

As we continue to explore our new ideas about English learners and the use of the CELP standards, one of the things that we need to delve into slightly deeper is the identification process of English learners. In the last session, we focused on several theories of second language acquisition. Those theories help us understand students who we already know are English learners and you can adjust accordingly. But how do we identify English Learners in the first place? The district's role is to identify the students who are English Learners. This identification process will help us understand the diversity of English owners and their needs by the tools we use in order to identify them.

So again we are seeking to answer these question who is an English learner? And how are English Learners identified? Just because a student is speaks a language other than English, does not automatically mean that students would be identified as an English Learner. We use the process in order to make that determination that if a student speaks a language other than English and is working his or her way towards English language proficiency that student would be considered an English learner. We use several tools to determine if that is in fact the case.

The first tool that we use to in the identification process is the home language survey. It's administered to students and their families upon registration to a district. You'll see these three sample questions here. They come from the Connecticut State Department of Education guidelines for home language surveys. You can find more information about that on the Connecticut State Department website in the link below the video. The goal in asking these simple questions is to get more information about the student's primary language use and the primary language use in the home. It gives us an indication if that student is indeed in English Learner. By using this home language survey, parents get an opportunity to share information that can lead to accurate identification of students who may have additional linguistic needs.

Best practice indicates that this survey be administered in a language that is comprehensible to the parents understand so that the parents understand the purpose behind answering these questions. The process to do so include using a translator or having a translated version of the home language survey document.

As parents answer the survey questions, if two or more and the answers are other than English, a student is referred to the next level--assessment for English language proficiency. that assessment is typically administered by a ESL specialist or a teacher who has been trained to administer the assessment. If by the criteria in the standardized English proficiency assessment indicates that the student is in fact proficient in English, the student in question is not considered in English Learner. However if the student is scores less than proficient according to you the test specifications, that student is considered an English Learner.

However a final determination of the student's status needs to be done through a review of results and tools available.

If a family for whatever reason answers the survey questions stating the student's predominant language is English that student is not be determined to be an English Learner at that how. However as you know in on the screen, student may in fact still be English Learner.

When we look at an alternative to the home language survey, it really comes to intersect between the parent and ESL specialists. Our goal is to work with parents because they have the most information about the student's prior history in education as well as with their language use. We want to honor the understandings of the parent. There are cases in which a parent may misunderstand or misconstrue the purpose for the survey or the questions in the survey and may not know how to accurately represent themselves and their child. There are occasions where a student enters a classroom, and it is clear to a teacher or to an ESL specialist that the student speaks a language other than English and has some language needs.

The first step in reviewing the student's performance in English is to go back to the home language survey and the parents. Do the answers accurately represent the child's experience? Ensure the parents have understood the question correctly and the purpose of taking the survey. A teacher or English Learner who is training in administering the English language proficiency assessment may decide to assess that student's English language proficiency if the teacher notes that a student is struggling due to perceived language issues. At this point a student is determined to need English language proficiency assessment and is shown to be less than proficient in English that student could also be considered in English Learner.

At that point, parent notification is necessary to let parents know that that student has been tested and the results of that test. We give parents options of programs depending on the size of the district and the program availability. Parents may choose to opt out of ESL services. However that student still remains in English Learner if he or she has been identified as such, which means that students would be assessed annually with the annual English language proficiency assessment given to all English learners regardless of their service status.

The home language survey is a way to begin the conversation with parents about understanding where that student is coming from in terms of his or her language use. We have the alternative of looking at that student from the teacher expertise to be able to make the final determination of the English Learner status.

So before you go on to check your understanding, make sure you think about these two questions and understand the process of English Learner identification. Please feel free to go back and review video if you're unsure of those answers.