Assessment of Diverse Children: Stage Model for Nondiscriminatory Assessment

Citation: Samuel O. Ortiz PhD, Best Practices in Non-Discriminatory Assessment, NASP [PowerPoint with 10 steps for assessment from slides 13 - 14, 16 - 19, 21 – 23, 40]

I. Assess for the purpose of intervention -… the role of assessment should not be viewed as one that is limited to identification or classification only, rather it should be extended to inform appropriate instructional interventions, modifications, and program development. (Slide 13)

II. Assess initially with authentic and alternative procedures - Evaluation of learning and performance through use of the curriculum-based materials or a formal RTI model, reflects an authentic nondiscriminatory approach because it seeks to measure that which the student has actually been taught. (slide 14)

III. Assess and evaluate the learning ecology - Begin with the assumption that there exist an infinite number of reasons for why any given child is having learning difficulties and that a given disability only represents but one of those reasons. (Slide 16)

IV. Assess and evaluate language proficiency - Language proficiency in both languages must be assessed and determined as such information is crucial to the interpretation of any assessment data that are gathered. (Slide 17)

V. Assess and evaluate opportunity for learning - The more a child’s or their parent’s culture differs from the dominant culture in which they live, the greater the chances that learning will be adversely affected. (Slide 18)

VI. Assess and evaluate educationally relevant cultural and linguistic factors - In order for a student to benefit from instruction, the language of instruction must be fully comprehensible to the child, the instruction must draw upon the child’s existing cultural and linguistic foundations, the child must be able to identify and relate to the content of the curriculum, and the child must be made to feel that their personal language and culture are assets, not liabilities. (Slide 19)

VII. Evaluate, revise, and re-test hypotheses - Ensure that all potential factors that might be related to the child’s learning difficulties have been thoroughly evaluated and ruled out as the “primary” cause of the observed learning problems. (Slide 21)

VIII. Determine the need for and language(s) of formal assessment - The interpretive validity of assessment data rests squarely on the proper identification and
understanding of the child’s entire linguistic history as well as other factors influencing the development of both languages. (Slide 22)

IX. Reduce bias in traditional assessment practices - Utilize best available tools with respect to the child's native and second languages; Consider using language-reduced tests where necessary and appropriate but recognize that such tests may measure a narrower range of cognitive abilities/processes and are subject to the same problems with norms and cultural content as verbal tests. (Slide 23)

X. Support conclusions via data convergence and multiple indicators - Once an assessment is completed, it is imperative that knowledge of both the individual’s cultural and linguistic experiences be used to frame the patterns seen in the data. (Slide 40)

Reaction Questions:
1. In your view, what are the purposes of assessment? Please give some examples.
2. Do you believe that existing assessment tools measure both English language skills and academic content skills in your school/district/state? If so, how?
3. From your viewpoint, what is the intended purpose and use of your state and district ELL assessments?
4. Do you believe that the assessments utilized within your school/district/state allow for multiple means of assessing performance and if so how? If not, why not?
5. In your view, how are the ELL assessments aligned to the content area standards?
6. In your opinion, how do the assessments of diverse children currently guide or inform instruction within your school, district, and state?

Application Questions:
1. What system will your district use to recognize and address the relevant characteristics of the ELL students in their assessments?
2. How might the district or state ensure that assessments recognize the importance and impact of cultural identity?
3. What role could universal design/access play in curriculum and assessments within your school, district, and state?
4. How can your school/district access the students’ learning and knowledge base in order to have effective, efficient and relevant curriculum and assessments as it
addresses first and second language proficiency?

5. In what ways can the school/district/state determine if they are implementing assessments that tap into prior knowledge?

6. What steps need to be taken by the school, district, state to insure that assessment informs instruction which impacts student achievement in first and second language proficiency?

7. In what ways does the district communicate with all stakeholders in the school community? What constitutes the assessment process, its purpose and goals, and how it will be used?

These questions were developed by the following stakeholders working together within the IDEA Partnership:

Role: Family Member
Location: California

Role: Higher Education
Location: California

Role: Special Education Teacher
Location: California

Role: General Education Administrator
Location: Illinois

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