



“Spanish-Speaking Students Do Not Have to Wait to be Tested for Special Education Services”

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Early identification and remediation are critical in remediating the effects of a child’s disability. However, for students who are English Language Learners (“ELL”) or who receive English for Speakers of Other Languages (“ESOL”) services, it can take up to five years before the student is considered proficient in English. Public schools have numerous assessments that can evaluate whether a student needs special education services; but nearly all of the assessments are published in English. What if your child does not speak, read or write in English, but you believe he or she might need special education services?

Spanish speaking students do not have to wait two, three or even five years before they are evaluated for special education services. According to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act-2004 (“IDEA”) – the federal law that provides students’ rights to special education services – public schools are not permitted to wait until a child can proficiently speak and read English before it evaluates the student. The IDEA requires that public schools select tests which are not racially or culturally discriminatory, and that the tests and evaluation materials be administered in the child’s native language or mode of communication, unless it clearly is not feasible to do so. This is significantly important for children who are considered ELL or receive ESOL services, but who are also falling further and further behind their schoolmates because they have an unidentified disability.

First, it is imperative that the public school determines whether your child is proficient in English before it administers its evaluation for special education services. Administering an English-based assessment to a student who is not proficient in English will lead to invalid results. If the student is found to be proficient in the English language, then the public school can administer special education assessments in English. For students who are not proficient in English, the public schools can administer alternate assessments in Spanish to evaluate your child’s needs.

Many assessments have been created to minimize racial or cultural bias, and were developed to assess whether a Spanish-speaking student qualifies for special education services. These assessments geared to Spanish-speaking students can measure the student’s intellectual skills, whether she has a specific learning disability in reading, writing or math, if he has a speech and language impairment and needs those services, or whether your child

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requires special education services to address social, behavioral, emotional needs. It is also important that the evaluator chosen by the public school speak Spanish, or work with a qualified Spanish-speaking individual when giving these tests to the student.

While the public school determines the assessments it will administer to evaluate your child, parents are part of the school team and are involved by providing information to the school about their child's needs. Parents may also challenge the appropriateness of the public school's evaluation at the due process hearing, and can seek a private, independent evaluation at public expense. Therefore, it is helpful for parents to know of assessments that are available to test children who are Spanish-speaking. While we do not recommend any particular assessment as appropriate for an individual child, below is a list assessments currently available:

English Language Proficiency

- Woodcock-Mu oz Language Survey - Revised
Measures proficiency in oral language, reading and writing in speakers of English as a second language, who are at least 2 years of age.
- Pennsylvania Department of Education English Language Proficiency Standards ("ELPS"):
 - Classroom/Formative Framework
 - World Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) Summative/ Large Scale Framework

Cognitive or Intellectual Ability

- Bateria III Woodcock-Mu oz: Pruebas de habilidades cognitivas (Bateria III Cog, 2005)
- Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children - Fourth Edition Spanish (2005).

Academic Achievement

- Bateria III Woodcock-Mu oz: Pruebas de aprovechamiento (Bateria III Approv, 2005)
- Aprenda: La prueba de logros en espa ol, Tercera Edición (Aprenda 3)
Measures progress student is making toward meeting No Child Left Behind Act standards

Speech and Language Assessments

- Expressive and Receptive One -Word Picture Vocabulary Tests (Spanish-Bilingual Editions)
- Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals (CELF-4) Spanish

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- Test de Vocabulario en Imágenes Peabody (TVIP)
- Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, Fourth Edition (PPVT- 4) Spanish Version

Social/Emotional/Behavioral Needs

- Behavior Assessment System for Children - Second Edition
Offers rating scales in Spanish

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

- Connors 3rd Edition (Connors 3)
Offers rating scales in Spanish

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