

# RTI for English Language Learners: Appropriate Screening, Progress Monitoring, and Instructional Planning

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National Center on  
Response to Intervention



# Key Questions to be Answered in this Presentation

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- Who are ELL students?
- What do we need to know about their background to provide appropriate instruction and interventions?
- Can and should we use the same progress monitoring tools with ELLs as we do with their monolingual English peers?
- What are the unique considerations for screening and progress monitoring ELLs?
- How do we set appropriate goals for ELLs?
- What is an example of use of the screening and progress monitoring tools with ELLs?



# Response to Intervention

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*Response to intervention integrates student assessment and **evidence-based** instructional interventions within a multi-level **prevention** framework in order to **maximize student achievement** and reduce behavior problems (NCRTI, 2009)*



# Critical Features of RTI

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- Use of screening and formative assessment data to identify students at risk for reading difficulties
- Monitoring the effectiveness of instruction (i.e., progress monitoring), and
- Implementation of multi-tiered evidence-based instruction matched to students' instructional needs

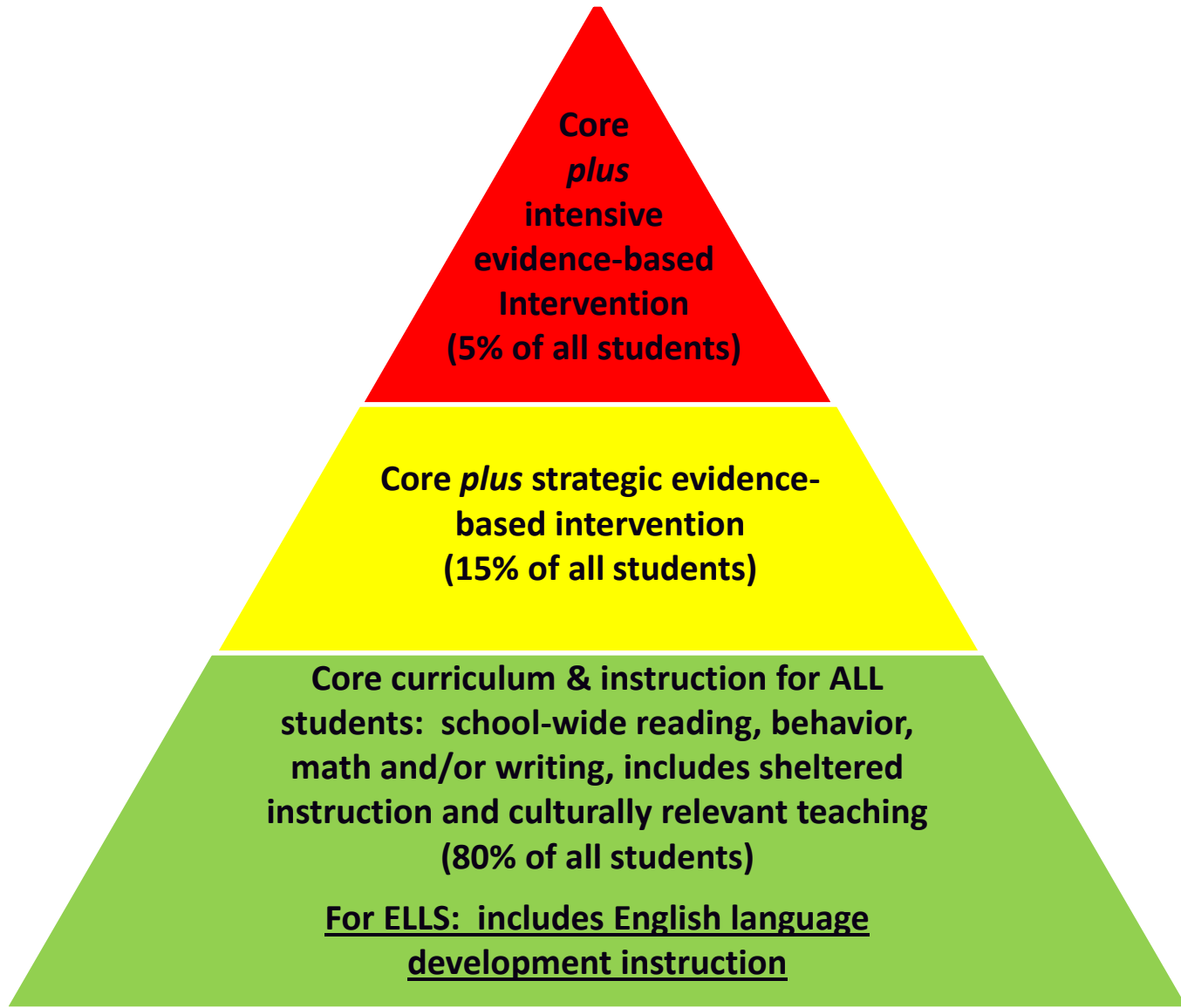


# Goal

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- For all students to develop the skills to access the general education curriculum in order to meet or exceed state and national benchmarks.





# Premises for Equity



## All educators must:

- Understand that education is a social entitlement achieved only when we provide equitable educational opportunities with high expectations for all students.
- Understand the linguistic, cultural and experiential context of every student and how to systematically incorporate this knowledge (including the use of their native language) into curriculum and instruction.
- Based on students' unique backgrounds, plan and adapt appropriate assessment and instruction.



# First: Know Your Student



## Factor 1

- English Language Learner (ELL) students are a heterogeneous group.
  - ELL students in the U.S. represent over 400 languages
  - The largest group are from homes where Spanish is the native language.
  - Projections estimate that by 2050 non-Hispanic white students will account for only 47% of the U.S. population.





# First: Know Your Student

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## Factor 2

- Linguistic Backgrounds

*“Second languages develop under an extremely heterogeneous set of conditions, far more diverse than the conditions under which children learn their native language (Bialstok & Hakuta, 1994, p. 2).”*

- ELL students may not have the opportunity to develop their first language (L1) fully before adding the second language (L2).



# First: Know Your Student

## Factor 2

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### ■ Language Proficiency

- The five stages of the second language continuum
  1. Preproduction/Entering
  2. Early Production/Beginning
  3. Speech Emergence/Developing
  4. Intermediate Fluency/Expanding
  5. Advanced Fluency/Bridging
- Students **MUST** acquire academic English (levels 4 to

### ■ BICS: Social Language

- Can develop in as little as two years

### ■ CALP: Academic Language

- May take 5 to 9 or more years to develop

Students **MUST** acquire academic English (levels 4 to 5) to benefit from English-only instruction.



# First: Know Your Student



## Factor 3

### ■ Background Experiences

- Country of origin
  - 52% of all ELL students are born in the U.S.
  - 11% are foreign born (first generation)
  - Differences in generational language patterns have been identified (Valdes & Figueroa, 1994)
- Socioeconomic Status
  - Research highlights significant differences in vocabulary and language from individuals with low SES status (Hart & Risley, 2005); these may strongly impact L1 and L2 language development



# First: Know Your Student

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## Factor 4

### ■ Educational Experiences

- Students who have 4-5 years of formal education in their L1 frequently acquire academic English within one to three years.
- These students can transfer what they have learned in L1 to help their learning in L2.
- Urban and rural educations in other countries can be vastly different.
- A student's age alone is not a reliable indicator of prior educational experiences.
- Students with interrupted instruction may need instruction in many foundational skills no matter their age.



# Native Language Instruction

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- Research has consistently demonstrated that better outcomes in English for ELL students are tied directly to the amount of instruction received in the native language (Goldenberg, 2008).
- The longer ELLs receive native language instruction, the better they perform in English in all academic areas.
- **ELL students receiving English-only instruction have a double cognitive load:**
  - They need to learn English
  - They need to learn IN English



# Second: Know Your Curriculum

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- RTI is predicated upon appropriate instruction for all students in Tier 1 (general education).
  - Is this happening at your school?
  - Where is this happening?



# A Critical Component: Formative Assessment

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## ■ Screening

- Universal screening is conducted on a regular basis (2 – 3 times per year) for *all* students
- Screening assessments are brief, individual, and will identify which students are struggling with core concepts

## ■ Progress Monitoring

- Occurs more frequently than screening assessments
- Tools must be valid and reliable



# Should the Same Screening and Progress Monitoring Assessment be Used with ELL Students?

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- **Reliability:** does the assessment produce similar scores across conditions and situations?
  - Reliability is not a particular problem if the tool has good psychometric properties.
- **Validity:** does the test measure what you want to assess?
  - Validity may be a problem because assessment results could be influenced by students' language, cultural and experiential backgrounds.





# Screening and Progress Monitoring in a Problem Solving Approach

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1. Define the problem
2. Analyze
3. Develop a Plan
4. Evaluate



# Unique Considerations for Screening ELLs

(Brown & Sanford, in preparation)

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1. Use tools with demonstrated reliability and validity to identify and monitor students' needs for instructional support in reading in both L1 and L2.
2. Assess students' language skills in L1 and L2 to provide an appropriate context regarding evaluation of current levels of performance.
3. Plan instruction based on what you know about the student's performance and literacy experiences in L1 and L2 and teach for transfer if needed.



# Unique Considerations for Progress Monitoring ELLs

(Brown & Sanford, in preparation)

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1. Monitor student's progress in all languages of instruction
2. Set rigorous goals that support students to meet grade-level standards
3. Evaluate growth frequently, increasing intensity of instruction when growth is less than expected
4. Evaluate growth of true peers to determine whether instruction is generally effective for students with similar linguistic and educational experiences



# Case Study Example

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- Although the ELL student in the Case Study is from a Spanish-speaking home, we know that ELL students in the U.S. represent more than 400 languages.
- Use this example as a framework or to guide you through the issues to consider when an ELL student of any non-native English background struggles.



# Case Study - Yesenia



- Yesenia was born in the United States and is a second generation Mexican-American.
- She attended Head Start for one year where she had some instruction in Spanish.
- She attended a bilingual kindergarten before moving to a school with an ESL-only model (no Spanish support) at the beginning of first grade.
- In this English-only program she receives ESL pull-out support.
- Her language proficiency scores indicate she is a level 3 in English and Spanish. While the scores may appear that she has equal proficiency in both languages, she is likely stronger in Spanish since that is the language of the home and she has had the most input in that language.



# Appropriate Screening for ELLs in a Problem Solving Approach

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## 1. Define the problem

- Use reliable and valid tools to assess:
  - Reading skills in English and Spanish
  - Language skills in English and Spanish

## 2. Analyze

- Does Yesenia have adequate instruction in reading and language to be successful?

## 3. Develop a Plan

- Base Yesenia's plan for support building on what she knows in her native language

## 4. Evaluate



# Screening Recommendation 1

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**Use tools with demonstrated reliability and validity to identify and monitor students' need for instruction support in reading in both L1 and L2.**

- Since Yesenia had linguistic and educational experiences in two languages, she was screened in English (DIBELS) and Spanish (IDEL).
- Both measures have demonstrated to be reliable predictors of ELL students' reading outcomes (Baker, Cummings, Good & Smolkowski, 2007; Riedel, 2007; Vanderwood et al, 2008; Fien et al, 2008).



*First grade DIBELS*

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	Decision Criteria – Beginning of Year	Score
Letter Naming Fluency (LNF)	At Risk 0-24	
	Some Risk 25-36	27
	Low Risk 37+	
Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (PSF)	Deficit 0 – 9	
	Emerging 10-34	30
	Established 35+	
Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF)	At Risk 0-12	11
	Some Risk 13-23	
	Low Risk 24+	

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*First grade IDEL*

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	Decision Criteria – Beginning of Year	Score
<i>Fluidez en nombrar letras</i> (FNL) Letter Naming Fluency (LNF)	At Risk 0-19	
	Some Risk 20-34	
	Low Risk 35+	41
<i>Fluidez en la Segmentación de Fonemas</i> (FSF) Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (PSF)	Deficit 0 - 34	
	Emerging 35-49	
	Established 50+	53
<i>Fluidez en las Palabras sin Sentido</i> (FPS) Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF)	At Risk 0-24	
	Some Risk 25-34	
	Low Risk 35+	39

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# Screening Recommendation 2

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**Assess students' language skills in L1 and L2 to provide an appropriate context regarding evaluation of current levels of performance.**

- On the Woodcock-Munoz Language Survey – Revised, Yesenia scored a Level 3 in English and Spanish.
- As stated earlier, she is likely stronger in Spanish.
- She qualifies for and must receive services from the federally-funded Title III (English as a Second Language/English Language Development) program.



# Screening Recommendation 3

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**Plan instruction based on what you know about the student's performance and literacy experiences in L1 and L2 and teach for transfer if needed.**

- Since Yesenia is at low risk in L1 reading skills, she should receive Tier 1 (core curriculum) literacy instruction in L2 (English).
- She should be taught to transfer what she knows in Spanish to English (although given her young age these may be limited because she has not yet developed a solid foundation in L1 literacy).
- She should be taught what is different about English such as new sounds that may not exist in her L1.
- She will need explicit instruction in the vocabulary and language structures used in all instruction and interventions.
- She will benefit from encouraging her family to continue her oral native language development.



# Appropriate Progress Monitoring for ELLs in a Problem Solving Approach

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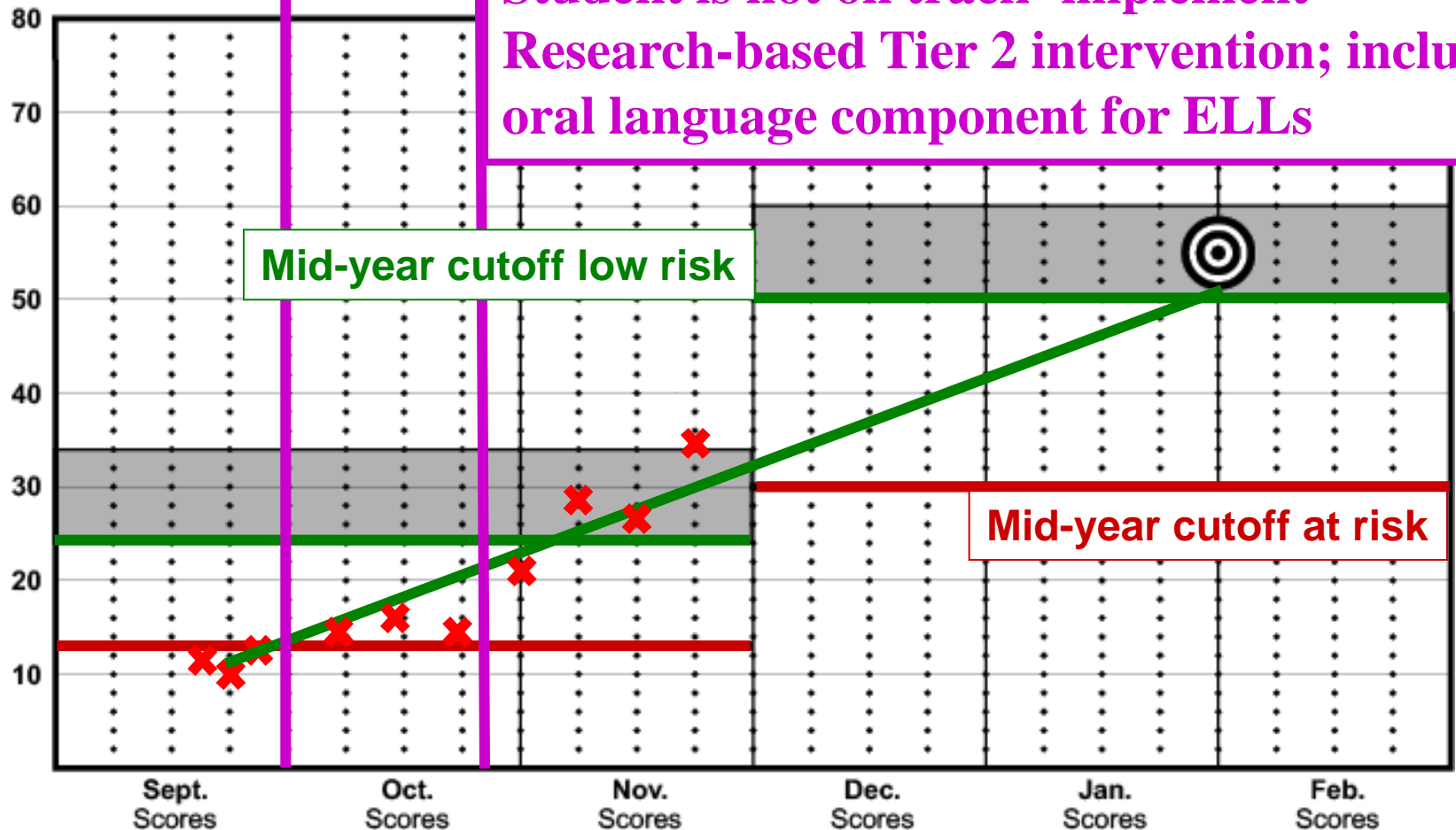
1. Define the problem
2. Analyze
3. Develop a Plan
  - Monitor Yesenia in English reading because her instruction is in English
  - Set goal at grade level since it is ambitious and achievable
4. Evaluate
  - If Yesenia's progress is slower than expected,
    - Examine her performance and growth on English and Spanish language measures
    - Increase intensity of instruction in reading and language if needed
    - Consider comparison to true peers if a learning disability is suspected as the cause of Yesenia's difficulty



# Yesenia – Progress Monitoring Example

**Tier 1+ Teach for Transfer (Spanish to English)  
Monitor Progress every week**

**Student is not on track- implement  
Research-based Tier 2 intervention; include  
oral language component for ELLs**



# Progress Monitoring Recommendation 1

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## Monitor student progress in all languages of instruction.

- Since Yesenia is currently being instructed only in English, her progress should be monitored in English.
- Progress should be monitored on grade level skills.



# Progress Monitoring Recommendation 2

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## Set rigorous goals that support students toward meeting grade level standards.

- Research shows that ELL students can benefit and make substantial progress when provided explicit instruction in phonemic awareness and phonics in English regardless of their English language proficiency (Gunn, Smolkowski, Biglan, Black & Blair, 2005; Haagar & Windemueller, 2001).
- Thus, the typical grade level goal was chosen for Yesenia.
- It must be noted, however, that while ELLs can make substantial progress on all skills, their overall rate of development may suffer due to having a smaller vocabulary and limited experience in the English language.
- It may be helpful to set both short term and long term goals since their growth rates may differ from monolingual peers even when provided the same intensive interventions.



# Progress Monitoring Recommendation 3

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**Evaluate growth frequently, increasing intensity of instruction when growth is less than expected.**

- Yesenia's progress monitoring graph shows that after implementing Tier 1/Core Curriculum + Teaching for Transfer and monitoring her progress weekly, she did not appear to be on track to meet the middle of the year goal.
- She needs additional instructional support.
- The intervention was adjusted to intensify the instruction in literacy skills and provide additional focus on oral language and vocabulary support (Linan-Thompson & Vaughn, 2007).





# Progress Monitoring Recommendation 4

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## Evaluate growth as compared to “true peers.”

- “True peers” are students with the same or similar levels of language proficiency, acculturation, and educational backgrounds (Brown & Doolittle, 2008).
- As illustrated in the progress monitoring graph, she responded to the instructional adjustments so there is no need for additional concern at this time.
- If her growth was low compared to true peers who were receiving similar interventions, that might indicate that her lack of response may not be due solely to second language issues.



# Evidence-Based Interventions

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- Currently, there are very few intervention programs that have included ELL students in their research.
- We must use what we know about effective instruction in literacy and instruction for ELLs.
- The PLUS Model (Brown & Sanford, 2010), defined on the next slide, is an intervention framework on research-based instruction for ELL students.



# The PLUSS Model for Interventions

(Brown & Sanford, in preparation)

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- P: Preteach critical vocabulary
- L: Language modeling and opportunities for using academic language
- U: Use visuals and graphic organizers
- S: Systematic and explicit instruction in reading components and strategies
- S: Strategic use of native language



# Common Questions

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Q: Isn't English Language development (ELD) an intervention?

A: ELD is federally mandated (*Lau vs. Nichols*, 1974) instruction to ensure that all ELLs have access to core content. An intervention is supplemental evidence-based instruction for students not making sufficient progress in the core.



# Common Questions

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Q: Which reading intervention programs work well for ELLs?

A: There is no particular intervention curriculum that stands out. We recommend pairing evidence-based interventions with sheltered instructional strategies. This might include extending an intervention session to preteach vocabulary or embed additional language practice.



# Common Questions

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Q: Which language intervention programs work well for ELLs?

A: Reviews of evidence based language intervention curricula can be found on websites such as the Florida Center for Reading Research ([www.fcrr.org](http://www.fcrr.org)). As mentioned earlier, these curricula may or may not have been validated on ELLs. Other options include increasing the rate and/or duration of English language development or increasing vocabulary routines and structured language practice across content areas.



# Common Questions

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Q: What should a team keep in mind when making decisions about ELLs?

A: Each ELL is unique. Teams should make instructional decisions based on analysis of a student's language and/or reading growth in L1 and L2. Avoid generalizations that could lead to tracking based on ELL status.



# Questions???

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- Vanderwood, M. L., Linklater, D., & Healy, K. (2008). Predictive accuracy of Nonsense Word Fluency for English language learners. *School Psychology Review*, 37, 5-17.



# Selected Resources

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## **DIBELS and IDEL grade level benchmarks**

[dibels.uoregon.edu](http://dibels.uoregon.edu)

## **Growth norms and benchmarks in English and Spanish**

[www.aimsweb.com](http://www.aimsweb.com)

## **Florida Center for Reading Research**

[www.fcrr.org](http://www.fcrr.org)

Hosp, M., Hosp, J. & Howell K. (2007) *The ABCs of CBM*. Guilford Press.

**IES Practice Guide:** Effective Literacy and English Language Instruction for English Learners in the Elementary Grades

<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/practiceguides/20074011.pdf>



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