

MTSS: Best Practices When Supporting Emergent Bilingual Students

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Abstract

The misrepresentation of culturally and linguistically diverse students in Special Education is an ongoing concern in education. To avoid the misidentification of Emergent Bilingual (EB) students, Student Support Teams (SST) should consider second language acquisition and, potentially, cultural factors before referring EB students for Special Education evaluations. While the Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) model is well-structured to meet the needs of all students, strategies that are made for monolingual students may not be appropriate for EB students. This poster will outline prereferral expectations for EB students, identify evidence-based recommendations, and describe differences of the MTSS model when supporting EB students in comparison to their monolingual peers.

Prereferral Expectations

Before referring EB students for a special education evaluation, the following considerations should be made by the MTSS team:

- Are the student's academic difficulties due to a lack of high-quality instruction or socioeconomic factors. If so, those factors may be hindering the student's progress.
- Do data support an evaluation? Progress monitoring is essential to gather before referring a student (Hoover & Erickson, 2015).
- Are linguistic difficulties consistent between both the student's first and second language? If not, the student may benefit from additional intervention rather than a Special Education evaluation (CDE, 2019).
- Are interventions implemented evidence-based? Interventions that work with monolingual students may not always be appropriate for EB students (OSEP, 2018).
- How does the EB student compare to other students with similar linguistic backgrounds? If other students in the same group or class are also not showing growth, the team should reconsider the interventions being implemented. (Hoover & Erickson 2015).

Lastly, members who participate in a school's MTSS team should have a holistic understanding of the second language acquisition time frame and the effects of a lack of language exposure on academic achievement and progress (U.S. Department of Special Education Programs [OSEP], 2019)

Modifications for EB's

Tier 3

- 1 on 1 instruction (OSEP, 2019).
- Compare data to students in the same class or group (OSEP, 2018).
- Progress monitoring may focus on specific skills to assess growth (NCEA, 2018).
- Ensure intervention fidelity and monitor student engagement (OSEP, 2018).
- Daily progress monitoring. If possible, in the student's primary and secondary language (NCEA, 2018).

Tier 2

- If student receives instruction in native language, interventions in native language are provided (OSEP, 2020).
- Team discussion of second-language acquisition process; linguistic demands of materials used and linguistic development of the student are considered (CDE, 2019).
- Use of progress monitoring tools that are reliable, valid and reflect language of instruction and progress towards learning objectives (OSEP, 2020).
- English proficiency does not delay intervention; interventions include integrated ELD, assistance in academic/basic vocabulary, intervention does not replace ELD (CDE, 2019).

Tier 1

- In class strategies: Translanguaging (Celic & Seltzer, 2013; Menken & Sanchez, 2019; Velasco & Garcia, 2014), PLUSS Model (Sanford et al., 2020), Social Emotional Learning (Gonzalez et al., 2014; NCEA, 2017)
- Use nonlinguistic tools (e.g., visuals, graphic organizers) to help students understand content (OSEP, 2018)
- Modeling, scaffolded practice, opportunities for student to respond, and immediate performance feedback. (OSEP, 2018)

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