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Preparing Highly Qualified Teachers for English Language Learners With Disabilities and at Risk of Disabilities

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ABSTRACT

The No Child Left Behind Act's emphasis on universal standards of academic performance, defined as proficiency in grade-level core curriculum and state academic assessments, challenges general education program personnel to higher standards of professional practice. Because schools must report student achievement by subgroups, including students with disabilities and English language learners (ELLs), reform efforts have increasingly focused on closing the achievement gap between these subgroups and mainstream peers. However, little information is available about the qualifications of teachers who serve ELLs who also have disabilities. This article delineates critical teacher competencies to address the needs of these students and of ELLs who are at risk for special education placement.

English language learners (ELLs) are students who come from communities where languages other than English are spoken and who cannot profit from instruction in English without support (Ortiz & Kushner, 1997). The nearly 5 million ELLs in U.S. schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2008) who are eligible for special language education programs are typically served in bilingual education or English-as-a-second-language (ESL) classrooms. The intent of these special language programs is to ensure that students develop English-language skills that allow them to meet the same high levels of academic performance as their English-proficient peers (Title III of the No Child Left Behind Act [NCLB], 2001). Although the preparation of the teachers who serve them is critical to meeting this goal (Mayer, Mullens, & Moore, 2000; Wilkinson, Ortiz, Robertson, & Kushner, 2006), schools with the highest percentages of ELLs are more likely to place them with novice teachers or teachers without bilingual education or ESL certification (National Center for Education Statistics, 2004). This may explain why so many ELLs fail to achieve academic parity with their English-proficient peers: The 2005 National Assessment of Educational Progress showed that almost 73% of ELLs in 4th grade and 71% of those in 8th grade scored below basic levels on English reading measures (Fry, 2007). Of all racial/ethnic groups, Latinos, who comprise the majority of the ELL student population, had the highest dropout rates (National Center for Education Statistics, 2004); those who are immigrants left school at rates nearly double those of native-born peers (43% vs. 15%, respectively). Low academic achievement and lack of access to qualified teachers puts ELLs at risk of placement in special education (Fletcher & Navarrete, 2003; McCardle, Mele-McCarthy, Cutting, Leos, & D'Emilio, 2005; Ortiz & Kushner, 1997; Wilkinson et al., 2006).

With the dramatic increase in the number of ELLs in U.S. schools—almost 57% between

1995–1996 and 2005–2006 (National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition and Language Instruction Educational Programs, 2007)—the number of ELLs with disabilities is also expected to increase. In 2001–2002, approximately 9% of all ELLs in U.S. schools were served in special education programs, with approximately 56% of them classified as having learning disabilities and 24% as speech/language impaired (Zehler, Fleischman, Hopstock, Pendzick, & Stephenson, 2003). Prevalence rates at the level of school districts are discrepant with these national data. For example, Artiles, Rueda, Salazar, and Higareda (2002) analyzed special education placement data for ELLs in several large school districts in Southern California after the passage of Proposition 227, or the Unz Amendment, which severely restricted bilingual education programs and native-language instruction. They found that students were underrepresented in elementary school but overrepresented in 6th through 12th grade. ELLs with limited language proficiency, whether in their native language or in English, were between 1.42 and 2.43 times more likely than English-speaking students to be placed in programs for students with mental retardation, learning disabilities, or speech and language impairments.

The NCLB Act (2001) requires that states, and thus schools, report student achievement by subgroup, including ELLs and students with disabilities. Subsequently, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA, 2004) aligned its provisions with NCLB, setting high expectations for the academic performance of students with disabilities. Both IDEIA and NCLB require that teachers have the knowledge and skills to implement instruction that is aligned with state content performance standards and that provides maximum opportunity to achieve high levels of academic performance. Because IDEIA emphasizes the principle that students with disabilities are to be educated to the greatest extent possible with nondisabled peers, it is assumed that students with special education needs will receive the majority of their instruction in the general education classroom. For ELLs, this means that students must have access to high-quality bilingual education and ESL programs and services; if students receive special language support for only part of the day, the general education teachers who work with these students must have the skills and competencies to meet the needs of these students. Yet because the focus of these legal mandates has been primarily on academic content knowledge, there is no assurance that teachers who meet these requirements will have the requisite bilingual education and/or ESL competence to teach ELLs in general and special education settings. The focus of this article, then, is to delineate the knowledge and skills required by teachers who serve ELLs with disabilities in the context of general education classrooms. Unless otherwise specified, the term *general education* refers to bilingual education, ESL, and general education (i.e., non–special language) programs.

Competencies to Serve ELLs With Disabilities

Descriptions of the role of general education program personnel in serving ELLs with disabilities, and the knowledge and skills they require to address students' cultural, linguistic, and disability needs, are gleaned from the research literature on bilingual special education, special education, multicultural education, bilingual education, and ESL. Competency domains outlined in general standards for bilingual education, ESL, and special education teachers inform the discussion. The Council for Exceptional Children's (2003) standards for beginning special education teachers serve as a framework for discussing competencies specific to working with ELLs with disabilities. Most of the standards and competencies fall into the following domains: foundations; language; culture; planning, implementing, and managing instruction; assessment; and professional practice. In addition, three other competency areas are presented in this article: development and characteristics of learners, individual learning differences, and collaboration, including linkages with families.

Foundations

To be effective advocates for, and participants in, the education of ELLs with disabilities, general

educators must be knowledgeable about federal legislation and court decisions that govern these students' education. Although it is expected that most general educators will be familiar with Titles I and III of NCLB (2001), an understanding of earlier guarantees accorded to ELLs provides the basis from which bilingual education and ESL program personnel can advocate for the incorporation of enrichment activities and for specially designed language instruction in their students' individualized education programs (IEPs). These guarantees include the mandate that ELLs receive equal access to all educational programs provided to English-proficient students (Equal Educational Opportunities Act, 1974); the mandate that ELLs have access to supplemental, evidence-based instruction, leading to the development of a level of English proficiency necessary to achieve academic parity with English-proficient peers (*Castañeda v. Pickard*, 1981; *Lau v. Nichols*, 1974); and specification of criteria for judging the effectiveness of special language instruction (Office of Civil Rights Memo of 1991). They provide the basis for consideration of a wider array of special designed language and content area instruction for ELLs who may additionally receive special education services.

General education program personnel, including bilingual educators and ESL teachers, must additionally be familiar with laws, principles, and policies that govern the field of special education. For example, special language program personnel must have an understanding of the mandates within the IDEIA and its amendments that pertain to the identification and assessment of ELLs being considered for special education placement and of efforts to reduce disproportionate representation of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. With such knowledge, general educators are better able to understand their role in reducing inappropriate referrals to special education, including structuring academic environments to support achievement, implementing response-to-intervention approaches that involve designing and providing classroom-based interventions for struggling learners, and working with intervention assistance teams to address unresolved academic and behavior problems prior to special education consideration (Wilkinson et al., 2006). Moreover, familiarity with the provision of special education and related services for students with disabilities and familiarity with efforts to increase these students' participation in the general education classroom helps general educators participate more effectively in the design and coordination of students' instructional programs.

Development and Characteristics of Learners

ELLs represent more than 460 different language backgrounds, although Spanish speakers comprise more than 76% of the ELL student population (Zehler, Fleischman, Hopstock, Pendzick, & Stephenson, 2003). These students come from homes in which the social, cultural, and linguistic norms vary widely in their relationship to mainstream language, culture, and experiences (Artiles & Ortiz, 2002; Wong-Fillmore, 1991). Teachers of ELLs must be able to recognize and appreciate these differences in backgrounds and experiences and view them as a conduit for teaching (Gay, 2002). For example, some ELLs are viewed as effective communicators in their respective home communities, yet their discourse patterns and communication styles may be distinct from patterns used in mainstream classrooms (Corson, 2001; Wong-Fillmore, 2000). Others may have accumulated vast funds of knowledge associated with their families' rural origins, urban occupations, and/or migrant experiences, but this knowledge has yet to be transformed into academically validated school principles (González, Andrade, Civil, & Moll, 2001). Effective teachers take advantage of these experiences and build on them so that students can succeed in academic contexts.

Effective teachers of ELLs use classroom practices that validate students' bilingual and bicultural identities. They view bilingualism as an asset and the key to maintaining the integrity of students and of families (Balderrama & Díaz-Rico, 2006). Thus, students are actively taught to rely on both of their languages and to use their skills in one language to support meaning making in the other. Effective teachers of ELLs addition-

ally tap into their students' vast cultural resources and use them as the foundation for making strategic connections between community knowledge and the content knowledge reflected in the school curriculum**.**

Language

ELLs present diverse native language and English proficiency skills. Some have achieved high levels of language proficiency in their native language but not in English. Others have yet to achieve high levels of language proficiency in either language. A defining characteristic of these students is that they require language support to develop the language skills foundational to academic success. Yet national data reveal that only about half of all ELLs receive extensive language instruction, in the form of carefully designed content area instruction in English and/or some or significant native-language support (Zehler, Fleischman, Hopstock, Stephenson, Pendzick, & Sapru, 2003). An additional third of all ELLs receive only some special language instruction, defined as support provided for less than 10 hours per week and/or provided by an instructional aide. The remaining 17% of students do not receive any specially designed language instruction. Almost 60% of ELLs are taught entirely in English, and even programs that purport to deliver instruction in both the native language and in English differ in the percentage of native language versus English instruction offered (Genesee, 1999; Kushner & Ortiz, 2000). Moreover, for the 9% of ELLs identified as having disabilities, instructional programs are even less likely to incorporate specially designed language instruction and are even more likely to be taught entirely in English (Zehler, Fleischman, Hopstock, Pendzick, & Stephenson, 2003).

Effective teachers of ELLs with disabilities provide instructional experiences that facilitate access to the general education curriculum by addressing students' individual language learning needs. These educators are able to merge language development with content instruction, adapt language input to differing proficiency levels to contextualize learning, and create multiple opportunities for the negotiation of meaning (Coelho, 2004; Milk, Mercado, & Sapiens, 1992). They negotiate meaning by making language and content more understandable, helping students convey messages that focus on meaning, and expanding and refining student language (Met, 1994). Finally, they employ ESL strategies including the use of hands-on activities and guided practice; gestures, visuals, graphic organizers, and semantic maps to preview key concepts and vocabulary; and modeling and think-alouds, to demonstrate problem solving (Cloud, 2002; Gersten, Baker, & Marks, 1998).

Bilingual education and ESL teachers will be particularly effective in the delivery of instruction to ELLs with disabilities if they provide instruction in the student's native language (Yates & Ortiz, 1998). They should use, or allow the student and others to use, the students' native language to access challenging content area knowledge and skills (Gersten & Baker, 2000; Lopez-Reyna, 1996; Reyes, Duran, & Bos, 1989); intensify and prolong engagement (Willig, Swedo, & Ortiz, 1987); clarify and elaborate key concepts taught in English (Tikunoff et al., 1991); and encourage mediation of complex procedures (Klingner & Vaughn, 1996). They should additionally provide explicit cognitive and metacognitive strategy instruction to successfully transfer strategies learned in the native language to English (Bos & Reyes, 1996; Gottlieb, 2006).

Although federal initiatives and legislation generally regard proficiency in English as key to ELLs' academic success, bilingual education and ESL program personnel must advocate for increased opportunities for native language development, if only as a conduit to English-language acquisition and instruction. For example, students educated in environments that promote native language development and incorporate culturally responsive curricula and instructional practices, while fostering positive attitudes toward native speakers of English and the culture(s) they represent, are more likely to develop high levels of English proficiency (Hamayan & Damico, 1991; Ortiz & Kushner, 1997). Moreover, students who come to school with 1 to 2 years of instruction in their home countries and/or receive a portion of content area instruction in the native language may be

expected to approach near-native levels of conversational proficiency and to develop similar levels of academic language proficiency in English far sooner than students who are served in ESL pull-out programs, which supplement content area instruction delivered entirely in mainstream classrooms (Thomas & Collier, 2002). Existing research suggests that although students with language-related disabilities will have challenges in both languages, the presence of a disability does not necessitate the restriction of language input to only one language (Genesee, Paradis, & Crago, 2004; McCardle, Mele-McCarthy, & Leos, 2005; Ortiz & Kushner, 1997). Thus, when making educational programming decisions for ELLs with and without disabilities, bilingual education and ESL teachers must advocate for opportunities for the development and use of the native language to support English language development. Not to do so is akin to teaching native English speakers with disabilities in German. Although it is unlikely that teachers would do this, such language shifts routinely occur for students who speak languages other than English. Yet it is unlikely that students who have struggled to acquire academic skills in their dominant language will excel in their weaker language.

Culture

Research has identified differences in cognitive and learning styles among students from diverse racial and ethnic groups (Au & Kawakami, 1991; Townsend, 2000; Tyler, Yzquierdo, Lopez-Reyna, & Flippin, 2004; Voltz, 1998) as well as between students educated within and outside the United States (Balderrama & Díaz-Rico, 2006; Liu & Littlewood, 1997; Lucas, Henze, & Donato, 1990; Rao, 2001; Westby, Dezale, Fradd, & Lee, 1999). Several psychological characteristics influencing student learning outcomes such as academic self-concept, self-efficacy, causal attribution for success and failure, motivation, and self-regulation also vary across cultures (Fiske, Kitayama, Markus, & Nisbett, 1998; Klassen, 2004; Urdan & Giancarlo, 2000; Yamauchi & Greene, 1997). Moreover, there are differences in communication styles, language interaction patterns, nonverbal behaviors (e.g., eye contact, head nodding, gestures), and narrative structures across cultures and between school and home communities (Heath, 1986; Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2005; Torres-Guzmán, 1998). Key to the creation of culturally responsive learning environments is the understanding of the nature and dynamics of language and culture and their impact on student learning. Effective teachers of ELLs view their students as capable learners who bring to school a wealth of knowledge, language, concepts, and experiences that serve as a foundation for future learning (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Sensitivity to students' values, beliefs, traditions, and experiences allow teachers to scaffold the transition from teacher-directed to student-directed learning and to design activities that engage students in deep cognitive learning characterized by intrinsic motivation, the ability to understand and apply information, and the use of meta-cognitive strategies (Ginsberg, 2005).

When an English learner experiences academic difficulty and individualized classroom-based early interventions fail to address these problems, bilingual education and ESL personnel must advocate for the use of alternative supports, programs, and services that are tailored to the cultural, linguistic, and experiential backgrounds of their students (Ortiz, 2002). They should guide their colleagues in the analysis of the instructional climate, including determination that the student's academic performance was not clouded by personally held beliefs and biases or by the expectations of educators who lack familiarity with ELLs' cultural and linguistic norms. They should additionally question how federal-, state-, or district-level educational policies and service delivery options may have influenced the student's opportunities to access quality instruction. For example, the educational value assigned to ELLs' attainment of bilingualism is not commensurate with the status and prestige accorded to native English speakers' foreign language competence (Balderrama & Díaz-Rico, 2006). This has led to educational policies and practices that result in language loss for ELLs but increased opportunities for second language proficiency for native English speakers. Educational practices that replace rather than build on students' home

and community language(s) and culture are more likely to emphasize basic skills instruction rather than provide access to academically rich instructional activities (S. B. García & Domínguez, 1997; Ortiz, 2002), as instruction is heavily centered on developing English language proficiency as opposed to fostering English acquisition within core content instruction. This, in turn, severely curtails students' academic performance in state-mandated curriculum.

Referral to special education is often the consequence of the school's determination that students' academic progress and/or levels of achievement are unresponsive to general education interventions. However, general educators must understand the significant role they play in preventing inappropriate referrals to special education through the structuring of academic experiences that support students' cultural and linguistic identities, language and literacy development, and content area achievement. In the case of ELLs, bilingual education and ESL program personnel's understanding of culture, cultural patterns, and the sociocultural, sociolinguistic, and sociohistorical contexts of ELLs and other CLD students will be invaluable in the design and implementation of culturally responsive instruction and in appropriately evaluating students' response to instruction.

Individual Learning Differences

The majority of ELLs acquire English as a function of enrollment in school (E. García, 1992). Factors that influence students' English language acquisition include age, personality, and motivation; the degree to which the first language has been acquired upon exposure to English; the number of years of exposure to English; and the quality and nature of that exposure (Coelho, 2004; Ortiz & Kushner, 1997). However, there is great variation in the language skills that ELLs present in both the native language and in English (Solano-Flores & Trumbull, 2003). For example, patterns of language use may vary as a function of contact with different language models. Moreover, within-student language patterns may change rapidly, particularly among students whose families travel frequently to their country of origin (McLaughlin, Gesi Blanchard, & Osani, 1995). As limited English proficiency, code switching, and language loss are often misinterpreted as evidence of a language-related disability, the insight of special language program personnel regarding bilingualism, second language acquisition, sociocultural contexts for language development, and typical patterns of language performance can be invaluable in distinguishing language difference from disabilities.

Culture influences every aspect of how we perceive and interact with others (Barrera & Corso, 2002), and awareness of the ways in which values, beliefs, and behaviors may differ across cultures is integral to working with CLD students and their families. Although members within cultural groups may share similar beliefs and values as a result of an enculturation process encompassing collectively transmitted information and shared experiences (Resse & Gallimore, 2000), individual members may display varying cultural practices, reflective of their unique experiences, linguistic abilities (Lynch & Hanson, 2004), immigrant status (Urdan & Giancarlo, 2000), acculturation style (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2000), and economic, educational, and social status (S. B. García & Dominguez, 1997). Therefore, bilingual education and ESL teachers and their colleagues in general education and special education must guard against assumptions of homogeneity in behavior and beliefs based on ethnicity, gender, family structure, and so forth. Such assumptions without empirical evidence may lead to inappropriate program placement (Kalyanpur & Harry, 1999).

When individual ELLs and other CLD students struggle academically, the ability to view and appropriately reference their language proficiency, academic performance, and behavior to that of typically developing cultural and linguistic peers is key to reducing assessment bias. However, the degree to which individuals conform to cultural and linguistic norms is often situational rather than absolute; thus, there is wide variation of beliefs, values, behavior, and performance within as well as across language and cultural communities (Gallimore & Goldenberg, 1996). Consequently, a fluid interpretation of what constitutes typical performance, empirically validated by culturally

and linguistically competent educators, is essential to individualizing the delivery of instruction and to assessing academic performance and behavior.

Planning, Implementing, and Managing Instruction

The mandates of NCLB (2001) to include ELLs in statewide accountability systems also reaffirm students' right to increased participation in the general education curriculum. Students with disabilities are afforded similar guarantees of access and opportunity for academic achievement through the IDEIA (2004). As a result of these mandates, general education teachers have assumed greater responsibility for the delivery of instruction to ELLs, students with disabilities, and ELLs with disabilities. As instructional planning for students with disabilities is coordinated through the individualized educational plan (IEP), it will be crucial for general educators to take an active role in the design and implementation of their students' IEPs, to ensure that they contain the necessary special education and related services and supplementary aids and services students with disabilities require to achieve high levels of academic performance in the state-mandated curriculum. In the case of ELLs with disabilities, input from bilingual and ESL program personnel regarding culture, bilingualism, second language acquisition, the ESL curriculum, and special language program instruction may increase the likelihood that IEPs are responsive to students' beliefs, norms, and experiences (Cloud, Genesee, & Hamayan, 2000), incorporate specially designed language instruction and culturally accommodated pedagogy (see, e.g., Au, 1993; Cloud, 2002; Santamaría, Fletcher, & Bos, 2002; Tharp, 1989; Trueba, 1988), provide access to instructional materials free from bias or stereotypes (S. B. García & Malkin, 1993), and use exemplary instructional strategies for ELLs with diverse abilities (see, e.g., Echevarria & Graves, 2003; Gersten & Baker, 2000; Gersten, Compton, Dimino, Linan-Thompson, Santoro, & Tilly, 2009). Moreover, as ELLs are most often placed in programs for students with language- and literacy-related disabilities, IEPs should provide specific recommendations for instruction in these areas as well (Cloud, 2002; Goldstein, 2002; Ortiz, 2002).

Teachers of ELLs with language- and literacy-related disabilities monitor the cognitive and linguistic demands of second-language instruction, recognizing that concepts and vocabulary used in English classroom texts may be confusing to students from diverse backgrounds (G. E. García, 1991). They use a variety of ESL strategies including (a) modeling and think-alouds to demonstrate problem solving, (b) hands-on activities and guided practice, (c) relating new subject matter to prior learning experiences, and (d) using gestures, visuals, graphic organizers, and semantic maps to preview key concepts and vocabulary (Coelho, 2004; Gersten et al., 1998). They integrate basic skill instruction in the context of higher-order skill development and provide support and guidance to scaffold the transition from teacher-directed to student-directed learning (Ortiz, 2002). Moreover, whether or not students receive formal instruction in the native language, effective teachers of ELLs create opportunities for native language use and help students to use their strength in one language to extend meaning in another. Finally, effective teachers monitor academic performance through the implementation of curriculum-based assessments to gauge student progress (Leung, 1996; Ortiz & Yates, 2002) and, when necessary, deliver individualized instruction to address any gaps in background knowledge or requisite skills (S. B. García, Wilkinson, & Ortiz, 1995; Wilkinson et al., 2006).

Assessment

Research has suggested that ELLs are considerably more likely than their English-proficient peers to experience academic difficulty and that educational personnel face significant challenges in the accurate identification of disability as the source of this difficulty (McCardle, Mele-McCarthy, & Leos, 2005; Ortiz et al., 2006). The broad range of linguistic, cultural, and cognitive characteristics of ELLs poses undeniable challenges for educational personnel (and policy stakeholders) who lack the knowledge and skills

to effectively address these students' diverse learning needs (Fletcher & Navarette, 2003; Kushner & Ortiz, 2000; McCardle, Mele-McCarthy, Cutting, et al., 2005; Ortiz et al., 2006). Thus, although a minority of ELLs may fail to make adequate progress in the general education curriculum because of disability, others may fail to progress as a result of deficiencies in the teaching-learning environment or unresolved learning problems that grow more serious over time (Ortiz, 2002). Regulations in the IDEIA (2004) emphasize that special education placement decisions for ELLs cannot rely on limited English proficiency or deficiencies in instruction as the determinant factor for eligibility. The legislation further affirms the importance of scientifically-based early intervention services as a vehicle for resolving learning and behavior difficulties prior to special education consideration. Making appropriate eligibility decisions for ELLs experiencing academic difficulty can thus be conceived as the analysis of behavior and academic performance of students who present a broad range of linguistic, cultural, and cognitive characteristics, accurately assessing and interpreting patterns of performance in light of opportunity to learn (Leung, 1996), and provision of high-quality intervention assistance to increase student performance. A disproportionate number of ELLs fail to adequately progress through the general education curriculum, suggesting the need to evaluate the quantity and quality of schooling, including the nature of instruction and teacher qualification, experience, and track record (García & Ortiz, 2008 [this issue]; Leung, 1996). Moreover, evidence suggesting that a disproportionate number of ELLs receive special education services (Artiles, Rueda, et al., 2002; Wilkinson et al., 2006), highlights the need to evaluate inventions in light of how they were designed, implemented, and evaluated to accommodate students' unique language, experiential and cultural characteristics, and diverse learning needs.

Myriad deficiencies in the teaching-learning environment may contribute to the disproportionate number of ELLs who fail to meet high-level curriculum performance standards. For example, federal- and state-level educational policies that arbitrarily cap the number of years a student may be served in a bilingual education program or that mandate English-only instruction limit meaningful access to state-mandated curriculum, whereas mandates related to the assessment of academic achievement confound mastery of curricular content with mastery of English when students lack the requisite English skills to demonstrate what they know and are able to do (Abedi, 2002). Moreover instruction that fails to accommodate students' native language and culture (Artiles, Rueda, et al., 2002; Ortiz, 1997) limits essential opportunities for cognitive, language, and skill development. Although teacher qualification, experience, and track record influence the opportunity to learn (Leung, 1996; Harry, Klingner, Sturges, & Moore, 2002), ELLs are increasingly more likely to receive instruction outside the special language education program (Zehler, Fleischman, Hopstock, Stephenson, Pendzick, & Sapru, 2003), from novice teachers (National Center for Education Statistics, 2004) or teachers with only a minimal amount of in-service training related to the instruction of ELLs (Zehler, Fleischman, Hopstock, Stephenson, Pendzick, & Sapru, 2003). Bilingual education and ESL program personnel, on the other hand, have expertise related to bilingualism and biliteracy, second-language acquisition, the ESL curriculum, special language program instruction, culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy, and instructional strategies known to be effective with ELLs (Ortiz, 2002). Input from these special language program personnel can be used to evaluate the degree to which students' prior schooling has appropriately accommodated their background characteristics, developing English proficiency, and learning needs. Moreover, should ELLs continue to experience learning and/or behavior problems, input from bilingual education and ESL teachers can inform the design and implementation of culturally and linguistically accommodated early intervention assistance.

Some ELLs fail to make adequate progress in the general education curriculum because of learning and/or behavior problems, resulting in serious gaps in knowledge or skills. For these students, early intervention assistance consisting of adapted instruction or remedial programs, targeted to specific learning or behavior problems,

may result in improved outcomes. As the outcome of intervention assistance will likely determine whether a referral to special education will be pursued, key components of intervention assistance must be evaluated, including the process by which interventions are selected, the degree to which interventions are differentiated according to identified need, whether selected interventions are implemented as intended, the accuracy with which outcomes are monitored and documented, and the degree to which outcomes resulted in a sufficient reduction between peer and grade-level expectation (Donovan & Cross, 2002). In the case of ELLs, it will be vital to collect additional information regarding whether the interventions employ culturally and linguistically relevant classroom management practices, including determination that interventions (a) are tailored to the students' individual experiential, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds; (b) address the perspectives and concerns of families as well as teachers (Salend, Garrick Duhaney, & Montgomery, 2002); and (c) consider prior schooling, including instruction outside the United States, and disruptions of schooling as well as previous program placement in special language programs (e.g., extensive services, limited services, or mainstream instruction only) and the extent to which instruction incorporated the native language (Wilkinson et al., 2006).

Research suggests that general educators need an expanded repertoire of skills for designing instructional interventions for ELLs who experience difficulty and/or fail to meet expected levels of performance (Donovan & Cross, 2002). Empirical research on instructional interventions for ELLs is limited, and relying on interventions originally designed for English monolinguals fails to account for the intersection of instructional need and students' native language and/or developing proficiency in English (García & Ortiz, 2008 [this issue]). Research also suggests that teachers require significant support to effectively accommodate instruction to students' differentiated learning needs and to evaluate outcomes (Wilkinson et al., 2006). For example, data will have to be obtained from multiple sources (family members, teachers, other educational personnel), using various assessment strategies (e.g., observations; anecdotal records; journals, portfolios, and other student products; classroom tests), to assess performance in multiple settings (bilingual/ESL classroom, other general education settings) with multiple interactors (e.g., monolingual and bilingual teachers and peers, etc.) and to measure progress in the native language as well as English. To ensure validity in the evaluation of student outcomes, data must be analyzed with input from special language program personnel. Their familiarity with the language proficiencies, communication styles, learning preferences, cultural norms, and background characteristics of ELLs and their experience with these students' learning trajectories can provide clinical judgment as a complement to data derived from standardized assessments. Finally, should ELLs ultimately be referred to special education, documentation of general education interventions as well as student outcome data can be used to inform eligibility decisions.

Collaboration

Despite IDEIA mandates ensuring active participation of parents in the special education process, there remain a number of challenges to the creation of collaborative relationships between schools and the families of ELLs and other CLD students with disabilities (S. B. García, 2002; Kalyanpur, Harry, & Skritc, 2000). The involvement of parents in the education of their children must include a broader definition of parent, acknowledge multiple perspectives of disability, accommodate family values and beliefs, and facilitate different avenues for involvement (see, e.g., S. B. García, 2002; S. B. García, Méndez Pérez, & Ortiz, 2000; Harris, 1995; Harry, 1992). Home-school collaborative relationships must accommodate diverse views of family and kinship networks; differentiated rights and responsibilities; respect for age, ritual, and tradition; childrearing and nurturance; time orientation; and beliefs about disability (see, e.g., S. B. García & Dominguez, 1997; Harry, 1997; Lynch & Hanson, 2004). Moreover, it should allow for changes in belief, behavior, and orientation.

When efforts to involve families from language backgrounds other than English are unsuccessful, special language program personnel may be better prepared to communicate with families whose English proficiency is limited or for whom communication with school personnel is difficult or intimidating (Violand-Sanchez, Sutton, & Ware 1991). To ensure that communication is not one sided, educators must use a framework for viewing beliefs, values, and behaviors (including their own) as a series of value sets (Lynch & Hanson, 2004) or cultural features (Gallimore & Goldenberg, 1996) to which individuals or groups of individuals subscribe and that evolve as a result of education, age, life experiences, friends, socioeconomic situation, and contact with other cultures. Such a model would require continuous empirical validation, thus creating the need for ongoing, meaningful communication with families.

As mentioned previously, general education teachers are being increasingly called upon to deliver instruction to students with disabilities. NCLB requires that all students, including those with disabilities, are provided the maximum opportunity to achieve high levels of academic performance in state-mandated curricula. In the case of ELLs with disabilities, instructional programs must include meaningful access to the bilingual education, ESL, and/or general education curriculum; opportunities for native language and/or English language and literacy development; and specialized instruction to address disability-related needs. Delaying content area instruction until such time as ELLs with disabilities can access the English-language curriculum is no longer an option. Therefore, teachers of ELLs with disabilities must possess a broad array of instructional strategies to address the language, culture, and exceptional learning needs of their students. Input from bilingual education and ESL program personnel regarding culture, second-language acquisition and bilingualism, and consultation and support in scaffolding and mediating instruction in a second language is critical to the design and implementation of more meaningful instruction.

As ELLs are increasingly educated outside special language education programs, and as instruction is increasingly delivered in English (Zehler, Fleischman, Hopstock, Stephenson, Pendzick, & Sapru, 2003), there may be a tendency to exclude bilingual educators and other special language program personnel from participation on intervention assistance teams and/or to limit their input regarding the adequacy of the teaching-learning environment for ELLs. Thus, bilingual education and ESL program personnel must actively involve themselves in their students' education and work toward collaborative partnerships with their colleagues in special education. Strategies to increase and enhance collaborative partnerships among teachers of ELLs with disabilities include (a) the specification of needs, goals, and definitions of collaboration; (b) an understanding of, and respect for, the expertise, roles, and responsibilities of each member of the collaborative team; (c) a commitment by school administrators of sufficient time for collaboration; and, if necessary, (d) professional development on the benefits of, and procedures for, collaborative partnerships (Roache, Shore, Gouleta, & de Obaldia Burkevich, 2003). Although there are many challenges to establishing effective collaborative partnerships among personnel who work with ELLs with disabilities (Kushner et al., 2004), these strategies can facilitate transdisciplinary collaboration.

Professional Practice

Teachers of ELLs with disabilities or ELLs who are at risk of special education placement serve as resources for their students, students' families, and professional colleagues (Kushner & Ortiz, 2000). In the face of outside forces that diminish students' bilingual and bicultural identities, general education program personnel must validate families' cultural and linguistic practices by encouraging native-language use in the home and facilitating home-to-school communication of family concerns. Effective teachers of ELLs share with their colleagues, students, and students' families materials and resources strategically designed to support students' developing proficiency in the native language and/or English and that accurately portray images and experiences of diverse cultural groups (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2002). Effective

teachers actively participate in curricular decisions and advocate for services and interventions that provide opportunities to develop and maintain both the native language and English. As necessary, they initiate professional development activities to support their colleagues' use of culturally and linguistically relevant instruction and practices. Finally, teachers of ELLs and ELLs with disabilities are active and contributing members in professional associations and community organizations. They organize conference sessions and solicit and/or write papers on themes and practices relevant to the instruction of ELLs and other culturally and linguistically diverse students. They attend sessions that allow them to reflect and adjust their professional practice according to current, evidence-based practices for educating ELLs, including those with disabilities.

Summary

Schools are being held to the highest levels of accountability for the academic performance of students with disabilities, ELLs, and ELLs with disabilities. This has resulted in significant challenges for general education program personnel, who must assume greater responsibility for providing these students with instruction in the state-mandated core curriculum. Classrooms are becoming increasingly diverse, yet few teachers report feeling well prepared to address the needs of ELLs or students with disabilities (National Center for Education Statistics, 1998; Zehler, Fleischman, Hopstock, Pendzick, & Stephenson, 2003), and coursework offered in preservice teacher education programs does not adequately address the instructional needs of culturally and linguistically diverse learners (Ortiz et al., 2006) or, by extension, the instructional needs of ELLs with disabilities.

This article delineates the critical competencies general education program personnel, including bilingual education and ESL teachers, require in addressing the academic needs of ELLs with disabilities and of those who are at risk for special education placement. It suggests that competencies must be developed in a variety of areas related to the instruction of ELLs to prevent academic difficulty, including assessment. It also suggests that the focus of evaluation of academic performance should be to guide the design and implementation of instructional interventions, which are then evaluated in response to expected achievement outcomes (Harry et al., 2002). Almost 70% of ELLs with disabilities are identified for special education following qualification for special language education programs (Zehler, Fleischman, Hopstock, Pendzick, & Stephenson, 2003). This suggests that all educators must have a comprehensive understanding of the broad array of instructional programming options for ELLs, ELLs with disabilities, and ELLs at risk for special education so that they can make informed decisions and provide the high-quality instruction required for ELLs to succeed.

Personnel preparation programs must be designed to ensure that educators exist who are ready to serve the culturally and linguistically diverse learners and students with disabilities they will have in their classrooms. A shared knowledge base among bilingual education, ESL, and general education personnel, and coordination of services provided across programs and contexts, are key to closing the achievement gap between these students and their mainstream peers and to resolving long-standing issues of disproportionate representation of multicultural populations in special education. Given the changing demography, it is clear that the welfare of our society depends on the social and academic success of these learners.

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