EVALUATING LANGUAGE LEARNERS FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION

STEVE GILL

BASED ON THE BOOK WRITTEN BY STEVE GILL AND USHANI NANAYAKKARA

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2 WHAT WE ARE GOING TO DO TODAY

- **The Topics:**
- Introduction to the topic
- Skills and Data Prior to the evaluation
- Our Tests
- My Protocol for Bilingual Evaluation
- SLD Mini-Matrix
- Report Writing

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3 INTRODUCTION TO THIS WORK

- Objectives:
- 1) Participants will know examples of key data to obtain prior to and during the evaluation process.
- 2) Participants will know an evaluation system and protocol that they can implement.
- 3) Participants will be able to explain steps to take in order to defend "determinant factor" and integrate the information into their reports.

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- **Do not share without prior written consent.**

- **Sorry that I need to make this slide, but….**

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5 A QUESTION….

- **Goal** --- **To create a question mark in everyone's mind…..**
- **Are you part of creating, sustaining, or solving the problem?**
- You cannot answer the question above without your data!!!

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6 WINNING THE LOTTO AND POWERBALL ON THE SAME DAY…

- 1 in 100 quintillion
- 1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000,000
- The likelihood that all 16 of 16 language learners in this teachers class had a disability in reading.
- If we have a group of students having the same problem, we have a systems problem and not a student problem.

7 **RESEARCH BY STEVE HIRSCH**

- If we provide staff with identical data, and we only change the name of the student and the country of origin, will we have proportional results?

- Staff were provided extensive data on 4 students, **the data was identical**, only the name of the student and country of origin changed… then staff were asked whether or not to refer the student and whether or not to recommend special education "exit" (for students already qualified…. Let's see the results!!!
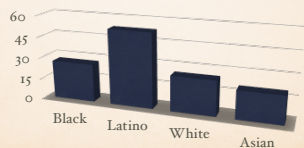

ETHNICITY AND REFERRAL FOR FORMAL SPECIAL EDUCATION ASSESSMENT

When looking at identical data

Bar chart axis values: 60, 45, 30, 15, 0 — categories: Black, Latino, White, Asian

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ETHNICITY AND EARLY RE-EVALUATION FOR EXITING

When looking at identical data
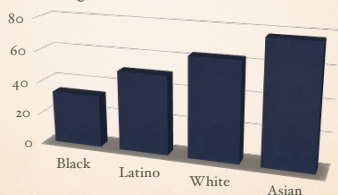
Bar chart axis values: 80, 60, 40, 20, 0 — categories: Black, Latino, White, Asian

10   JUST A THOUGHT…

- **Conduct the assessment with the notion that there is nothing wrong with the individual and that systemic, ecological, or environmental factors are the primary reason for learning problems. Maintain this hypothesis until data suggest otherwise.**

- (Klingner, J., & Eppolito, A.M. (2104), English Language Learners: Differentiating Between Language Acquisition and Learning Disabilities. *Council for Exceptional Children. (pp.9)*

11   **WHERE DID THIS WORK COME FROM**

- My beginning
- My Middle
- Grad school for Language Acquisition
- The ELL CDP Journey

12   TOOLS FOR YOUR TOOLKIT

- Knowing your school/district ELL service results and why
- LE^{3}AP Lens
- Your District Demographics and Data and why
- Bilingual Evaluators, when are they most critical
- ELL Critical Data Process – Variety of sources of data, the legal requirement
- Informal Reading Assessment
- Example group of formal assessments and why **(just 1/9 of the tools, think about that…)**
- Dynamic Assessment (brief introduction)
- SLD Mini-Matrix from ELL Critical Data Process

HANDOUT

13

- Read Part 1 – Stories

- What is your takeaway?

REALITY….

14

- The more information, data, proof, the more decision making power!

- We don't control all the variables!

- Do your best!

REALITY – TOO…

15

- **The vast majority of our problems are in SLD**

- **SLD for all is usually 30-40% from districts I have worked with (OSEP 34-38%)**

- **SLD/ELL/SPED has ranged from 45-85%**

- **Next problems areas are SLI and DD, but smaller groups and smaller disproportionality**

16 REALITY THREE

- Deep dive districts and the "other" languages as example of variations across languages within disability categories.

- All, versus All less ELL, All Ells, All ELLs less most common language groups…

17 YOUR TURN

- What are some of the realities and challenges you are facing in your setting?

18 KNOWING ABOUT YOUR ELL SERVICES

- Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing
- Knowing what is normal (Cummings, Collier and Thomas)

- What is occurring and what are the results?

- Data, not perception.
- % still qualified at 5 years, scores on ELA and Math, LTELS

19 YOUR TURN

- Are your ELL services focused on building listening, speaking, reading and writing?

- If you say yes, provide an example.

- If you say no, then what are they doing?

20 STORY FROM PROCESSING PERSPECTIVES--- READ PART 1 OF HANDOUT

- As you read this, can you relate to it personally?
- Have you ever worked with a student, colleague or parent who was similar?
- What messages did you send to that student, colleague, or parent verbally or non-verbally?
- How do you believe they remember you?
- How would you like to be remembered by them?
- What did you do to make their life better?
- What did you do that might not have made their life better?

21 WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS?

- Combining what you have read and after reading the stories with the questions in mind

22 **LE³AP --- A NEW LENS….**

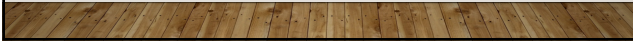- **L**ook at:
- **E**xposure
- **E**xperience
- **E**xpectations
- **a**nd
- **P**ractice
- A central theme of our books.
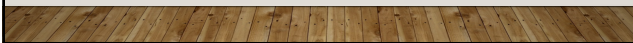
23 **HANDOUT**

- Read Part 2 --- LE³AP Examples

- How would you apply this in your work?

24 KNOWING YOUR DATA AND DEMOGRAPHICS

- **Know your building**
- **Know your district**
- **Know your state (if possible)**

- **Who is getting referred, who is getting tested, who is getting qualified?**
- **How does this match up with the demographics?**

25   KNOWING YOUR BUILDING DATA, DISTRICT DATA, STATE DATA

- **What are the most important things to start with**
- **ELL%,   Sped%,   ELL/Sped % (not the reverse)   (district, state)**
- **% by disability,   % by disability ELL/SPED,   % by disability major languages versus non-major languages,**
- **% no longer ELL at 5 years,   ELLs scores on ELA and Math,   % by building, Language Acquisition level at SLD first qualification**

26   **BILINGUAL EVALUATORS OR NOT**

- **When is it most important?**

- **Who are these folks usually evaluating? What is their primary language?**

27   BILINGUAL EVALUATORS OR NOT -2

- **Realities of our ELL's (75% speak Spanish, we have over 400 languages, and top 10 take up the majority of all languages we see and work with)**

- **Rare languages lower than normal SLD usages (mostly hard categories)**

- **LTELs disproportionate in SLD (30-40% versus 45-85%)**

28 BILINGUAL EVALUATORS OR NOT -3

- **Bilingual evaluators must be able to use both languages…. So knowing ones strengths and weaknesses is critical.**

- Recommended reading --- Bilingual: Life and Reality by Francois Grosjean (great book for bilingual/multilingual/ELL teachers)

29 INTERPRETERS AND TRANSLATION….

- **Highly problematic, better than nothing in some cases…**

- **Do the work, prepare for success!**

30 ELL CRITICAL DATA PROCESS

- Student's Primary Language
- Students who speak multiple languages
- Language Development and Transition in Multi-lingual Homes
- **Red Flag Area**- Education in Primary/Native Language
- Parental literacy in primary language
- **Red Flag Area**- Student did not learn to read in the primary language
- **Red Flag Area**- Years learning English
- Attendance History

31 ELL CRITICAL DATA PROCESS

- Performance of Language Learners in Your Schools
- **Red Flag Area**- Rate of growth on the state language acquisition test
- **Red Flag Area**- Intervention Description
- Expectations in the general education classroom
- Classroom observation
- Comparison Student Data
- **Red Flag Area-** The parent interview
- Developmental History

32 EXAMPLE FROM WORKBOOK

- **Handout parts 3 and 4 (Determinant Factor and Report Example)**

- **Looking for integration of data/information to determinant factor.**

- **Thoughts and Questions?**

33 TOOLS FOR YOUR TOOLKIT

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34 GETTING INTO THE TESTING

- Focus on evidence, not numbers…

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35 FROM THE BOOK, ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS (A BOOK EDITED BY ARTILES, WRITTEN FOR THE CENTER FOR APPLIED LINGUISTICS). IT WAS PUBLISHED IN 2002, SO SOME TERMINOLOGY HAS CHANGED.

- "…data suggest that testing English Language Learners in the native language produces unexplained outcomes. In an important study that used psychometric tests developed for Spanish Speakers…Rueda found that… English Language Learners who had not been referred for special education, the test misdiagnosed 47% with learning disabilities and 7% with mental retardation. Among those students diagnosed by the school system as learning disabled, and a diagnosis of mental retardation was confirmed for only 58% of the English Language Learners placed in programs for students with mental retardation. In effect, using assessments normed in either the native language or in English with English Language Learners may produce diagnoses that cannot be defended."

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36 WAC 392-172A-03040

- (3) In interpreting evaluation data for the purpose of determining eligibility for special education services, each school district must:

   (a) **Draw upon information from a variety of sources**, including aptitude and achievement tests, parent input, and teacher recommendations, as well as information about the student's physical condition, social or cultural background, and adaptive behavior; and

   (b) Ensure that information obtained from **all of these sources is documented and carefully considered**.

37 OUR TESTS, OUR KIDS, THE BIG PROBLEM

- **Most aren't normed on the kids we are actually testing, but getting better…**

- **Where the design weakness is (what does bilingual mean and how it plays out in our tests)?**

38 INFORMAL READING MEASURES

- A supply of books (in common languages) – From Kindergarten like books to books like Charlotte's Web (and why)
- LE^{3}AP

- Example about 8th grade average American reading level and trajectory (if reading….)

39 **MY BILINGUAL TESTING "PROTOCOL" AND THE CHALLENGES**

- 1) Informal Reading in Spanish versus LE^{3}AP
- 2) One Word E/R English and Spanish Bilingual Version
- 3) Bateria (test issues, reality, and LE^{3}AP)
- 4) CTONI-2
- 5) Sometimes WISC-5 Spanish if extremely strong Spanish skills
- 6) Sometimes the WJ-IV academic in English (and LE^{3}AP)

40 DYNAMIC ASSESSMENT / TESTING THE LIMITS

- Taking testing the limits and dynamic assessment together, can you create evidence that helps defend your case?
- Lev Vygotsky to Reuven Feuerstein
- Mediated Learning Experience (Feuerstein)
- ASHA to Bilingual Education
- Described as a "dream and a nightmare…"

41 THE SLD MINI MATRIX

- A subset of the ELL Critical Data Process to use when examining language learners with less than 5 years of learning English.

42 SLD MINI MATRIX

- Items from the ELL Critical Data Process and examples in which Specific Learning Disability is not supported by the information gathered:

- Item 11 (Intervention description): If the student of concern responds positively to targeted intervention, at a level similar to or higher than like peers, this is data indicating that they do not have a learning disability.

43

SLD MINI MATRIX

- **Items from the ELL Critical Data Process and examples in which Specific Learning Disability is neutral by the information gathered:**

- **Item 13 (Classroom observation):** If the student of concern is not appearing engaged in the classroom, then this evidence is neutral (does not help during the evaluation process), regarding SLD.

44

SLD MINI MATRIX

- **Items from the ELL Critical Data Process and examples in which Specific Learning Disability is supported by the information gathered:**

- **Item 14 (Comparison student data):** If the student of concern is shown to score **much lower** than like peers on measurable data, then this is evidence that supports the possibility of a learning disability. (This is not reading, math or written language, given those should be addressed in the targeted interventions).

45

STRANGER TEST – REPORT WRITING

- **If a stranger to the situation were to read your report, would they:**

- **1) Know what data you used to support your conclusions?**
- **2) Would they know your actual decision/conclusions?**
- **3) Would they believe that you had presented a valid argument for your decisions/conclusions?**

46 CONVERGENT DATA

- What this looks like?

- The student of concern is one of the lowest performing students in the classroom and your testing indicates they are reading well below grade level expectations.
- The student of concern is struggling to effectively communicate and their rate of language acquisition on the state testing is below that of their like peers.
- The school is very concerned about this specific language learner and the language learners in your building are qualified for special education at the same rate or lower than non-language learners.

47 YOUR TURN

- What are your examples of convergent data?

48 EXAMPLES OF REPORT LANGUAGE

- Using part 4 of handout and thinking about a student you are working with or just finished --- **next slide**

49   YOUR TURN

- Create a paragraph or bullet points that has convergent data and statements that defend a position toward or away from eligibility.

- Not a whole case, given time constraints.

50   MYTHS, LEGENDS AND OTHER….

- **Dual Language Programs and 3rd to 4th grade (google Thomas and Collier graph)**
- **Secondary Issues**
- **Reading and Math Instruction, versus the law**
- **Non-Nons**
- **Are we measuring what we think we are measuring?**
- **Rater Biases**

51   DO OUR TESTS WORK???

- **First 250 ---** Without these, no meaningful communication
- **First 750 ---** Used by every person every day
- **First 2500 ---** Probably can express all thoughts/feelings, just have to be creative
- **First 5000 ---** Active vocabulary of native speaker without higher education
- **First 10,000 ---** Active vocabulary of a native speaker with higher education
- Source – *Spanish Frequency Dictionary**

52 DEVELOPMENT SOUNDS BY AGE (DOES OUR PROCESS WORK?)

53 **EXAMPLE OF RATER BIAS (WHAT ARE MEASURING?)**

54 REALITY….

- The more information, data, proof, the more decision making power!

- We don't control all the variables! But, we (our system) can do a lot better!

- Do your best!

55 SMALL DISTRICTS

- Some of this information is difficult or the numbers aren't large enough to generalize.

- Work with other small districts to combine knowledge and numbers.

56 JUST A THOUGHT…

- **Conduct the assessment with the notion that there is nothing wrong with the individual and that systemic, ecological, or environmental factors are the primary reason for learning problems. Maintain this hypothesis until data suggest otherwise.**

- (Klinger, J., & Eppolito, A.M. (2104). English Language Learners: Differentiating Between Language Acquisition and Learning Disabilities. *Council for Exceptional Children. (pp.9)*

57 WRAPPING THIS UP

- **1) This process doesn't happen overnight,**
- **2) Examine your practices, add as much as you can now,**
- **3) Make a plan to add additional steps and when,**
- **4) Watch your data,**
- **5) Re-examine your practices, repeat**

58 THANKS AND THE JOURNEY MOVING FORWARD

- This is an ongoing journey.

- As someone once told me, "We are all either getter better or getting worse at each of our skills!"

- Our kids, especially our ELLs, our kids in poverty, and our Black/African American kids need us to achieve better results for them. And, we can do it!!!