

# When an English Learner Struggles Academically: Telling the Difference Between Second Language Acquisition and a Possible Learning Disability

## We are in standby mode

All participant phones are muted.

Please type a short introduction into the chat area.

(Name, Title, Organization)

Please sync your phone to the WebEx interface:



1. Find the “**Session Info**” Tab in the WebEx window
2. Locate your **Attendee ID**
3. Dial the full ID, “#” symbol included, on your phone keypad

Participants will be muted during the webinar.

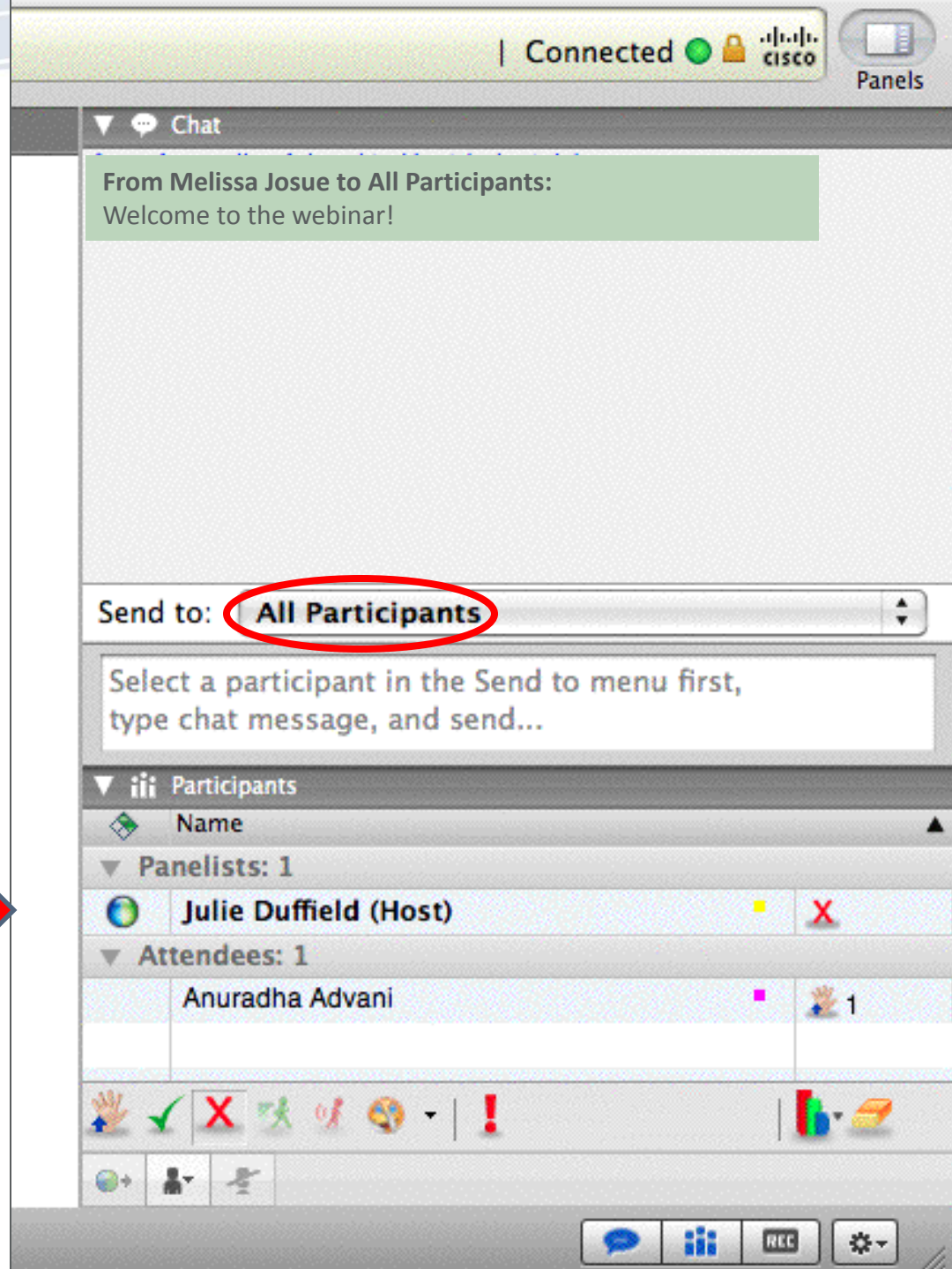


**MUTED**

# Chat Area



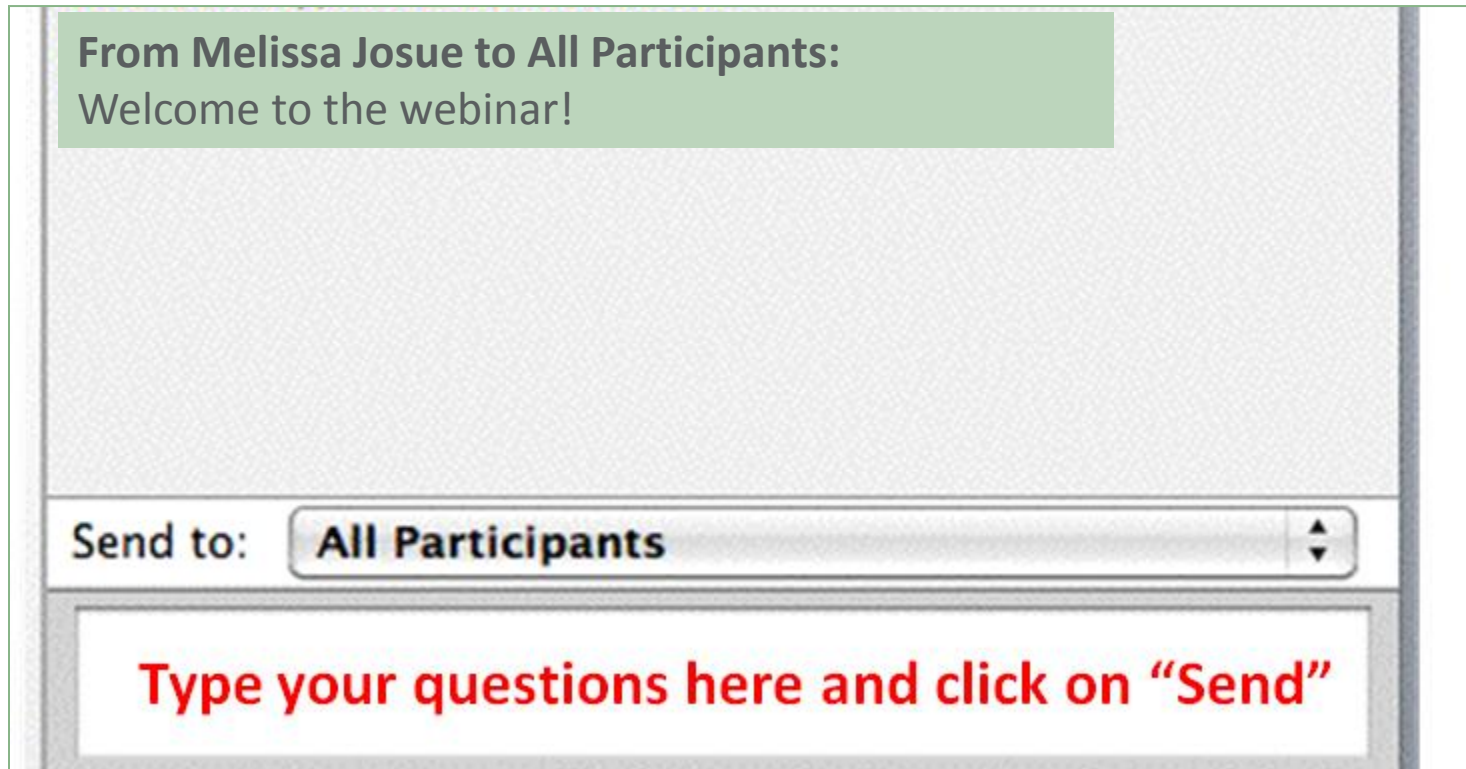
# Participants



The screenshot shows a Cisco Webex chat window. At the top right, it displays "Connected" with a green dot, a lock icon, and the Cisco logo. Below this is a "Panels" button. The main chat area shows a message from Melissa Josue to All Participants: "Welcome to the webinar!". Below the message is a "Send to:" dropdown menu with "All Participants" selected and circled in red. Underneath the dropdown is a text box with the instruction: "Select a participant in the Send to menu first, type chat message, and send...". Below the text box is a "Participants" panel. It has a "Name" header and a "Participants" icon. It is divided into "Panelists: 1" and "Attendees: 1". Under "Panelists", there is one entry: "Julie Duffield (Host)" with a globe icon, a yellow square, and a red X icon. Under "Attendees", there is one entry: "Anuradha Advani" with a pink square and a hand icon with the number "1". At the bottom of the chat area is a toolbar with various icons: a hand, a checkmark, a red X, a green checkmark, a red checkmark, a globe, a dropdown arrow, an exclamation mark, a bar chart, and a document. At the very bottom of the screen are four icons: a speech bubble, a group of people, a "REC" button, and a settings gear.

# Using Chat Box for Q&A

During the webinar, your feedback, questions, and comments are welcomed in the text chat box.



From Melissa Josue to All Participants:  
Welcome to the webinar!

Send to: **All Participants**

**Type your questions here and click on "Send"**

# When an English Learner Struggles Academically: Telling the Difference Between Second Language Acquisition and a Possible Learning Disability

September 20, 2016

Dr. Julie Esparza Brown

Portland State University

**Facilitator:**  
Elizabeth  
Burr, REL  
West



# Webinar Goals

**As a result of your participation today, you'll learn:**

- The important things to know about students: language development/profile; cultural background; life experiences; educational experiences; and personal characteristics;
- The process of second language acquisition and differences between typical and atypical language development; and
- Appropriate supports and screening tools to use prior to referral to special education.



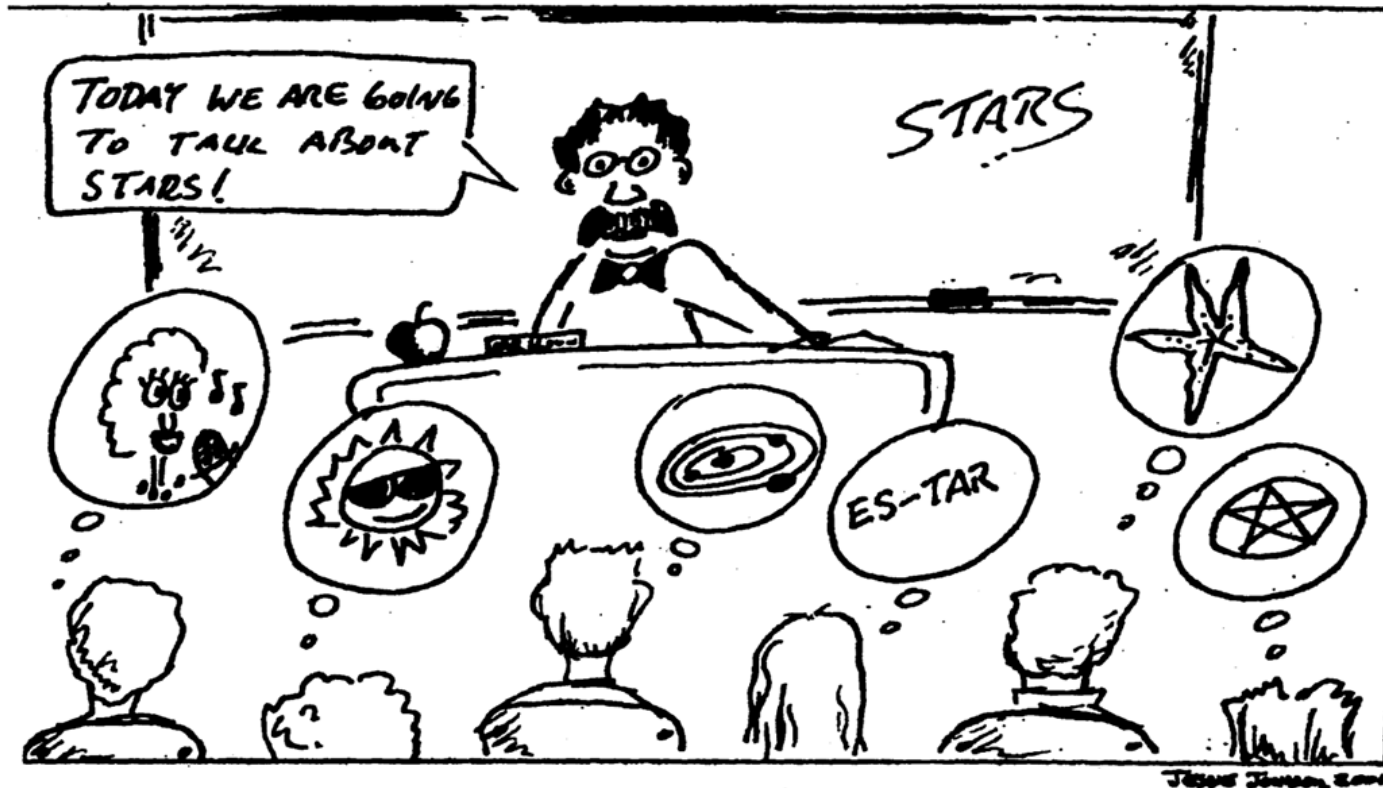
**Presenter:**  
Julie Esparza  
Brown,  
Portland State  
University



# Session Outline


- I. Setting the Context
- II. Keys to Difference vs. Disability
- III. Five Things to Know About Your Students
  - I. Language Profile
  - II. Cultural Background
  - III. Educational Experiences
  - IV. Personal Characteristics
  - V. Life Experiences
- IV. Decision-making

# Is This Your Classroom Reality?




**Is this your classroom reality?**


# Today's EL Students




EL students who have exited ELD/ESL programs



Long-term ELs (more than 7 years in ELD/ESL programs)




Students with interrupted formal education



EL students in ELD/ESL programs (ranging from Levels 1 – 5)



Newcomers to U.S. (less than six months in country)



ELs in special education

KIDS WITH

DISABILITIES ARE JUST KIDS



Learning



Physical



Speech & Language

Autism



Emotional



Hearing



Cognitive



Visual



Physical

# Keys to Distinguishing Difference vs. Disability

- It is essential to understand the reason(s) for the child's struggle to begin distinguishing difference from disability.
- The key is to make appropriate comparisons to gauge whether a student's progress seems to be hampered by more than just cultural and linguistic differences.
- Must compare to “**true peers,**” when possible.

# True Peers

- “True Peers” are those of the same age and grade who have similar language proficiencies, cultural and experiential background.
- If several “true peers” are struggling, this is an indication that the instruction is less than optimal for that group of students.

# Student Problem Solving Profile Form

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**Last grade attended:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Last grade attended:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Language primarily used when speaking to this student at home:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Language student primarily uses at home:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Developmental difficulties:** \_\_\_\_\_

**At what age did the student walk?** \_\_\_\_\_

**At what age did the student first start to speak?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What was the language the student first spoke?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What was a second language introduced?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Were there any prenatal, birth or early childhood difficulties or illnesses?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What are their child's strengths?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Does the child have any household responsibilities?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Does the parent have any concerns about their child?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What is their educational goal for their child?** \_\_\_\_\_

**How does the family celebrate and maintain their culture?** \_\_\_\_\_

**In what ways can they support their child at home? Who can help the student with their homework?** \_\_\_\_\_

- You have a copy of the form for reference.
- Feel free to use or adapt.
- We will be referring to various sections of the form throughout the presentation.



# Knowing your students: Language

## Language Development, Culture, and Background



# Five Things to Know About Your Students

Language  
Profile

Educational  
Experiences

Cultural  
Background



Personal  
Characteristics

Life Experiences

# Language Concepts



## Primary Language

Home Language

Language Child Learns First

## Dominant Language

Depends on Context

Language Child Chooses to Speak in the Situation

## Language Proficiency

Based on Opportunity

Ability, accuracy and fluency in a language

# Home Language Experiences

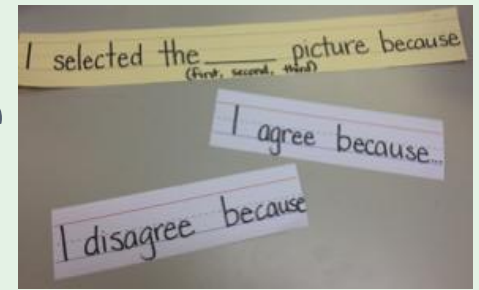
- What are the student's language experiences/development from birth until they entered school?
- Consider first, second, third language...

# Typical vs. Atypical Language Development

**Critical questions to ask families to determine if the students' language development seems typical or atypical for their specific context**

- Was the student's language development typical as compared to peers and siblings before they entered the school setting?
- Was the child experiencing any delays in their home language (e.g., not understood by parents, not uttering first words until well past what would be considered typical) prior to entering school?

# Language Knowledge/Profile



Know the English language and native language proficiencies of each of your EL students.

- Where do you get this information?
- What does it mean?

Identify appropriate teaching strategies for the proficiency stages of your students.

Identify appropriate ways for students to respond and demonstrate their knowledge based on their language proficiency stage.

# Language Knowledge/Profile

Remember, EL students' language reservoir is the sum of L1 and L2!

Many U.S. born students (second generation) may have heard both English and their native language from birth.



Language 1

Language 2

<b>Second Language Learner: Difference</b>	<b>Language Disability</b>
<p>Language performance is similar to other EL students who have comparable cultural and linguistic experiences. (“true peer;” Brown &amp; Doolittle, 2008)</p>	<p>Language patterns are unique to the student and unlike others in the student’s cultural community.</p>
<p>Limited vocabulary in the native language due to lack of opportunity to use and hear the native language</p>	<p>Student demonstrates limited vocabulary even when there are rich language opportunities in the native language.</p>
<p>Student shifts from one language to another within a single utterance</p>	<p>Word-finding problems are evident in both languages and often student substitutes with another language.</p>
<p>Communication may be impeded by an accent or dialect.</p>	<p>Student exhibits deficits in expressive and receptive language, which impedes communication.</p>

Adapted from Klingner, Hoover & Baca (2008)



<b>Second Language Learner: Difference</b>	<b>Language Disability</b>
<p>Age appropriate behaviors in interpreting facial expressions, appropriate physical proximity, and use and interpretation of gestures.</p>	<p>Student demonstrates difficulty using and interpreting nonverbal language, often leading to social problems.</p>
<p>Grammatical errors due to native language influences (e.g., student may omit initial verb in a question—You like cake? (omission of Do).</p>	<p>Grammatical structures continue to be inappropriate in both languages even after extensive instruction (e.g., student cannot produce the past tense in either Spanish or English indicating difficulty with grammatical tenses).</p>
<p>Word order in L1 may differ from that of English (e.g., in Arabic sentences are ordered verb-subject-object while Urdu sentences are ordered subject-object-verb</p>	<p>Student demonstrates limited phrasing and vocabulary in both languages (e.g., his/her sentences in both languages demonstrate limited or no use of adjectives and adverbs and both languages are marked by a short length of utterance).</p>

Adapted from Klingner, Hoover & Baca (2008)

# Progress in English Acquisition

**The general rule of thumb is that students progress through one stage per year.**

- However, some students take more time to progress through Levels 3 and 4...

# Language Proficiency Information

School:

Student Problem Solving Profile

District:

***Language Proficiency Assessments:***

Eng (state assessment) (Score/Level)	Eng: WMLS-R/_____ % of success in oral language	Span: WMLS-R/_____ % of success in oral language

# Five Things to Know About Your Students

## Language Profile



# Language Knowledge/Profile

- His native languages are Kanjobal and Spanish.
- Currently, Sergio's English language proficiency is at the Early Intermediate Level.
- His Spanish proficiency level is at the Beginning Level.
- His proficiency in Kanjobal is unknown.
- At home, the family uses a mixture of Kanjobal and Spanish and frequently code-switch or use both languages within a sentence.
- His oral English is more intelligible than his Spanish.
- However, he may be using both Kanjobal and Spanish when teachers assume he is trying to communicate in Spanish.

# As Compared to “True Peers”: Language

- There are no other students who speak the particular dialect of Sergio’s primary language of Kanjobal.
- The true peer comparisons are to his siblings and cousins.
- With the exception of an older brother in special education, the children are making good educational progress.

# Knowing your students: Culture

Language Development,  
Culture, and Background



Gay (2000) defines culturally responsive teaching as using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance styles of diverse students to make learning more appropriate and effective for them; it teaches to and through the strengths of these students.



# Culturally Responsive Teaching is...



the lens  
through which  
teachers see  
their students  
and their  
students'  
learning



the filter  
through which  
teachers listen  
to how students  
express their  
needs and  
dreams



the way in which  
teachers interact  
with students when  
delivering instruction  
using curricular  
materials, and  
making educational  
decisions

# What Do Teachers Need to Know



- What cultural knowledge do your students possess about their own culture and US culture?
- What are each student's prior experiences in school and life?
- What are the ways in which they are used to learning?

# Five Things to Know About Your Students



**Cultural  
Background**

# Cultural Background



- He was born in Portland but both of his parents are from small villages in Guatemala.
- The parents' native language is Kanjobal - a Mayan language.
- There are very few people in Portland from their region.
- They interact to some extent with the Mexican community but mostly socialize within their own family group.
- In their culture, power is hierarchical and the American focus on equality can be unfamiliar.
- Individuals from rural regions tend to have very limited formal education.

# Information from Parents

School:

Student Problem Solving Profile

District:

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***Information from Parents:***

**Mother's L1**

**L2**

**L3**

**Father's L1**

**L2**

**L3**

**Last grade attended:**

**Last grade attended:**

**Language primarily used when speaking to this students at home:**

**Language student primarily uses at home:**

***Developmental Milestones:***

# As Compared to “True Peers”: Culture

- Although Sergio was born in the U.S., his family does not engage much within the broader community.
- Parents believe teachers have the responsibility of educating their children and the family provides for their well being.
- Sergio, thus, is unfamiliar with many concepts within the curriculum.
- How can a teacher help bridge the differences?

# Remember...

A wide variety of ethnically and culturally diverse examples, scenarios, and vignettes could be used to embody and demonstrate the concepts, principles, skills, and ideas being taught.

# Knowing your students: Educational Experiences

## Language Development, Culture, and Background





# Five Things to Know About Your Students

## Educational Experiences



# Educational Experiences

- Sergio received Early Intervention services under Developmental Delay.
- Early intervention services were in English.
- In kindergarten and first grade, Sergio attended an elementary school with no bilingual education; special education services were in English.
- In second grade he transferred to a different school and entered a dual language program; special education services are in English and Spanish.
- Sergio is a third grade student in a dual language (English/Spanish) immersion program.
- His older brother is in middle school and receives special education services for Communication.
- The younger sister attends kindergarten in Sergio's school and is reportedly doing well.

# Student's Educational Background

## **1. Student's Background**

### ***Attendance:***

Days Absent/Tardy Kinder	Days Absent/Tardy Gr. 1	Days Absent/Tardy Gr. 2
Days Absent/Tardy Gr. 3	Days Absent/Tardy Gr. 4	Days Absent/Tardy Gr. 5

Hearing	Date	Results	Recheck needed
Vision	Date	Results	Recheck needed
Other			

### ***Educational Background:***

Preschool No Yes Language of Instruction: \_\_\_\_\_

Kindergarten Full-Day Half-Day Language of Instruction: \_\_\_\_\_

Early Intervention Program No Yes IEP Focus: \_\_\_\_\_

Retention No Yes If so, when? \_\_\_\_\_

Educational Experiences in Other Schools or Countries (include any concerns noted in file): \_\_\_\_\_

Was the school in an urban or rural setting?

# Student Information

School: \_\_\_\_\_ Student Problem Solving Profile \_\_\_\_\_ District: \_\_\_\_\_

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Student:

Date:

Grade:

Birthdate:

Typical Birthdate for This Grade is September 1, 20\_\_ to August 31, 20\_\_)

Student's L1:

Student's L2:

Student's L3:

Teacher (L1):

Teacher (L2):

Core Reading Program    Eng:

Span:

Concerns (circle all areas):

Reading

Writing

Math

Other \_\_\_\_\_

What are the specific concerns regarding the areas circled above?

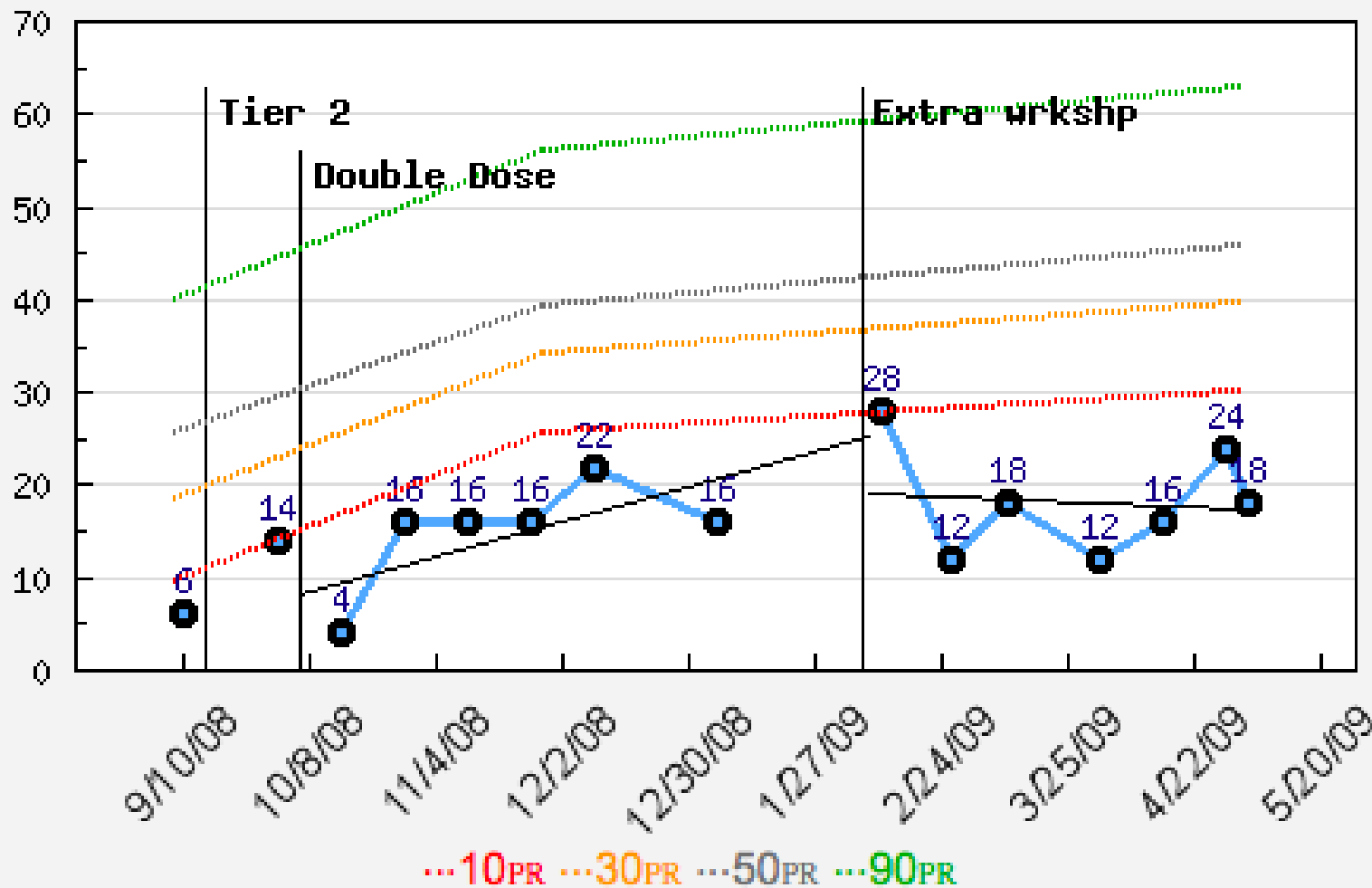
Concerns reported by:

Team Members:

# Progress Monitoring Data Crucial

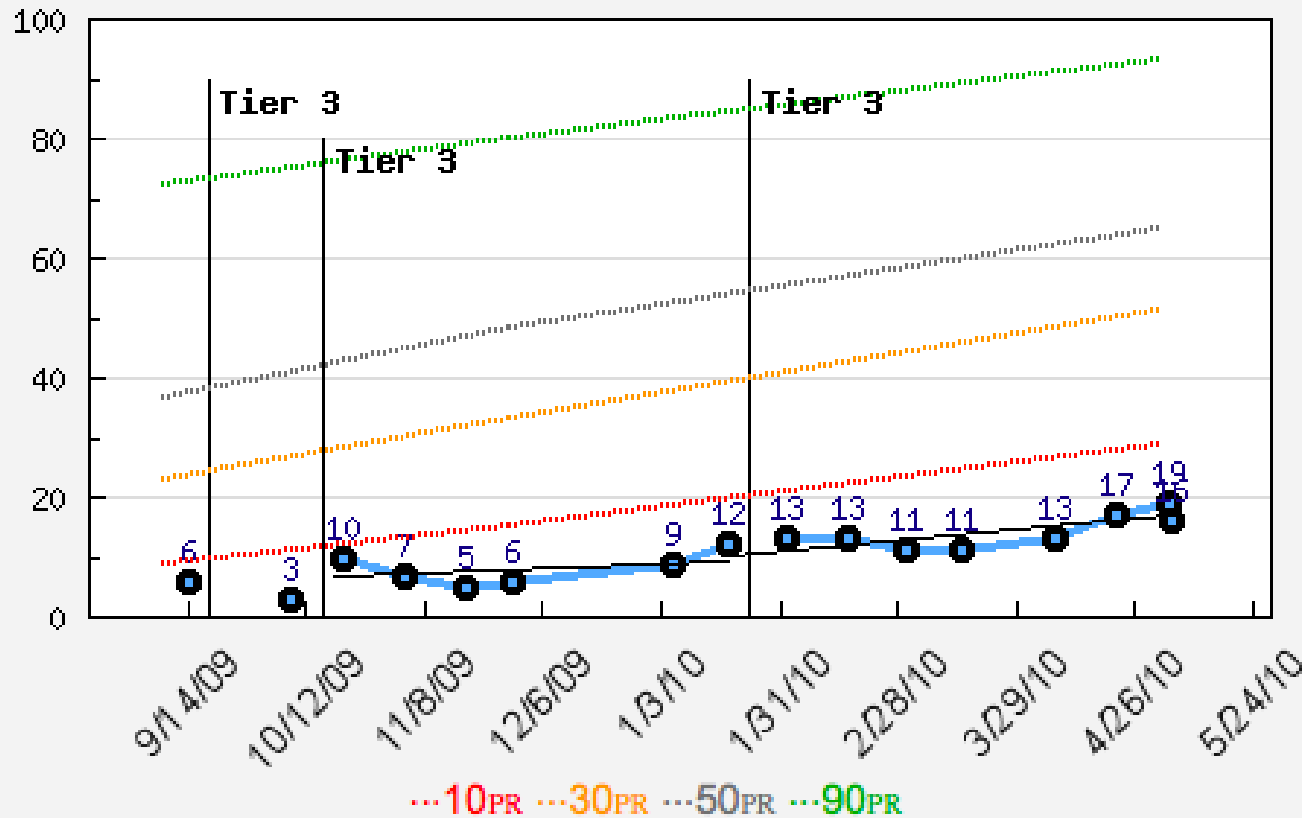
- After understanding the child's context, provide appropriate, targeted interventions and closely monitor progress.

# Grade 1, Letter Sounds:

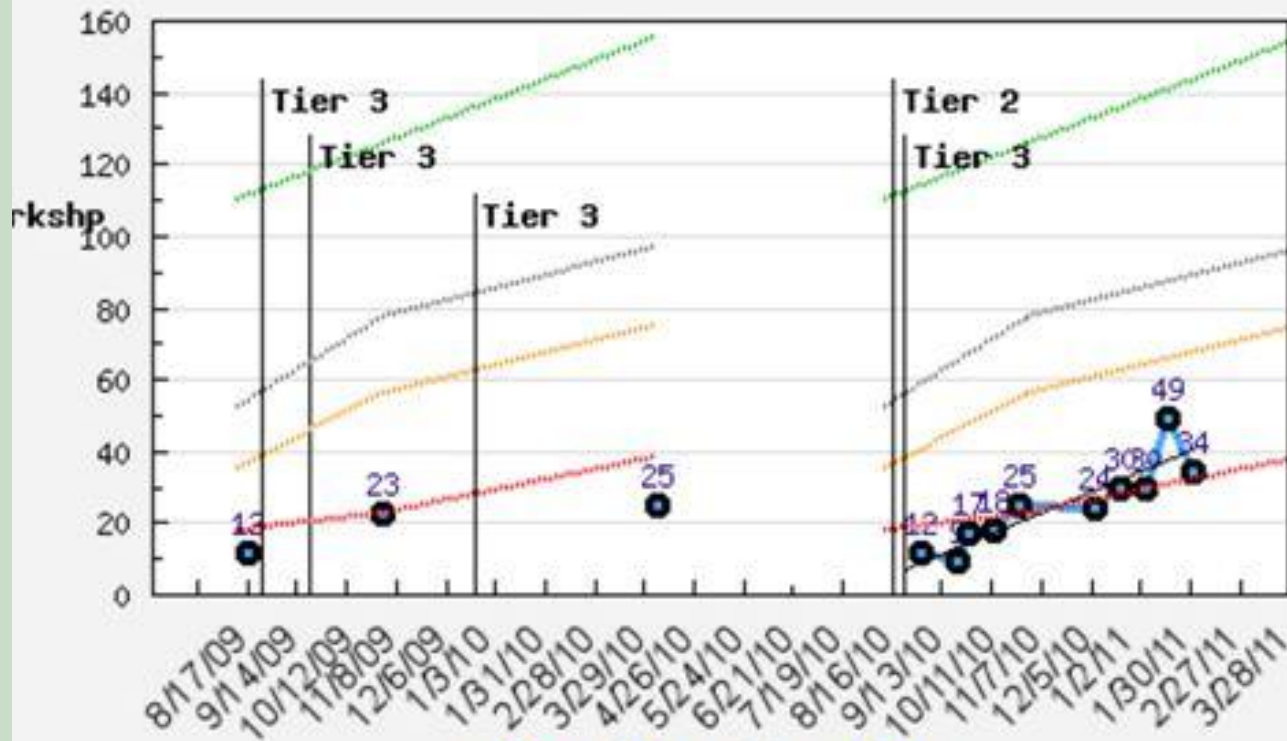


# Grade 1 Tier 2 Interventions

## Grade 2, Word Reading Fluency:



# Grade 2 Tier 2 Interventions



# Grade 3 Tier 2 Interventions



# Interventions

Did the school refer:

- At the appropriate time?
- Too early?
- Too late

# Caution

- When data suggests the student is not making expected rate of progress as compared to true peers, do not delay a referral for a psychoeducational evaluation.
- OSEP Addressed this:

The regulations implementing the 2004 Amendments to the IDEA include a provision mandating that States allow, as part of their criteria for determining whether a child has a specific learning disability (SLD), the use of a process based on the child's response to scientific, research-based intervention<sup>1</sup>. See 34 CFR §300.307(a)(2). OSEP continues to receive questions regarding the relationship of RTI to the evaluation provisions of the regulations. In particular, OSEP has heard that some LEAs may be using RTI to delay or deny a timely initial evaluation to determine if a child is a child with a disability and, therefore, eligible for special education and related services pursuant to an individualized education program.

# Knowing your students: Life Experiences

## Language Development, Culture, and Background



# Five Things to Know About Your Students



Life Experiences

# Life Experiences

- Sergio was born in Portland, Oregon.
- He lives with his parents, older brother and younger sister.
- His mother's two sisters and their families live with Sergio's family in one home; there are nine children in the home.
- Communication by the adults is a combination of Kanjobal and Spanish with mostly English used by the children.
- After school the children generally play with each other in the home.

## **1. Student's Background**

### ***Attendance:***

Days Absent/Tardy Kinder	Days Absent/Tardy Gr. 1	Days Absent/Tardy Gr. 2
Days Absent/Tardy Gr. 3	Days Absent/Tardy Gr. 4	Days Absent/Tardy Gr. 5

Hearing	Date	Results	Recheck needed
Vision	Date	Results	Recheck needed
Other			

# Knowing your students: Personal Characteristics

Language Development, Culture,  
and Background



# Five Things to Know About Your Students



Personal  
Characteristics



# Personal Characteristics

- Sergio is a friendly, happy boy who gets along with his peers.
- He prefers to communicate in English and he is more intelligible in English.
- He was recently provided a tablet and is enjoying learning apps and playing games on it.
- Sergio also enjoys puzzles.

# Student Interview

## **|Student Interview – Secondary Level**

1. Were you born in the U.S? If not, how long have you lived here?
2. How long have you attended this school? Where did you go before?
3. Are you involved in any special activities outside of school (e.g., sports, religious, volunteering, cultural groups)? If yes, what activities?
4. Do you read and write in your first language? If yes, how well?
5. Do either of your parents (or guardians) read and write in their first language? If yes, a little bit or very well?
6. What do you want to do after you graduate from high school?
7. What are you favorite subjects (or classes)?

# Sergio: Difference or Disability?

- What would your team do?



Second Language Behaviors	Characteristics of LD	Cultural Differences
Difficulty following directions	Difficulty following multiple directions	Discourse styles different (e.g., overlapping talk vs. waiting for one's turn)
Difficulty expressing needs or answering questions		Differences in gender expectations
Poor attention and concentration	Difficulty concentrating	Anxiety and stress due to process of adapting to new culture
May be easily frustrated	Difficulty finishing work on time	Differences in ways of showing respect
Errors in speech, reading and writing	Slow in learning sound-symbol correspondence	Differences in writing patterns and rhetorical features

Adapted from Klingner, Hoover & Baca (2008)

Second Language Behaviors	Characteristics of LD	Cultural Differences
Slow processing	Difficulty remembering sight words	May view time differently
Confused by slang or idioms	Difficulty understanding social situations	Differences in behavioral expectations across settings
Poor auditory memory	Difficulty retelling a story in sequence	Focus on group achievement instead of individual

Adapted from Klingner, Hoover & Baca (2008)

# Concluding Comment

Regarding the issue of referring students for special education evaluation who are recent arrivals, Elena Gallegos (an attorney in Austin, Texas) gave the following information at a Special Ed and the Law conference in held in Washington State in 1999.

She states that:

**"OCR prohibits policies that impose a minimum time period before a newly arrived immigrant may be referred for evaluation of special needs, including speech/language assessment. San Francisco Unified School District, 16 IDELR 194 (OCR 1989)."**

# Selected Resources

Brown & Sanford (2010) Practitioner's Brief

<http://www.rti4success.org/resource/rti-english-language-learners-appropriately-using-screening-and-progress-monitoring-tools>



# Selected Resources

Brown & Doolittle (2008) Practitioner's Brief

<http://www.rti4success.org/resource/cultural-linguistic-and-ecological-approach-response-intervention-english-language-learners>





# Selected resources

*Multiple Voices for Ethnically Diverse Exceptional Learners*, 13(1), 2012, 56–70  
Copyright 2012, Division for Culturally & Linguistically Diverse  
Exceptional Learners of the Council for Exceptional Children

## **Enhancing Instruction for English Learners in Response to Intervention Systems: The PLUSS Model**

AMANDA K. SANFORD

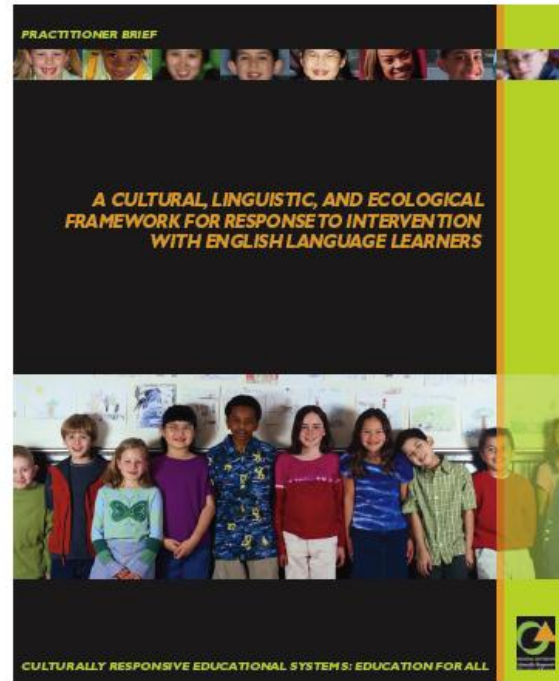
JULIE ESPARZA BROWN

*Portland State University*

MARANDA TURNER

*Gresham-Barlow School District, Gresham, OR*

# Selected Resources



“The beauty of the world lies in the diversity of its people” ~ *Unknown*



# Contact Information

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WestEd 



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RELwest.WestEd.org

Please take our survey:

[https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2016ELW\\_ebinar](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2016ELW_ebinar)