

Questions to Consider When Assessing ELLs and Ways to Answer Them

The following charts (Exhibits 3.3 through 3.9) list a variety of questions, organized by RTI tiers, that educators should consider when assessing ELLs, as well as possible measures to address these questions and the appropriate person/people to conduct the assessment. As concerns become more significant, the need to address them becomes more urgent and the stakes increase, thus requiring higher quality (more defensible) measures. It is preferable to have a system for collecting baseline information using “high-quality for high-stakes” measures that are able to address several different types of questions. Psychometrically adequate measures such as CBM should be used in Tier 1 as the information obtained is used both to determine what is typical for a target student’s peer group and to serve as baseline for progress monitoring for a smaller number of students who require Tier 2 and Tier 3 assessments and interventions. Measures listed in all tiers of the chart below are considered high-quality (psychometrically), feasible (time-wise) and informal observations/assessments.

Exhibit 3.3

Tier 1: Universal—for ALL Students

Question	Recommended assessment(s) for ELL	Who conducts for ELL?
Can the student see? Hear?	Well Child checkup/physical	Family physician/ nurse, specialist (e.g., optometrist)
Is the student coming to school?	Attendance records	School nurse or person in charge of taking attendance
Does the student have the basic prerequisite academic skills to be successful in school? Does the student need supplemental instruction and supports in order to be successful in school? To what degree is the student at risk (which tier)? What is the least restrictive environment?	<p>Universal CBM screening. AIMSweb and DIBELS offer assessments in Spanish. AIMSweb provides aggregate norms for students assessed with Spanish CBM (letter naming fluency, letter sound fluency, nonsense word fluency, phoneme segmentation fluency and reading CBM). DIBELS identifies “at-risk” criterion score ranges.</p> <p>Teacher conducts ongoing informal assessments of student’s interactions with instruction and materials on a minute-to-minute basis.</p>	<p>Teachers and paraprofessionals can easily learn to conduct CBM with a high degree of inter-rater reliability. Students learning in Spanish (bilingual education) can be assessed in Spanish. It is also possible to translate directions and use graded text in other languages. While administration of CBM requires less proficiency in L1 than some other assessments, assessor should be fluent enough to converse in the student’s L1.</p> <p>Progress monitoring of ELLs learning in English should be conducted in English (directions may need to be provided in L1).</p>
What does the child need to learn?	Nature of errors and correct responses can be observed on individual student’s CBM in reading, math or written expression (Rosenfield, 1987; Hosp, Hosp & Howell, 2007).	Teachers without skills in student’s L1 may conduct assessment, but providing student with clarification in his/her L1 can be very helpful.
At what level should the child be taught? Do the student’s skills and needs match the current curriculum and classroom materials?	<p>CBA: Ask child to read at various text levels. This can be from curriculum text or curriculum-independent text (e.g., DIBELS, AIMSweb, STEEP). Record the number of words read correctly in one minute and calculate percent accuracy to gauge whether reading material is at an appropriate instructional level.</p> <p>Teacher’s daily observations of individual student working with classroom materials (informal).</p>	<p>Teachers without skills in student’s L1 may conduct, as long as student understands the directions.</p> <p>For students learning in L1 (bilingual classrooms), assessment should be in the language of the instruction.</p>

Exhibit 3.4

Tier 1—for ELLs New to a School

Certain specific questions must be addressed when an ELL enters a school for the first time (often without comprehensive school records). Educators need to assess the student for Basic Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP).

Question	Recommended assessment(s) for ELL	Who conducts for ELL?
How much exposure has the student had to English?	Language history survey (see Appendix 4), parent meeting, school records. Language history survey considers exposure at home, in the media and prior language of instruction.	Language history survey should be given at registration, in a language that parents understand (Spanish and English versions available in Appendix 4).
How well does the student perform on tests assessing English receptive skills? How well does the student perform on tests assessing English expressive skills?	State-approved screening measure (e.g., LAS, IDEA, Woodcock Muñoz Language Survey). Language assessment measures for ELLs should be interpreted with caution (August and Shanahan, 2006; Ochoa & Ortiz, 2005).	Screening procedures conducted per district policy by a professional trained in administering and interpreting tests for ELLs (e.g., ESL teacher, bilingual school psychologist, bilingual speech/language therapist).
What academic skills did the student master in his/her native language prior to coming to the United States?	Survey-level assessment using CBM from curriculum texts in L1 or curriculum-independent material (e.g., AIMSweb, DIBELS Spanish measures). Skill assessment will be a rough estimate. <u>Optional (for L1/Spanish):</u> 1. Standardized achievement battery (e.g. Bateria III Woodcock-Muñoz) to survey various academic skills. Use as a norm-referenced assessment only if student has until recently been receiving instruction in Spanish.	Professional trained in administering and interpreting CBM for ELLs (e.g., ESL teacher, bilingual teacher, school psychologist) by someone with moderate fluency in ELL's L1. Individually administered standardized tests require professional trained in administering and interpreting tests for ELLs (e.g., ESL teacher, bilingual school psychologist, bilingual speech/language therapist).
What kind of academic skills does the student have in English? • Reading? • Math? • Written expression? • Vocabulary?	Survey-level assessment using CBM from curriculum texts or curriculum-independent material (e.g., AIMSweb, DIBELS). Informal teacher observation/assessment of student performance (CBA). <u>Optional:</u> 1. Standardized achievement battery (e.g. Woodcock Johnson-III) to survey skills (not as a norm-referenced assessment).	Teachers without skills in student's L1 can conduct as long as student understands the directions to the task. Individually administered standardized tests must be conducted by a professional trained in administering and interpreting tests for ELLs (e.g., ESL teacher, bilingual school psychologist, bilingual speech/language therapist).