

# **SCREENING AND ASSESSMENT OF YOUNG ENGLISH-LANGUAGE LEARNERS**

**Dick Clifford, Linda Espinosa, Christina Gilanders, Virginia Gonzalez, Jane Henderson, et al. (2005)**

## **Overview**

One of the indicators of good assessment is that it is linguistically and culturally responsive for all children regardless of their home language. We need to be aware of certain aspects of screening and assessment that are unique to English Language Learners (ELL's). This paper was completed at the request of experts in the field, with the intent to explicate and expand upon issues specifically relating to the screening and assessment of children whose home language is not English.

## **Our Current Challenge**

Screening and assessment procedures guide classroom decision making and allow professionals to identify children who might benefit from special services. When children are not regularly and appropriately assessed, they bear the costs in that they fail to receive beneficial special services, as well as a more tailored learning environment. The instruments used to assess ELL's should be valid, reliable, free of bias, and developmentally appropriate.

## **Recommendations**

There are profound challenges in selecting and administering assessments appropriate to ELL's; therefore, the authors of this article have come up with a list of recommendations. These recommendations represent the ideal toward which early childhood educators should move in the screening and assessment of young ELL's.

1. Appropriate use of screenings and assessments – ELL's should be regularly screened and screenings should be followed up appropriately.
2. Characteristics of appropriate assessment – Assessments for ELL's are ongoing, based on multiple methods and measures and are age appropriate.
3. Linguistic and cultural appropriateness – the instruments should be appropriate and free from bias.
4. Characteristics of assessors – Assessors should be bilingual and culturally aware as well as knowledgeable about the child and about second-language acquisition.
5. The role of the family – Family members are essential sources of information in conducting and interpreting assessments.
6. The needs in the field – More and better assessments are urgently needed and policymakers and programs should continue to diversify the early childhood workforce.

## **Conclusion**

These recommendations reflect a vision of the field that includes early childhood professionals well prepared to assess the diverse children in their programs in ways that support their learning and development. The recommendations also assume that the nation has policymakers with both the resources and the political will to support the

needs of young ELL's and their families. We must continue to advocate for the support and resources for ELL's in order to fully implement these recommendations.

Clifford, D., Espinosa, L., Gilanders, C., Gonzalez, V., Henderson, J., Hernandez, L., Hernandez, L., Italiano-Thomas, G., Kagan, S.L., Meisels, S., Rolstad, K., Scott-Little, C., & Tabors, P. (2005). *Screening and assessment of young English language learners: Draft recommendations*. Washington, D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children.