



IDENTIFICATION AND EVALUATION PROCESSES FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION AND ENGLISH LEARNERS

Article 7 includes provisions regarding limited English proficient students (e.g., English Learners/ELs) and the educational evaluation process for special education. Appropriate disability identification processes that evaluate the student's disability-related educational needs and not the student's English language skills will help personnel to accurately identify students in need of disability-related services.

This flowchart outlines the steps of the special education evaluation process. **This process can run concurrently with the English Learner identification and screening process.** States and local education agencies (LEAs) have an obligation to ensure that evaluations of children suspected of having a disability are not denied or delayed because of EL status. LEAs can refuse to evaluate, but must include an explanation of the parent's right to contest the decision.

Additional considerations are listed in the [English Learners and Evaluation for Special Education](#) guidance document.

If you have questions regarding a special education evaluation of ELs, please contact:

IDOE's Office of Special Education
spedassistance@doe.in.gov

IDOE's Office of English Learning and Migrant Education
englishlearners@doe.in.gov

Special Education Evaluation Process

Request for special education evaluation received

Provide written notice to evaluate or not

Obtain written parent consent

Collect additional information and complete evaluations

Provide parent copy of full evaluation

CCC interprets data, determines eligibility, develops IEP

Obtain written parent consent

IEP implemented

Annual IEP meeting to review, revise, and update

Re-evaluation considered at least every three years



POLICY CONSIDERATIONS FOR IDENTIFICATION AND EVALUATION OF ENGLISH LEARNERS

Clear policies and procedures are necessary to accurately identify English learners (ELs) with disabilities and provide appropriate instructional services. Consider the suggestions below to strengthen local policies and procedures regarding identification and education for English learners with disabilities, where applicable.

PROVIDE CLEAR POLICY GUIDANCE

District policies, procedures, and expectations for educators when referring EL students for special education should be clearly defined in special education guidance. The lack of guidance for dual-identified ELs can foster confusion and varying interpretations from teachers about the rules they need to follow.

PRIORITIZE EARLY IDENTIFICATION FOR ELS

IDEA Part C and Article 7 call for the identification of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers with special needs starting at birth. In these early years, research shows ELs are less likely than their non-EL peers to be referred to early intervention and early childhood special education services. Leaders should ensure early identification practices are followed.

IMPROVE EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

As a baseline, assessment tools should be administered in the student's native language (or other mode of communication) and in a form that is most likely to yield accurate information on what the student knows and can do academically, developmentally, and functionally, unless it is clearly not feasible to do so. It is critical that assessment administrators evaluate ELs in their home language and in English in order to yield meaningful data, as any delay or disability will be observable across both languages in most cases. IDEA requires bilingual assessment when students have academic skills in their native language and stipulates that it be administered by trained bilingual personnel to the extent possible.

TRAIN AND SUPPORT EDUCATORS IN DEVELOPING KEY KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

Since creating a more effective identification process relies on implementation by educators, it is vital that they have a solid understanding of how language and disability intersect. Well-designed pre-service learning and in-service professional development should address typical and atypical language and literacy trajectories, formal and informal evaluation practices, instructional strategies that correspond to each stage of language development, and early intervention strategies.

SUPPORT HOME LANGUAGE AS AN ASSET

For dual-identified students, one of the biggest questions revolves around whether to implement home language supports. Researchers have found that interventions using both home language and English result in similar or even greater rates of growth in English abilities.