

Question: Does a child need to be tested in both languages if they qualify for speech from the Spanish testing? What does the law say?

The law states that testing, or assessment, must occur in the child's native language (IDEA '97 Sec.300.19). Best practice is to assess both languages, keeping in mind that "testing" may involve formal and/or informal measures. These cases are rarely straightforward. When assessing individuals who are acquiring English, factors such as proficiency in each language, and amount of exposure to and use of each language, must be considered. For instance, a child's native language of Spanish may be dominant and he may have had little exposure to English. In this case, testing in Spanish at length and addressing English skills through language sampling and/or proficiency testing would be appropriate. Another student may be losing proficiency in his native language of Spanish while gaining proficiency in English. This pattern is commonly noted in children acquiring a second language. To test this student only in Spanish would result in low scores in Spanish and qualify the student for services when a normal second language acquisition pattern may be occurring. Without assessment in English, information needed to make a determination on services would be missing.

Goldstein (2000) states that a speech-language pathologist should test in all languages/dialects. He goes on to say that one should not rely on only norm referenced testing, a language sample, or one elicitation technique. Langdon and Cheng (1992) indicate that with a bilingual child, certain linguistic skills may be affected in one language more than in the other, depending on the exposure

to and use of each language. For this reason, testing a child in both languages is important.

Such assessments are complex and require extra time to complete. However, by assessing in one language only, the clinician would have incomplete information for diagnosing and planning intervention for a bilingual child.

Resources

Langdon, H. W., and Cheng, L.L (1992). **Hispanic Children and Adults with Communication Disorders: Assessment and Intervention**, Gaithersburg, Maryland: Aspen Publications.

Goldstein, B. (2000). **Cultural and Linguistic Diversity Resource Guide for Speech-Language Pathologists**, San Diego: Singular.