

Program Guidelines for ELs with Disabilities

Considering program guidelines for ELs with Disabilities, as with other populations, one might expect to find a range of abilities among students whose English proficiency is limited. The difficulty often arises in determining whether a learning problem is related only to ELP level or whether the student has an actual disability. Students learning English, because of their cultural and linguistic background, have special instructional needs. When a student is having difficulty mastering specific skills, it is important for the teacher to differentiate the instructional strategies and/or instructional pace for the student. Just because the student requires accommodations to his/her program, it does not necessarily mean that he/she has a disability or that he/she should be referred to for a comprehensive evaluation for possible special education services.

If the student continues to have difficulty after consistent language differentiation and instructional interventions have been implemented, the student can be referred for a comprehensive evaluation **IF** the team suspects a disability. The ESL teacher has training in English language acquisition regardless of the student's first language and should be a member of the team considering the referral. The ESL teacher is also familiar with the usual rate and stages of acquisition, as well as the typical errors to be expected. Once a referral is made, a comprehensive evaluation is conducted. The evaluation team will determine if the student is eligible to receive special education services as a student with a disability under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

If the student is eligible for special education services, an Individual Education Program (IEP) is developed by the IEP team which includes required members as specified in the Missouri State Plan Special Education, IDEA, Part B <http://dese.mo.gov/governmental-affairs/dese-administrative-rules/incorporated-reference-materials/IDEAPartB-2014>. The IEP should address the student's need(s) for services based on the student's disability to be able to progress in the general education curriculum. If the IEP team deems appropriate, language assistance and support can be addressed in the present level of academic achievement and functional performance. If appropriate, ELs may be served through both programs.

If the severity of the student's disability indicates more special education services are needed to meet the student's needs rather than ESL services, the ESL specialist should work with school and district personnel to set up a consultative model for that student's language development.

The ESL specialist should meet regularly with the special education teacher and maintain a record of consultations. Missouri uses ACCESS for ELLs as its annual English Language Proficiency assessment. Students who are in monitored status for EL do not take the assessment. Form D is used by the IEP team to address the student's participation with or without accommodations. For additional information, refer to: <https://dese.mo.gov/college-career-readiness/assessment/el-assessment>.