- (A) who is aged 3 through 21;
- (B) who is enrolled or preparing to enroll in an elementary school or secondary school;
- (C)(i) who was not born in the United States or whose native language is a language other than English;
- (ii)(I) who is a Native American or Alaska Native, or a native resident of the outlying areas; and
- (II) who comes from an environment where a language other than English has had a significant impact on the individual’s level of English language proficiency; or
- (iii) who is migratory, whose native language is a language other than English, and who comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant;

and

Step 1: Language Usage Survey

Parents/guardians complete the NM Language Usage Survey (LUS).

- Only one LUS for a student in their NM public school career
- LUS is kept in the student's cumulative file and transfers as part of student records
- LUS data is reported to Nova
- If a language other than English is indicated in LUS questions 1-7, then the student is administered the English language proficiency screening assessment (go to Step 2)
- If responses to questions 1-7 are English only, the student is *not* an EL student.

Sólo para uso del distrito: District: School:		
 ENCUESTA DEL USO DEL IDIOMA DEPARTAMENTO DE EDUCACIÓN PÚBLICA DE NUEVO MÉXICO - padres o tutores deben llenar-		
El propósito de esta encuesta es asegurar que su hijo/hija reciba una educación de la más alta calidad y los servicios que tiene el derecho de recibir. La información que usted proporcione será utilizada solamente para ayudar a la escuela a tomar decisiones programáticas. Responderá a este formulario solamente una vez en la trayectoria de educación de su hijo/hija.		
Nombre del estudiante:	Fecha de nacimiento:	Nivel/Grado:
Responda a cada pregunta marcando la casilla bajo SÍ o NO		
1. ¿Usa el/a estudiante otro idioma(s) además del inglés con su familia o sus amigos? <input type="checkbox"/> SÍ <input type="checkbox"/> NO		
2. ¿Usa usted otro idioma(s) además del inglés con el estudiante? <input type="checkbox"/> SÍ <input type="checkbox"/> NO		
3. ¿Comprende el estudiante cuando alguien se comunica con él o ella en un idioma además del inglés? <input type="checkbox"/> SÍ <input type="checkbox"/> NO		
4. ¿Lee el/a estudiante en otro idioma(s) además del inglés? <input type="checkbox"/> SÍ <input type="checkbox"/> NO		
5. ¿Escribe el estudiante en otro idioma(s) además del inglés? <input type="checkbox"/> SÍ <input type="checkbox"/> NO		
6. ¿Le interpreta o traduce el estudiante a usted o a alguna otra persona en otro idioma(s) además del inglés? <input type="checkbox"/> SÍ <input type="checkbox"/> NO		
7. ¿Si respondió SÍ a una o más de las preguntas 1-6, ¿cuál(es) idiomas además del inglés usa el estudiante con más frecuencia en casa? Escoja hasta tres: <input type="checkbox"/> Árabe <input type="checkbox"/> jicarilla apache <input type="checkbox"/> tewa <input type="checkbox"/> cantonés <input type="checkbox"/> keres <input type="checkbox"/> tiwa <input type="checkbox"/> diné <input type="checkbox"/> coreano <input type="checkbox"/> towa <input type="checkbox"/> español <input type="checkbox"/> lengua de señas americana (ASL) <input type="checkbox"/> vietnamés <input type="checkbox"/> francés <input type="checkbox"/> mandarín <input type="checkbox"/> zuni <input type="checkbox"/> griego <input type="checkbox"/> mescalero apache <input type="checkbox"/> Otros _____ <input type="checkbox"/> hmong <input type="checkbox"/> portugués <input type="checkbox"/> italiano <input type="checkbox"/> ruso <input type="checkbox"/> jemer <input type="checkbox"/> somali		
OTRAS PREGUNTAS		
8. ¿Se traslada el estudiante de otro estado, distrito o escuela? Si este es su caso, favor de proveer la ubicación y el nombre de la escuela:		
9. ¿Ha recibido el estudiante instrucción escolar en otro(s) idioma(s) además del inglés? Si la respuesta es sí, cuál idioma(s)?		
10. ¿En cuál idioma prefiere recibir información de la escuela?		
11. ¿En cuál idioma prefiere comunicarse con los empleados de la escuela?		
12. ¿Hay algo más que deberíamos saber para servir mejor a su hija/hijo?		
Firma del parent o tutor:		Fecha:
Traductor/intérprete:		Idioma:
		Fecha:

Federal Definition, continued

(D) 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.



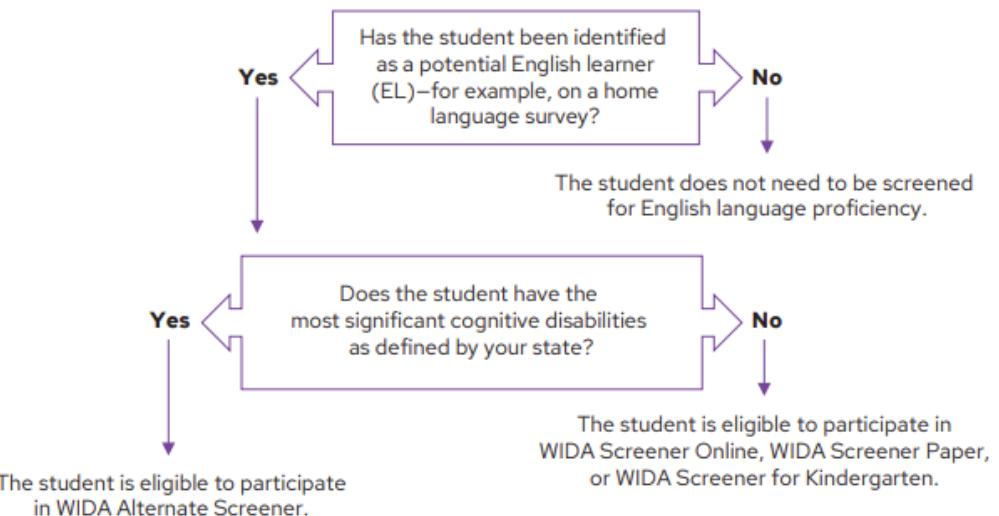
U.S. Department of Education

Step 2: English Language Proficiency Screening

The WIDA Screener for Kindergarten and the WIDA Screener Online for grades 1-12 are the only department approved English language proficiency (ELP) screening assessments in NM.

New in SY25-26: WIDA Alternate Screener grades K-12 for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities

WIDA Alternate Screener Participation Decision Tree



Assessment participation decisions must be made by the IEP team, not an individual. Check with your state education agency on specific criteria for identifying potential ELs with the most significant cognitive disabilities.

ELP Cut Scores

WIDA Screener for Kindergarten

GRADE	DOMAINS	SCORE INDICATES STUDENT AS AN EL	SCORE INDICATES STUDENT <u>IS NOT</u> AN EL
Students entering in 1 st Semester	Listening, Speaking	Oral Language Composite Score of 4.0 or lower*	Oral Language Composite Score of 4.5 or higher
Student entering in 2 nd Semester	Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing	Overall Composite Score of 4.0 or lower*	Overall Composite Score of 4.5 or higher

WIDA Screener for Grades 1-12

GRADE	DOMAINS	SCORE IDENTIFIES STUDENT AS AN EL	SCORE INDICATES STUDENT <u>IS NOT</u> AN EL
Grades 1-12	Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing	Overall Composite Score of 4.0 or lower*	Overall Composite Score of 4.5 or higher

WIDA Alternate Screener*

1st Semester Kindergarten: Students are identified as ELs with a score of <3 in the Oral Language Composite score, which includes Listening & Speaking. Students are initial fluent English proficient with a score of 3 or higher in the Oral Language Composite score.

2nd Semester Kindergarten: Students are identified as ELs with a score of <3 or lower in the Overall Composite score, which includes Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. Students are initial fluent English proficient with a score of 3 or higher in the Overall Composite score.

Grades 1-12: Students are identified as EL with an overall composite score of <3 or lower in the Overall Composite score, which includes Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. Students are initial fluent English proficient with a score of 3 or higher in the Overall Composite score

*Please contact PED's Language and Culture Division for support with the WIDA Alternate Screener.



Quiz Question 1

Can an individualized education program (IEP) team decide whether a student is designated as an EL student?

No

Step 3: Parent Notification

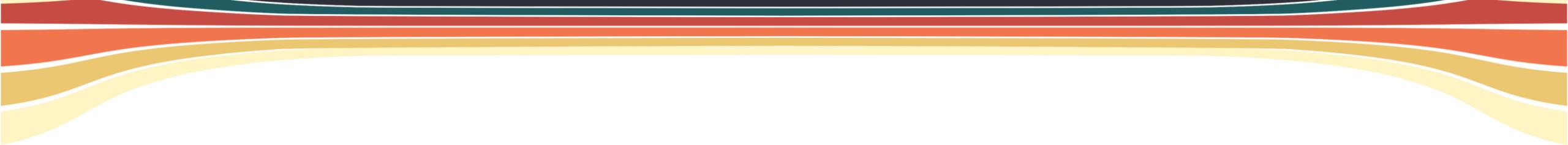
- Initial Parent notification within 30 days of beginning of school
- Annual Parent notification within 30 days of beginning of school
- Sample parent notification letters include the following:
 4. If your child has an Individualized Education Program (IEP), the EL program and/or language support services will assist in meeting the IEP goals in the following ways: [Insert description here].
- Parent notification is required under ESEA, as amended, section 1112(e)(3)(A)

For Steps 1-3 requirements, please also see state regulation 6.29.5 NMAC.

Table Discussion

1. Do your district/charter school's individual education plans (IEPs) include which students are EL students? Is the data accurate?
2. What processes have been successful at your district/charter school to ensure IEPs are accurately indicating students identified as ELs? (collaboration structures, etc.)





How Do Districts and Charter Schools Serve English Learners?

English Learners are Protected



Federal Law

- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
- Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974
- ESEA of 1965, as amended by ESSA of 2015

Requires that *all* English learners have

- Equal access to a high-quality education
- Opportunity to achieve their full academic potential

English Learner Program/Services

For an English learner program to comply with federal civil rights requirements, it must meet the following two goals:



English learner students attain English language proficiency, and



English learner students can participate meaningfully in the standard instructional programs without English learner supports within a reasonable amount of time.

English Learner Program Standards

A district or state charter has the flexibility to choose the English learner program that best meets its students' needs, federal civil rights requirements, and standards listed below. Programs must be offered until English learner students are proficient in English and can participate meaningfully in educational programs without English language supports. An English learner program must meet the standards below:

It must be based on sound educational theory.

Programs and practices must be reasonably calculated so that the program and services can be implemented effectively (including having the necessary resources).

The program must be evaluated for effectiveness to ensure it produces results within a reasonable period of time.

English Learner Services – Required in State Regulation

Integrated English language development (ELD):

All content area classes must also deliver integrated ELD (integrated instruction) and provide appropriate language supports.

Designated English language development (ELD):

A block or class of at least 45 minutes where the primary goal is for English learner students to learn English. Students should be grouped based on their English language proficiency levels.*

Can take the form of a pull-out class or course at the elementary, middle school, or high school level, a dedicated block within the self-contained classroom, or an integrated ELA-ELD course at the secondary level.

*Schools offering Bilingual Multicultural Education Programs are required to adhere to additional state regulations. These include allocating a minimum of one hour for English language development and meeting specific teacher endorsement criteria.

Teachers should use the state's adopted ELD standards—the WIDA ELD Standards framework, 2020 Edition—to help inform instruction and assessment.

Bilingual Multicultural Education Program as an EL Program

Dual language immersion

Designed to develop high academic achievement in two languages; additive bilingual and biliterate proficiency; and cross-cultural skills development

Enrichment

Designed to further develop the home language of fully English proficient students and to teach the cultures of the state

Heritage language

Designed to support and revitalize a student's native language and culture through oral and/or written language instruction; Native American language programs require approval from tribal councils or from other appropriate tribal entities with authority to make educational decisions on behalf of Native American children

Maintenance

Designed to develop and maintain proficiency and literacy in the primary or home language while developing a student's literacy and oral skills in English

Transitional

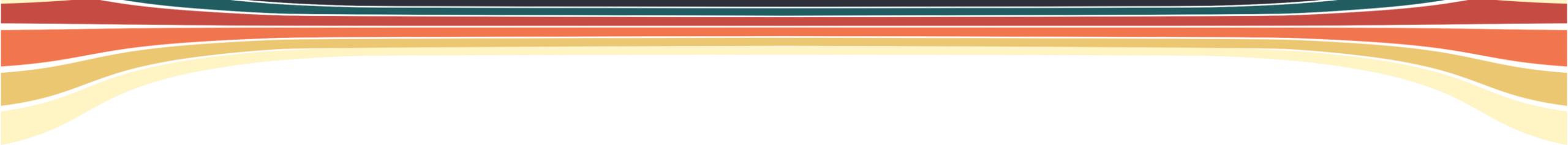
Designed to transfer students from home language instruction with gradual transition to an all-English curriculum



Quiz Question 2

Special education services are more important than language program/services for an EL student with a disability?

No



Some Considerations for EL Students with Disabilities

Considerations for EL Students with Disabilities

- Student is a general education student first.
- An EL program is part of layer 1 instruction in the Multi-Layered System of Supports (MLSS) and thus part of core instruction for EL students.
- EL students with disabilities require access to:
 - All programs available for all students
 - EL programs to which the student is entitled
 - All special education services to which the student is entitled, based on their disability



Quiz Question 3

Can EL student with a disability participate in a bilingual multicultural education program?

Yes

Quiz Question 4

Should an EL specialist, EL coordinator, or other language specialist attend an IEP meeting for an EL student with a disability? **Yes**

Why or why not?

Additional Considerations

- IEP team includes a second language acquisition specialist (such as an ELD teacher, EL program coordinator, bilingual program teacher, or teacher who holds a TESOL endorsement) who knows the student.
- Language proficiency of the student in listening, speaking, reading, and writing
- Developmental level of the student's English and home or heritage language in listening, speaking, reading, and writing
- Prior knowledge and experiences of the student
- Culturally relevant materials and experiences
- Cultural heritage of the student (Butterfield & Reed, 2011)

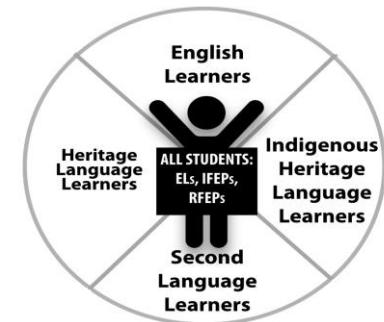


Table Discussion

1. What are the most common barriers to educational success for EL students with disabilities that you have seen in your role?
2. How do these barriers show up differently in elementary, middle, and high school settings?



Strength-Based Focus

Historically, school systems have invested a great deal of time and resources to identify challenges and difficulties that students with disabilities face, with the goal of providing individualized support in a timely manner. It is important, however, that school teams do not focus only on what students do not know and cannot do, as this contributes to deficit views of students' learning potential.

Deficit views of students overlook the negative impact that inappropriate district policies, educator attitudes, and instructional approaches, among other elements of the learning environment, can have on students' learning experience and their success. While all students experience individual challenges, they also bring unique strengths, abilities, interests, and experiences that can be drawn upon to promote learning.

- López, Young, Genesee, Hillard 2022



Student Agency

- Are students with disabilities who are EL students included so that they can inform their IEPs through student agency by
 - identifying their strengths, assets, and interests;
 - providing input through interest inventories, creating resumes, and informing learning profiles;
 - actively participating in their own IEP meetings; and
 - advocating for the accommodations or modifications as needed.
- Are EL students with disabilities included in all programs including bilingual multicultural education programs (BMEPs) if available at the school?

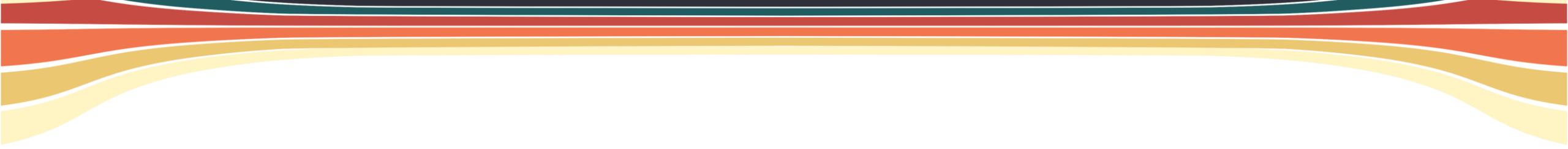
Eliminating Barriers



BOX 1. EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF RESEARCH ON DUAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS WITH DISABILITIES

1. Evidence from preschool-aged children with developmental language disorders, autism, and Down syndrome indicates that they can achieve the same levels of language competence and exhibit the same profiles of strengths and weaknesses as monolingual children with the same disabilities. Thus, bilingualism does not exacerbate bilingual learners' disabilities and does not prevent them from becoming bilingual.
2. The extent to which preschool bilingual children acquire proficiency in both languages is associated with the quality of the learning environment, including both the amount of exposure and the nature of the linguistic input.
3. There is no scientific evidence to date to justify educational policies or practices that limit the access of bilingual learners with disabilities to dual language education on the grounds that it exceeds their neurocognitive capacity.
4. Students in dual language programs attain significantly higher levels of bilingual proficiency than similar students in monolingual programs. In particular, students who speak a minoritized L1 are able to attain the same, or even higher, level of proficiency in the majority language and in academic domains as similar students with similar disabilities in monolingual programs.

- López, Young, Genesee, Hillard 2022



Statewide Assessment for ELP

Assessing English Language Proficiency

- All ELs take annually the WIDA ACCESS English language proficiency (ELP) assessment
 - WIDA ACCESS for Kindergarten
 - WIDA ACCESS Online (grades 1-12)
- ACCESS is not a timed test
- WIDA Alternate ACCESS (grades K-12) is for ELs with the most significant cognitive disabilities who take the statewide alternate performance assessment, DLM, and who can take the WIDA Alternate assessment if this is written in the student's IEP.
- Alternate ACCESS is paper-based and individually administered

Reaching ELP

- 4.7 or higher overall composite score on WIDA ACCESS
- 3 or higher overall composite score on WIDA Alternate ACCESS
- Overall composite score is a weighted score of the four domains: Listening (15%), reading (35%), speaking (15%) and writing (35%).
- Students who have reached English proficiency are reclassified as fluent English proficient (RFEP) and must be monitored for two years for academic progress.

SAMPLE Monitoring Worksheet for Reclassified Fluent English Proficient Students
(Existed English Learner Students)

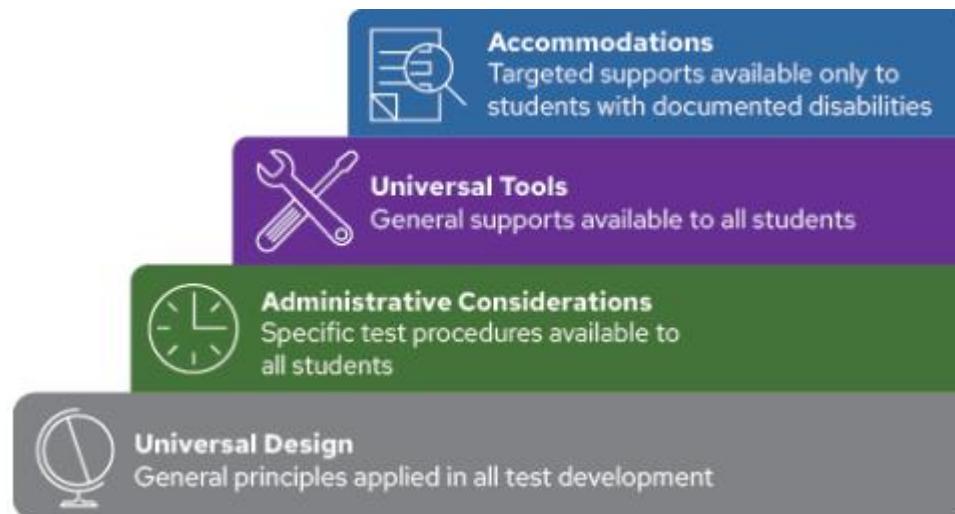
Per state regulation § 29.5 (1) NNAEC English learners (ELs), who attain an overall composite score of 4.7 or higher on the ACCESS for ELs assessment or an overall composite score of Level 3 or higher on the Alternate ACCESS assessment, are reclassified as fluent English proficient (RFEP). RFEP students must be monitored for academic progress after exiting EL status for two subsequent school years by the school district or charter school. If a student is not making academic progress, the Multi-Layered System of Supports (MLSS) framework should be utilized to ensure students are alerted. Each district or charter school should have a monitoring plan in place to ensure that the monitoring process is effective and informs the district of the effectiveness of the chosen EL program or services as well as how well the EL program(s) and instruction has succeeded in creating a foundation for continued success for RFEPs. The English Learner Tool Kit ([changes](#)) provides guidance and resources for monitoring exited EL students. Above all, let's remember to recognize students who have reached English language proficiency!

Student Name:		Grade:					
Date EL proficiency was achieved (Must be monitor for 2 years from this date)							
ACCESS for ELs Proficiency Results:							
Overall Composite Score	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing	Literacy	Comprehension	Oral Language

Year 1 of Monitoring

Monitoring Date	Content Area	How is this measured? (From a short, short cycle, state a measure etc.)	Scores ²	Recommendations/Notes: What kind of support, enrichment, services does the student need during the coming weeks or months?
	English Language Arts		BOY MOW EOY	
	Mathematics		BOY MOW EOY	
	Science		BOY MOW EOY	
	Social Studies		BOY MOW EOY	
Is the student participating in other programs or services? (Gifted, Special education, Bilingual/Multicultural Education Program, etc.)				
Are there other qualitative considerations?				

Accessibility and Accommodations on WIDA ACCESS Assessments



- Accommodations for students with IEPs or 504 plan
- Universal tools (color contrasts, magnifier, etc.) available to all students
- Administrative considerations including flexibility in timing, scheduling, setting of test are available to all students.
- Universal design – test items have been developed using universal design principles.

Source: WIDA

Less Than Four Domains

- ESEA, as amended, requires that a state provide appropriate accommodations for ELs with disabilities and, if an EL has a disability that precludes assessment in one or more domains of the ELP assessment such that there are *no appropriate accommodations for the affected domain*, assess the student's ELP based on the remaining domains in which it is possible to assess the student (34 CFR § 200.6(h)(4)).

To complete the form, you need to be familiar with the following codes that meet the needs of your student:

- Hearing Impairment (HI).** Example: A student with profound hearing loss that is not fluent in ASL.
- Visual Impairment (VI).** Example: A student is blind or visually impaired, yet unable to read braille.
- Speaking Domain for Students Taking the Braille Version (VIBR).** Example: A student unable to produce functional speech (stutters) but uses an Augmentative/Alternative Communication device.
- Non-Verbal (NV).** Example: A student with autism who is unable to communicate, and accommodations do not help the student.

[ACCESS and WIDA Alternate ACCESS Domain Exemptions for ELLs with Disability.pdf](#)

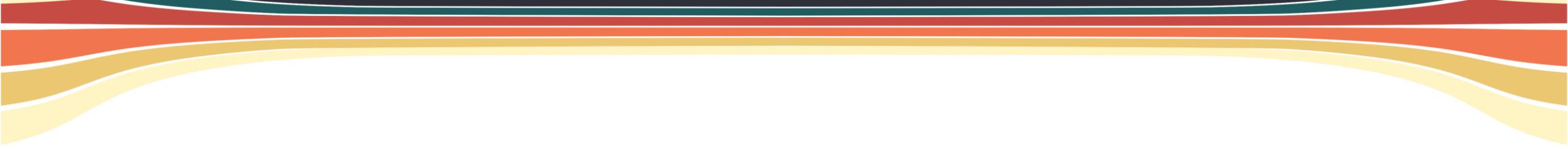
Quiz Question 5

Who decides when an EL student with a disability exits EL program/services?

The decision is made by the overall composite score of the student on the annual WIDA ACCESS or WIDA Alternate ACCESS, not a team or person. If the score meets the exit criteria, then the student exits EL program/services and reclassifies as fluent English proficient (RFEP).

English Learner Roadmap





Continuous Improvement

Resources for Identifying and Serving ELs with Disabilities

IDENTIFYING AND SERVING
ENGLISH LEARNER STUDENTS
WITH DISABILITIES
GUIDANCE MANUAL

Find the Guidance Manual [here](#).

Canvas course for the
Guidance Manual

- Six Modules
- Badge received after
successful completion
- Rolled out in
spring/summer 2025 in
six regional trainings



The image shows a screenshot of a Canvas course page for the "Implementing the Identifying and Serving English Learner Students with Disabilities Guidance Manual". The page is titled "Implementing the Identifying and Serving English Learner Students with Disabilities Guidance Manual" and is categorized under "Language & Culture". It is marked as "FREE" and "Self-Paced Training". The course description states: "This course is designed to support New Mexico educators, administrators, and service providers in using the NMPED guidance manual to make informed decisions for English learners with disabilities. Through six self-paced modules, participants will explore how to deliver culturally and linguistically responsive instruction, apply Universal...". The page also includes sections for "Available Badges" and "Self-paced FREE" with a right-pointing arrow.

The Role of Collaboration

Example: Rio Rancho Public Schools (RRPS)

- At Rio Rancho, collaboration is the cornerstone of all instruction and support. Collaboration begins when a student first enters the school, and teachers reach out to parents. “Relationship-building with families isn’t a singular event that begins at a certain stage of the process.”
- The district integrates families throughout the entire process. Nothing about a child should be news to the family.
- Once the student assistance team (SAT) process is initiated for an English learner student, all teachers who directly support the student collaborate to provide targeted, timely, and intentional support through the layers of MLSS.
- In the case of English learner students, English language development (ELD) coordinators are automatically members of the SAT. These professionals are highly valued for their knowledge of available ELD programming as well as the English learner student’s language development trajectory.

IDENTIFYING AND SERVING
ENGLISH LEARNER STUDENTS
WITH DISABILITIES
GUIDANCE MANUAL

Read the Rio Rancho
vignette (page 19)



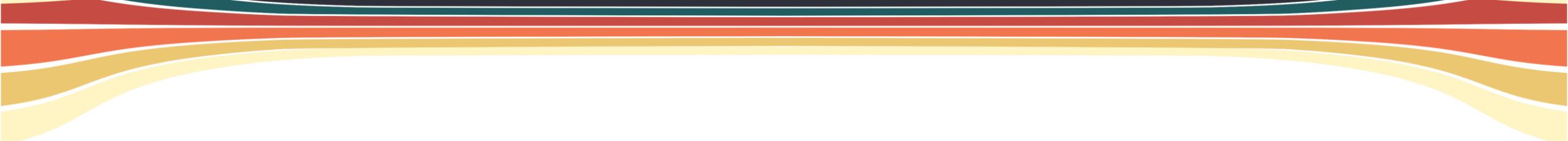
Example: Rio Rancho continued

- Rio Rancho has also prioritized district-level collaboration among the Curriculum and Instruction, Federal Programs, and Special Services teams.
- One critical area of focus in evaluations for English learner students is the language of the diagnostic assessment: Students might require testing in the home language, English, or both.
- Rio Rancho has a Bilingual Review Committee that joins the Eligibility Determination Team (EDT).
- The Bilingual Review Committee is a sub-team of the Special Services Department and consists of a bilingual psychologist or diagnostician, a bilingual speech-language pathologist (SLP), and other specialists who provide bilingual ancillary support services.

Example: Rio Rancho continued

- The committee works with the EDT to examine all available student data, such as results of the LUS, WIDA screener, WIDA ACCESS, curriculum-based assessments, and the student's performance in language and academics over a number of years.
- By gauging the student's growth rate in various areas, the Bilingual Review Committee can help the EDT determine if further diagnostic testing is needed and which language or languages are needed.
- The committee then oversees diagnostic testing to ensure that all assessments are administered in a way that is culturally and linguistically responsive and appropriate for the student.

Source: Interview with Suzanne Nguyen-Wisneski, Executive Director of Federal, Bilingual, and Native American Programs, and Joy Morales, Executive Director of Elementary Curriculum and Instruction, Rio Rancho Public Schools



“The first part of our relationship-building process has been to understand each other’s work and what it looks like through the lenses of the other teams ... what each team does, and why they do it. Where does our work intersect, and how do we complement one another?”



-Suzanne Nguyen-Wisneski Executive Director of Federal, Bilingual, and Native American Programs at RRPS

Table Discussion

- What are your initial thoughts on the RRPS example?
- What does collaboration look like at your district?



The Role of Collaboration

Example: Farmington Municipal Schools (FMS)

The Director of Multicultural Services realized there were gaps in FMS services for English learners with disabilities. To understand how school-based multidisciplinary teams were serving these students, she attended a different individualized education program (IEP) meeting each day for an entire month. She observed silos in how general education, special education, and EL services operated:

- Students' instructional programs lacked coherence, and ELD professionals rarely attended the meetings.
- IEP teams were operating under a misconception that special education was more critical than ELD.
- Consequently, students' language development received little attention in the eligibility and IEP processes, and English learner students with disabilities were being removed from ELD.

IDENTIFYING AND SERVING
ENGLISH LEARNER STUDENTS
WITH DISABILITIES
GUIDANCE MANUAL

Read the Farmington
vignette (page 37)



Example: Farmington continued

Director of Multicultural Services approached the Director of Exceptional Programs, her special education counterpart, to better understand how special education was implemented in FMS, especially on behalf of English learners identified with disabilities.

The two directors began sharing insights and gaining a stronger understanding of how their work overlapped. Together, they reflected on how well services aligned in FMS:

- How many students were dually identified?
- Which experts were available in each school site to serve those children, and what instructional training did special education, general education, and ELD teachers need?

They discovered in their data review that *their 300 dually identified students* in FMS spent the majority of their school day in the general education setting but were all performing *at the bottom 25 percent of the district*.

When they inspected dually identified students' IEPs, only 10 percent correctly indicated English Learner (EL) status on the first page. Of those 10 percent of IEPs that did identify EL status, only 40 percent were drafted in a meeting that included a teacher or coordinator who represented ELD.

Example: Farmington continued

Based on these findings, they created a Focus Team of district administrators to advocate for dually identified students at the district and school levels. Their team met with principals and site coordinators to ask how instructional services were scheduled and coordinated. The Directors began researching best practices for serving English learner students with disabilities. Their team adopted a philosophy to guide their collaboration: “These are our children we share. We need to work as a team.”

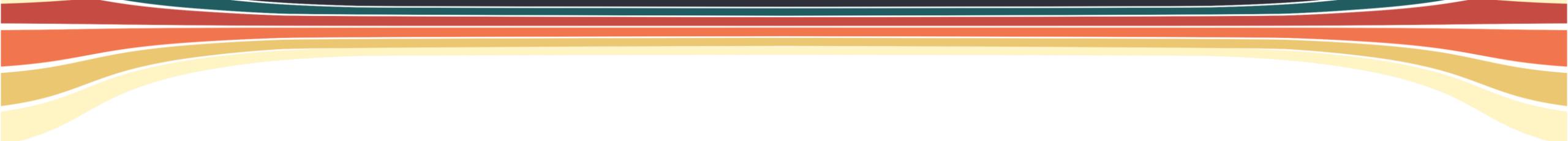
They first worked within a Focus Team to refine and align guidelines for IEP processes. Next, they began disseminating their recommendations among principals and special education and EL coordinators at schools to shift mindsets. However, the Directors understood that massive systemic changes could not happen all at once. Instead, their Focus Team tackled new accountability pieces each year for seven years. These incremental changes took hold thanks to consistent and frequent messaging. The Directors also empowered educators by explaining the purpose and reasoning behind the change

Source: Interview with Karen Brown, Director of Multicultural Services, and Christa Kulidge, Director of Exceptional Programs, Farmington Municipal Schools, both Directors have retired.

Table Discussion

- What are your initial thoughts on the FMS example?
- What changes would benefit EL students with disabilities at your district/charter school?





“Changes require honest conversations about the “why.” Not the “what” or the “do now.” That’s how you adopt an improvement mindset, growth mindset, and a growth model, rather than just giving directives. The more we make sure people are on the bus, the clearer the message becomes.”



-Karen Brown, Director of Multicultural Services at FMS, retired

For More Information

For Questions

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