Synthesis Brief

English Language Learners with Disabilities

Synthesized by Eve Müller and Joy Markowitz Project FORUM at NASDSE March 2004

Introduction

English language learners (ELLs) pose particularly difficult challenges relating to special education referral, assessment and instruction. The purpose of this document is to provide a brief synthesis of the research on and information about ELLs with disabilities. The document is intended to provide state- and local-level policy makers with research-based information that is important for decision-making related to this population. Based on discussions with a number of experts in the field, resources were selected that represent the most recent work in this area.

It is important to note, however, that because there is such limited research validating educational methods for ELLS with disabilities, current best practices are often based on research that examined educational methods for ELLs *without* disabilities. Whenever possible, this document identifies the specific group of students to which findings refer. Furthermore, experts in the field do not always agree on best practices, and positions represented in this synthesis brief, based on the source documents listed below, do not necessarily capture the full range of expert opinions. Project FORUM at the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE) produced this document as part of its Cooperative Agreement with the Office for Special Education Programs (OSEP).

Methodology

Most of this document is a synthesis of findings and recommendations for best practices presented in Artiles & Ortiz (2002a). Information is drawn specifically from chapters on background (Artiles & Ortiz, 2002b), prevention and early intervention (Ortiz, 2002), assessment (Ortiz & Yates, 2002), instruction (Cloud, 2002; Santamaría, Fletcher, & Bos, 2002) and parent involvement (Cloud, 2002; García, 2002). Information and recommendations from five additional sources are also included:

- Artiles, Trent & Palmer (2003)
- Barrera (2003)
- Gersten & Baker (2002)
- Gersten, Baker & Marks (1998)
- Zehler, Fleischman, Hopstock, Stephenson, Pendzick, & Sapru (2003)

Complete references for source documents can be found in the bibliography under "source documents." Project FORUM did not review the references sited in any source documents.

This document is organized into the following sections:

- background;
- prevention of school failure;
- early intervention;
- assessment and identification;
- instructional principles;
- partnering with parents;
- policy recommendations generated by Project FORUM; and
- concluding remarks.

Background

This document addresses students who are less than proficient in English and/or for whom English is a new language of instruction. The term *English language learner* is currently preferred over other terms (e.g., limited English proficient and language minority) and includes students whose conversational English may be adequate but struggle with English in academic settings (Gersten & Baker, 2000).[1] Although the term *English language learner* is used throughout this document, it is recognized that ELLs are not a homogeneous group. Researchers and educators are most concerned about the students with the least proficiency in English. A range of estimates is available as to the exact number of ELLs currently attending public schools throughout the United States. For instance, one study estimates that nearly four million ELLs currently attend public schools throughout the United States, a 72 percent increase from 1992 (Zehler et al., 2003). Another study estimates that as many as 4.6 million ELLs may currently attend public schools in the United States (Kindler, 2002). Of these, approximately 9 percent receive special education services—approximately 357,000 students (Zehler, et al., 2003).

Many districts do not have mechanisms in place for identifying ELLs with disabilities as a specific subgroup of students and 75 percent of districts serving ELLs with disabilities do not have services designed especially for these students (Zehler et al., 2003). Furthermore, instructional programs for ELLs with disabilities are reportedly not as aligned with state content/performance standards as are instructional programs for special education students in general. Seventy-five percent of districts serving ELLs with disabilities report that they lack sufficient number of teachers qualified to teach this population (Zehler et al., 2003).

[1] Although the term English language learner (ELL) is currently used by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement for Limited English Proficient Students (OELA), the term limited English proficient (LEP) is still used in the law as recently as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001.

Prevention of School Failure

Students fail in school for a variety of reasons and there are three broad categories of students who experience serious academic problems. Type I students fail because of deficiencies in the instructional environment. For example, students learning English are likely to fail when they do not have access to effective bilingual education or English as a second language (ESL) programs. Type II students experience academic difficulties that cannot be attributed to a learning disability (e.g., excessive absences). Type III students are those who have been evaluated and found to have disabilities. A number of authors have expressed concern about the disproportionately high number of ELLs receiving special education services and the problem of distinguishing Type III students — those who truly have disabilities — from Type I and Type II students, who are failing for other reasons (Ortiz et al., 1985; Ortiz, García, Wheeler, & Maldonado-Colón, 1986). However, there are no national data to document this disproportionality.

Prevention of failure among ELLs involves two critical elements: the creation of educational environments conducive to academic success (Madden, Slavin, Karweit, Dolan, & Wasik, 1991) and the use of instructional strategies known to be effective with these students (Ortiz, 1997).

Positive School Climates

Preventing school failure begins with creating school climates that foster academic success (Cummins, 1989; Stedman, 1987). Such environments reflect a philosophy that all students can learn and that educators are responsible for ensuring that they do. Positive school climates are characterized by strong leadership by principals; high expectations for student achievement; a challenging curriculum; a

safe environment; ongoing, systematic evaluation of student progress; and the involvement of administrators, teachers, community members and parents in school governance and decision making (Anderson & Pellicer, 1998). These factors affect the success of *all* students. The following factors specifically affect the success of ELLs:

Shared Knowledge Base

Professional development activities must ensure that teachers share a common philosophy and knowledge base concerning the education of learners from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (García, Wilkinson, & Ortiz, 1995; Wang, Reynolds, & Walberg, 1995). Given the growing diversity of our student population, *all* teachers, regardless of teaching assignment, should be knowledgeable about second language acquisition and the relationship of the native language to the development of English proficiency, first and second language teaching methodology, socio-cultural influences on learning, assessment of proficiency in the first language and in English, informal assessment strategies to monitor progress and strategies for working with culturally and linguistically diverse families and communities.

Supporting Linguistic and Cultural Diversity

In schools with positive educational climates, special language programs enjoy the support of principals, teachers, parents and community members. It is understood that native language instruction provides the foundation for achieving high levels of English proficiency (Cummins, 1984; Thomas & Collier, 1997) and using the native language is a key instructional strategy (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). In effective schools, teachers are aware that their own culture influences their view of the teaching and learning process and shapes the classroom culture (García & Dominguez, 1997; Ortiz, 1997). They make sure that students see themselves—their life experiences, language, culture, norms, values and physical attributes—in the curriculum (Taylor, 2000). Teachers do so by using instructional materials that are free of stereotypes; by presenting both minority and majority perspectives; and by acknowledging the contemporary social, political and economic experiences of their students (García & Dominguez, 1997; Santos, Fowler, Corso, & Bruns, 2000).

Furthermore, in schools with positive climates, parents from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are seen as effective advocates for their children and as valuable resources in school improvement efforts (Cummins, 1989; Santos, Fowler, Corso, & Bruns, 2000).

Effective Instruction

In classes where ELLs are successful, teachers use instructional strategies known to be effective for learners from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (Ortiz & Wilkinson, 1991; Willig, Swedo, & Ortiz, 1987), draw heavily upon students' prior knowledge (Brophy, 1992; Leinhardt, 1992), provide multiple opportunities for students to review previously learned concepts, nest basic instruction in the context of higher order thinking and problem solving (Cummins, 1984; Ortiz & Wilkinson, 1991; Willig, Swedo, & Ortiz, 1987) and teach students to apply concepts to the tasks at hand (Burke, Hagan, & Grossen, 1998). Collaborative learning activities facilitate task engagement and provide opportunities to use language for both conversational and academic purposes and to practice language skills (McGroarty, 1989; Willig, Swedo, & Ortiz, 1987).

Early Intervention

Although many learning problems can be prevented in schools and classes that accommodate individual differences, even in the best environments some students still experience serious difficulty (Fashola & Slavin, 1998; Ortiz, 1997). For these students, early intervention strategies such as those discussed in the following

sections must be implemented as soon as learning problems are noted.

Clinical Teaching

Clinical teaching is instruction that is carefully sequenced. Teachers teach skills, subjects, or concepts; re-teach material using different strategies or approaches for the benefit of students who fail to meet expected performance levels after initial instruction; and use informal assessment strategies to identify students' strengths and weaknesses and the possible causes of academic difficulties (García & Ortiz, 1988; Ortiz, 1997; Ortiz & Wilkinson, 1991). In the case of ELLs, assessing conversational and academic language proficiency is critical to deciding the language or languages of instruction and determining the learning goals and objectives for language instruction (Cummins, 1984; Ortiz & García, 1990). Assessment data, along with documentation of efforts to improve student performance, are invaluable when students are referred for remedial or special educational services.

Peer and Expert Support

When clinical teaching is unsuccessful, teachers should have immediate access to general education support systems for further problem solving (Chalfant & Pysh, 1989; Chalfant, Pysh, & Moultrie, 1979; Hallahan & Kauffman, 2000). One example of such supports is a model wherein peers or experts can work collaboratively with general education teachers to develop strategies to address students' learning problems and to guide the teachers as they implement recommendations (Fashola & Slavin, 1998; Fuchs et al., 1990). Using this model, ESL teachers can help their general education peers by demonstrating strategies for successfully integrating ELLs into their classes, and general education and ESL teachers can meet to coordinate ESL and content instruction. It is important to note, however, that it is not clear from the research exactly what practices truly make a difference and which instructional settings are optimal under individual and group conditions.

Recent studies indicate that building-based support teams reduce the number of referrals for special education services (Chalfant & Pysh, 1989; Donovan & Cross, 2002; Ortiz, 1990, 1997), although the effectiveness of such teams for ELLs has not yet been examined.[2] An example of building-based support teams is the Teacher Assistance Team (TAT) (Chalfant, Pysh, & Moultrie, 1979). The TAT helps teachers resolve problems that they routinely encounter in their classes. The TAT, made up of four to six general education teachers and the teacher who requests assistance, designs intervention strategies to help struggling learners. Many other terms for these teams are also used, including pre-referral teams and teacher support teams.

Alternative Services

A variety of general education alternatives exist for students with special needs. These include one-on-one and cross-age tutoring, family and student support groups, family counseling and the range of services supported by Title I funds. Support provided to ELLs through these programs can be used to supplement general education instruction (Slavin & Madden, 1989). Again, it is important to note that research is lacking in this area, so it is not yet clear that these alternative services are equally effective for ELLs with and without disabilities.

Assessment and Identification

The decision to conduct a comprehensive evaluation to determine whether an ELL qualifies for special education services should only

[2] It remains unclear whether a reduction in referrals is an appropriate goal for schools serving ELLs or whether current referral levels accurately reflect the need for special education services.

be made after the prevention and early intervention efforts described above have been carried out.

Using Professional Assessment Personnel

It is important for school systems to use qualified professionals to assess ELLs. Assessment personnel should have a good understanding of first and second language acquisition theory, effective instructional practices for ELLs with disabilities, and the influence of culture and socioeconomic status on student performance (Ortiz & Yates, 2001). If the school district does not have bilingual evaluators, every effort must be made to contract the services of such personnel. If assessment personnel are unable to obtain the services of bilingual evaluators, they should seek the assistance of bilingual professionals from within the school or district who can serve as interpreters (e.g., bilingual education teachers, general education teachers who are bilingual and bilingual counselors). It is also important that new and existing teachers receive appropriate preparation for teaching and assessing ELLs with learning difficulties.

Planning and Administering the Assessment

The following guidelines should be followed when planning and administering assessments for ELLs.

- Assess in both the native language and in English.
- Use equivalent instruments and procedures in the native language and English. In this way, assessors will be able to compare what students know in each language and they will also be able to describe what students know cumulatively.
- Use valid and reliable instruments. Tests and other evaluation materials should be free of racial or cultural bias and standardized tests should be validated for the purposes for which they are used.
- Determine appropriate adaptations of instruments and procedures. Results of standardized tests should be cross-validated with data from other sources (Leung, 1996). If the student's performance is low on formal *and* informal assessments, it is more likely that the student has a disability.

Language Proficiency Assessments

Language proficiency data should be current and should describe receptive and expressive skills in both the native and the second languages (Ortiz & Kushner, 1997). If current language proficiency data are unavailable, establishing a student's language dominance and proficiency becomes a major component of the comprehensive evaluation. In addition to their grammatical skills, ELL's conversational abilities and academic language proficiency skills should also be assessed (Ortiz & García, 1990).

Assessment of Achievement and Intelligence

For students who receive bilingual education, academic achievement should be assessed in the native language and in English. A student's score on an assessment may be low because the language used in the test is beyond the student's English proficiency level. It is also possible that students may know the answer to a question, but be unable to provide it in English. Norm-referenced instruments should be supplemented with performance-based measures that tell teachers what students can do and what they know, not just how they compare to other students.

There are currently no technically sound tests of intelligence in languages other than English. Although nonverbal are preferred over verbal tests for assessing the intelligence of ELLs, such tests cannot predict how students will perform in classes where success depends on the ability to use language for both social and academic purposes. Considering the state of the art, the following should be done to

supplement assessment of intelligence (Holtzman & Wilkinson, 1991):

- Document pre-referral intervention prior to assessment.
- Evaluate the situation to ensure that referral does not reflect bias or lack of information.
- Observe the student in various educational contexts.
- Collect information regarding students' current performance and functioning level within the classroom.
- Analyze student's opportunities for learning within the classroom.
- Obtain parent input about the student's performance in the home and community context.

Although standardized and other criterion-referenced tests have yet to be developed and validated for assessing ELLs with possible disabilities, two other types of assessment— curriculum-based assessment (CBA) and dynamic assessment (DA)—show promise for use with this population (Jitendra, Rohena-Diaz, & Nolet, 1998; Lidz & Pena, 1996; Shinn, 1989). Both CBA and DA follow a *test-teach-test* model. DA, which consists of teaching a specific learning task that is presumably new to the student and collecting progress data as the student learns the new task, appears to be particularly effective in helping teachers differentiate between disability-related learning difficulties and the normal process of acquiring a new language. Additional empirical research is needed, however, to validate measurement tools that can accurately distinguish students with limited English skills from students who may require special education.

Determining Eligibility

The team that determines eligibility for special education services should include members who understand the unique considerations in educating ELLs (Ortiz & Yates, 2001), including the student's bilingual education or ESL teacher. If the meeting is conducted in English, a trained interpreter should attend so that parents with limited English can participate meaningfully in team decision-making. Prior to making the decision that a student is eligible for special education services, team members must be able to document that the student's problems are not the result of a lack of academic support, limited English proficiency, cultural differences or other special factors (e.g., socioeconomic status, mobility, interrupted schooling, etc.).

Instructional Principles

Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning Environments

Teachers create culturally responsive teaching and learning environments in variety of ways, described in the sections below.

Curriculum and Materials

Curricular themes and instructional materials should be selected to validate the life experiences and background knowledge of ELLs, materials should be as free of bias or stereotypes as possible and culturally biased materials should be openly discussed (García & Malkin, 1993). Culturally relevant materials strongly support the development of literacy. Materials that affirm students' identities facilitate student engagement and learning (Cloud, Genesee, & Hamayan, 2000).

Classroom Interactions

Expectations that students have regarding classroom interactions may vary greatly both within and across cultures. Teachers can learn about students' expectations via questionnaires or classroom observation. They can also learn about the traditional values, norms and behaviors of particular cultural groups via specialized publications (e.g., Lynch & Hanson, 1998; Roseberry-McKibbin,

1995). Once key cultural beliefs, norms and values have been identified, they can be used to meet learning goals.

Teaching Approaches

Effective teachers choose approaches that are compatible with students' preferences and prior learning experiences (Weisner, Gallimore, & Jordan, 1998). The following techniques have been found most effective for ELLs with disabilities (Fletcher, Bos & Johnson, 1999; Gersten, Baker & Mark, 1998; Gersten & Baker, 2000):

- visuals to reinforce new concepts and vocabulary;
- rich and relevant vocabulary to keep students engaged and challenged;
- cooperative learning and peer tutoring strategies;
- strategic use of the native language (e.g., for introducing complex concepts);
- balance of linguistic and cognitive demands;
- clear and consistent language use when introducing new concepts;
- formal and informal opportunities for learners to use both academic and conversational English throughout the day;
- feedback that is adapted to the learner's level of language development;
- strong home - school connections; and
- ongoing assessment of the effectiveness of instructional activities in producing actual student learning.

The following instructional principles are also recommended specifically for helping ELLs with disabilities build vocabulary (Gersten, Baker & Mark, 1998):

- focus vocabulary instruction on a small number of critical words;
- provide multiple exposures to new vocabulary;
- introduce new words before they are encountered in reading;
- practice with new words;
- explain idioms; and
- develop "word banks" (e.g., post lists of words that are critical to student learning).

Appropriate Language and Literacy Instruction

In planning which language to use for instruction, special educators must consider the following (Cloud, 2002):

- family's language of communication at home;
- student's stage of development in the native and English languages;
- extent to which the student's disabilities affect language and literacy development;
- student's current and future needs for both languages;
- strength of each language for instructional purposes; and
- language preferences of the student and his/her parents.

Researchers have shown the development of the native language has a positive impact socially, intellectually and educationally (National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education, 1996; TESOL, 1996). High levels of bilingualism are consistently associated with strong cognitive skills, and students who develop their native language as well as English achieve at higher levels than do students whose native language remains undeveloped or is replaced prematurely with English (Collier, 1995).

Students with disabilities also seem to benefit from dual language development, although research in this area remains limited (Bruck, 1982; Greenlee, 1981). For these children, sequential language learning is recommended (Gutierrez-Clennan, 1999) whereby instruction is first provided in the child's stronger language to facilitate general language learning mechanisms (e.g., attention, perception and comparison), which in turn support future first and

second language learning. According to this model, children are taught in their first language for a predetermined period of time before English is introduced. This approach does not deny that functional proficiency in English is an important educational goal, and English language and literacy instruction should begin as soon as developmentally appropriate.

Once ESL instruction has begun, instruction should emphasize content-based and cognitive/learning strategies (e.g., Chamot & O'Malley, 1994) for students with mild and moderate disabilities, and life skills and vocationally-related instruction for students with more severe disabilities. ELLs with disabilities seem to benefit in particular from multi-sensory teaching approaches, computer–assisted and other technology-supported instruction, learning style-based instruction and whole language process approaches (Cloud, 1990, 1994).

The following are five characteristics of effective language instruction, whether provided in the native language, English or both languages:

Alignment with Standards

To ensure that ELLs with disabilities are held accountable to the highest possible standards, individualized education program (IEP) goals and objectives should be constructed in relation to state and national curriculum standards, including ESL standards. Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (1997) set the following goals for ELLs: develop social language, academic language and socio-cultural competence.

Use of Comprehensible Language

Effective teachers modify their language so that it is comprehensible to students. They use natural redundancy, carefully constructed language to match student proficiency and augment their communication through use of physical gestures, visual cues and props (Gersten & Woodward, 1994).

Creation of Interactive Classrooms

Effective teachers create abundant opportunities for students to use the new language. Active learning and peer support (e.g., cooperative learning groups) have been shown to greatly enhance language learning for ELLs (Fern, Anstrom, & Silcox, 1994).

Integration of Language, Literacy and Content Instruction

Because context-rich learning is preferred, lessons should be designed to integrate content and language learning (Gersten & Baker, 2000). Such lessons contain four objectives: linguistic, communicative, content, and learning strategies and study skills. Once the learning objectives are established, activities and materials should be selected with cultural appropriateness and the student's disabilities in mind.

Adoption of Similar Learning Objectives in Both Languages

When the language of the home and school differ, teachers and parents can work together by focusing on those objectives that are not specific to one language. Using the example of weather, this would mean that teachers and parents would both work on the same communicative objective (e.g., to request or supply information about the weather), content objective (e.g., to learn about weather forecasting) and learning strategy (e.g., to use the newspaper or Internet to locate information).

Sheltered Content Instruction

Artiles and Ortiz (2002) describe sheltered content instruction as a process for making academic content comprehensible to ELLs. This is a multiphase process for ELLs with disabilities—teachers must

first think through how they will shelter the instruction for students' second language needs and then how they will modify the instruction for students' disabilities.

The following are recommendations for making content area instruction comprehensible to ELLs (Kang, 1994; Leverett & Diefendorf, 1992; Zehler, 1994):

- create a predictable environment by using structured activities and letting students know what is expected of them;
- maximize opportunities for language use by asking carefully constructed questions that students can answer;
- create opportunities for student dialogue in a supportive environment;
- encourage active participation via discovery processes, make learning relevant to students' experience, use thematic teaching and design activities that promote use of learning strategies and higher order thinking;
- use vocabulary guides, semantic webs, concept maps, advance organizers and structured overviews to help students develop the vocabulary and background knowledge needed to understand academic content;
- employ guided reading strategies with English textbooks or select materials that are linguistically appropriate for students' stages of language proficiency;
- implement strategies that support reading comprehension such as guided questioning, prediction and graphic aids;
- use structured study guides, information organizers, chapter outlines and short summary notes that record key concepts; and
- adopt reciprocal (peer-mediated or adult-directed) teaching techniques to help students acquire key concepts and the related academic language.

To shelter instruction for ELLs with special education needs, teachers can do the following:

- create a learner-friendly environment through seating and lighting;
- remove distractions to student learning;
- vary classroom organization and management tactics to provide needed support and encouragement;
- adapt methods of presentation (e.g., modeling and demonstration) and methods of practice (e.g., visual, auditory, kinesthetic and tactile presentation of new concepts) to the students' needs;
- use technology to enhance learning;
- apply behavior management techniques;
- use reformatted materials (graphic organizers, enlarged typeface, cued text, and recorded books) and technology aids; and
- use one-on-one teaching through the use of cross-age and peer tutoring and instructional aides.

In terms of assessment in sheltered content classes, a particularly fruitful approach is portfolio assessment, which uses a variety of products and information-gathering techniques, such as anecdotal records, language samples, and interviews with students and parents, to create a picture of student progress over time (Salend, 1998; Swicegood, 1994).

Partnering with Parents

An important part of the assessment process is gathering information about the family. Assessment personnel need accurate cultural and linguistic information about different areas of student's life. Background information will give the school knowledge about the student's home life — family child-rearing practices; family structure; levels of acculturation; languages; and beliefs about intelligence, disability and education (García & Dominguez, 1997).

Given the extreme shortage of qualified bilingual/bicultural examiners, it is recommended that family members be viewed not simply as sources of information but also as cultural informants and as partners in the process who can help determine what information is needed and how to obtain it (Lynch & Hanson, 1998). Family contributions provide valuable data about the students' functioning outside of school, and may help in distinguishing linguistic and cultural differences from disabilities (Baca, de Valenzuela, & García, 1996; Leung, 1996; Ortiz & García, 1990).

Special educators should consider the following when establishing partnerships with families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (Greene & Nefsky, 1999):

- family's level of acculturation;
- family members' attitudes toward disability and their acceptance of their child with a disability;
- family's communication style and the possible need for communication to take place in a language other than English;
- family's knowledge of and comfort with the school infrastructure (e.g., special education procedures, school personnel roles and responsibilities and parental rights);
- family members' perceptions of school (based on their prior experience and cultural expectations) as well as the value they place on education; and
- special education professionals' knowledge of and sensitivity to cultural diversity.

Policy Recommendations

Based on the publications synthesized for this document, the following policy recommendations relating to ELLs with disabilities were generated by Project FORUM.

- Provide guidance for school personnel in making appropriate referral decisions (e.g., how to rule out school-related causes of failure such as inappropriate instruction).
- Provide appropriate training for bilingual evaluators and/or translators involved in assessment of ELLs, as well as training for monolingual evaluators on the effective use of interpreters and translators.
- Maintain state and district-level lists of bilingual evaluators who are qualified to assess in languages other than English.
- Offer state-level support for pooling resources for bilingual assessment.
- Ensure that teacher preparation programs for both general and special educators include information on first and second language acquisition theory, effective instructional practices for ELLs with disabilities, and the influence of culture on student performance.
- Support professional development activities as well as technical assistance to address the unique support needs of ELLs with disabilities.
- Create financial incentives (e.g., loan forgiveness programs) for teachers training to serve ELLs with special education needs.
- Monitor special education referral patterns for evidence of disproportionality of ELLs at the state, district and school levels.
- Ensure that ELLs with disabilities participate in state- and district-wide assessments in order to monitor academic performance.
- Base state-level policies regarding bilingual education programs and special education programs/services for ELLs on current research.
- Provide funding for ongoing research on ELLs with disabilities, including demonstration programs that use research-validated instructional strategies.
- Support the development and use of culturally and linguistically appropriate assessment instruments.

- Develop technical assistance or resource centers that focus, at least in part, on ELLs with disabilities.
- Support institutes of higher education (IHEs), centers and laboratories that conduct research on ELLs with disabilities.
- Encourage communication and coordination between technical assistance centers and research centers.
- Provide guidance (e.g., policy handbooks) as to how special education and bilingual education/ESL policies and practices apply to ELLs.

Concluding Remarks

This document is intended to provide policy makers with research-based information regarding identification, assessment and intervention for ELLs with disabilities. Research is extremely limited in this area, however, and experts do not always agree as to whether ELLs with disabilities can benefit from the same strategies found to be effective for ELLs *without* disabilities. With the growing numbers of ELLs in our nation's public schools, it is particularly urgent and critical, therefore, to support ongoing research in this area.

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