

# **Response to Intervention: English Language Learners**

# Evaluation of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students

Care must be taken to determine the primary language of each student prior to assessment of cognitive skills or levels of academic achievement. The Las Cruces Public School district measures English language development of all students whose home language is something other than English. This language development assessment is done a minimum of once per year. However, the student's proficiency in their home language is not routinely measured. In the case of ELLs that speak Spanish, a bilingual diagnostician begins their evaluation by administering the Woodcock-Muñoz Language Survey – Revised (WMLS-R) in both English and Spanish. The WMLS-R provides a measure of Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) in both languages and provides vital information that assists the diagnostician in determining the appropriate language(s) of evaluation.

The district currently utilizes The ACCESS (Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State) for ELLs (English Language Learners) test battery, which is a collection of assessment instruments administered to all ELL students which addresses language development within the four language domains (e.g., listening, speaking, reading, and writing) across all grades and within five proficiency levels. These proficiency levels are as follows:

- 1 – Entering – knows and uses minimal social language and minimal academic language with visual and graphic support
- 2 – Beginning – knows and uses some social English and general academic language with visual and graphic support
- 3 – Developing – knows and uses social English and some specific academic language with visual and graphic support
- 4 – Expanding – knows and uses social English and some technical academic language
- 5 – Bridging – knows and uses social English and academic language working with grade level material
- 6 – Reaching – knows and uses social and academic language at the highest level measured by this test

A student is considered fluent in the English language when their overall ACCESS score is at a 5.0 or higher.

## Definitions

**BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills):** Face to face to face conversational fluency, conversational fluency, including mastery of including mastery of pronunciation, vocabulary, and pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. English language learners typically acquire conversational language used in everyday activities before they develop more complex, conceptual language proficiency. BICS is not related to academic achievement, but is necessary to function in everyday interpersonal contexts and is universal across all native speakers. English Language Learners (ELL's) typically attain BICS within 1-3 years of regular exposure.

CALP (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency): Language proficiency associated with schooling, and the abstract language abilities required for academic work. A more complex, conceptual, linguistic ability that includes analysis, synthesis and evaluation. CALP is cognitively demanding whereas BICS is cognitively undemanding. CALP reflects dimensions of language related to literacy skills. English Language Learners may attain CALP within 5-7 years of instruction, but may need as long as 10 years or more.

BICS is more literal language while CALP is more abstract.

Examples:

Circle

BICS: to walk around something

CALP: to draw circle around something

Skim

BICS: to glide on a surface

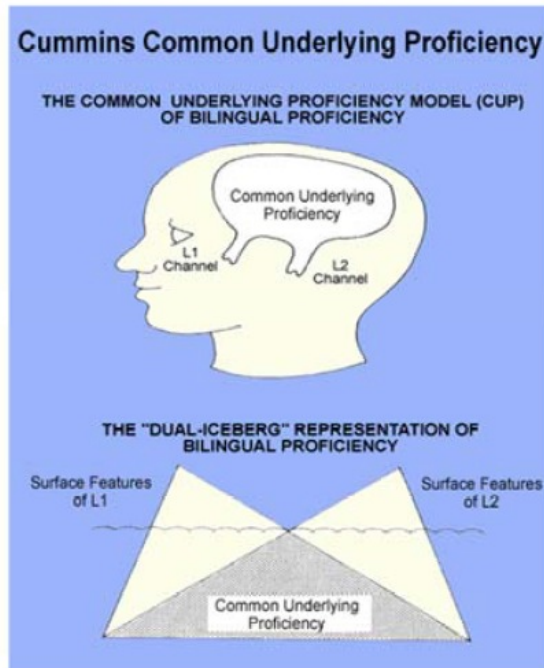
CALP: to read quickly for a main point

Factors that determine one's ability to acquire CALP include: prior schooling and experience with language, level of literacy in the first language - reading achievement in English is more dependent on reading achievement in the native language than it is on relative oral proficiency in English, amount of exposure and practice in the second language.

CALP is:

- Second level of language proficiency
- Most important factor in determining the language of assessment
- Should also be the guiding factor to the language of instruction
- Is not equal to language dominance (BICS)

# Common Underlying Proficiency Theory - CUP (Cummins)



**CUP (Common Underlying Proficiency) and Iceberg Model** – According to [Cummins' (1980, 1984) and Baker's (1993)] theories, although first and second language are visibly different on the surface, both languages operate through the same central processing system in the student's brain. Regardless of the language the person is using, the thinking behind language production comes from the same cognitive functioning ability. Speaking, listening, reading and writing in the first language help students develop the same skills in the second language. Concepts learned in one language are therefore transferable to the second language. Researchers believe that educators can help students learn more efficiently if they tap into students' prior academic knowledge, concepts, vocabulary, word cognates and grammatical structures from first language to help build second language.

Cummins has represented this theory through two visual representations. The [Iceberg Model](#) and the [CUP Model](#). In the **Iceberg Model**, the two icebergs are separated at the top, representing the different surface features of both languages. Under the water, the icebergs are actually one large iceberg, symbolizing the central processing system that exists in bilingualism.

# Instructional Interventions for ELLs

## Appropriate Oral Language Learning

- Speech appropriate for students' proficiency level
- Variety of techniques used to make content concepts clear
- Clear explanation of academic tasks
- Provide clear and concise directions – short simple sentences
- Show student models of completed work / projects
- Print on board or overhead; cursive may be unfamiliar
- Link concepts to students' background experiences

## Scaffold Literacy

- Context clues
- Provide list of frequently used words, like Dolch words, for easy reference
- Emphasize key vocabulary
- Use lots of visual aids
- Support learning with graphic organizers, charts and graphs.
- Foster writing in English through labeling and short sentences
- Use a frame to scaffold writing
- Allow ELL student more "THINK TIME"; provide additional time
- Grade written work for content and allow flexibility for grammar / language mistakes to follow WIDA CAN-DO descriptors and student's ACCESS score
- Use a variety of approaches for ELL student to answer questions orally or simpler written form (e.g. instead of a paragraph, make a list)

## Class Groupings

- Cooperative learning activities
- Assign a "study buddy" to work with

## Assessments

- Spanish version
- Dual language glossary
- Word-to-word dictionary
- Read-aloud test directions, questions, responses in Spanish
- Provide additional time to complete assignment/assessment