

# Identifying and Supporting English Learner Students Who May Have Learning Disabilities

## Practitioners of English Language Learning meeting

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# Overview

- State and National Context
- REL West report: *Identifying and Supporting EL Students with Disabilities: Key Issues in the Literature and State Practice*
  - Literature Review
  - State Practice Review
- Planning for September PELL meeting



# State and National Context

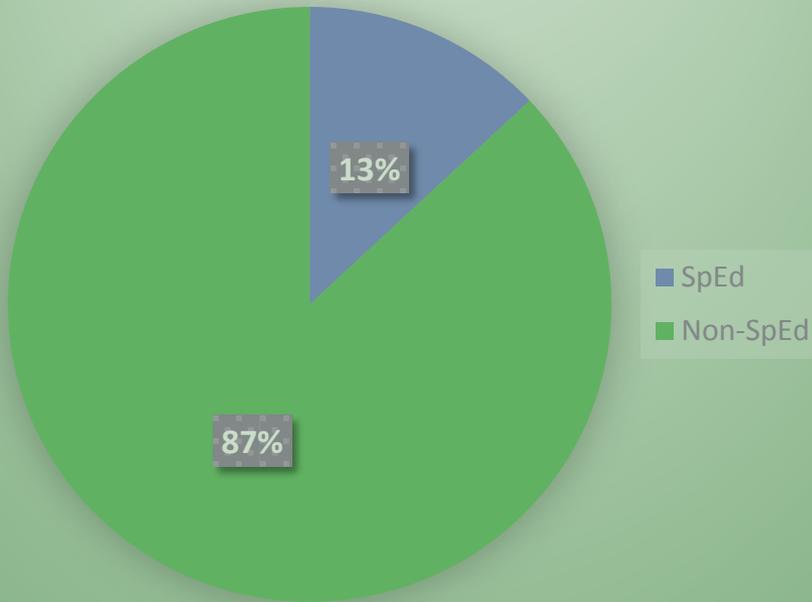
“Multiple needs in an individual student contribute to the challenges schools face when their systems are not integrated and coherent.

Children with a disability who are also English language learners (ELLs) become caught between systems because there is not enough support for both intensive language and special education services.”

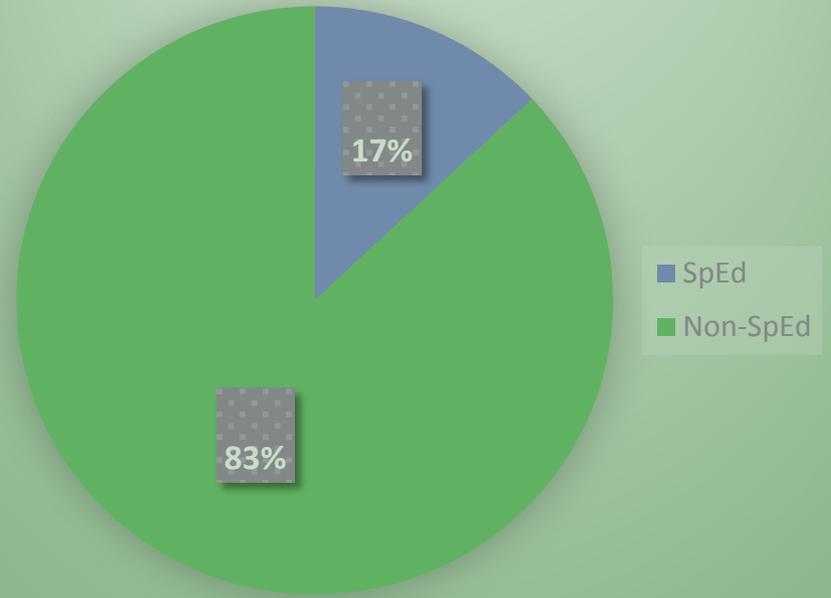
(California’s *One System Report* (2015), p. 23)

# English Learners are Over-Represented in Special Education in Arizona

Non-ELs: 1,054,681



ELs: 95,150



# The Achievement of ELs in SpEd: Western Region (AZ, NV, & UT)

- More long-term ELs receive SpEd services than short-term ELs<sup>1</sup>
- ELs in SpEd have very low content test passing rates<sup>2</sup>
- Middle/High school ELs in SpEd struggle more than those in Elementary school <sup>1,2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Haas, Huang, & Tran (2014)

<sup>2</sup> Haas, Tran, Huang, & Yu (2015)

# Federal Legislation, Guidance

- **ESSA**—requires states to distinguish between EL / EL with disabilities and long-term ELs
- **IDEA**—proposed rule standardizing state disproportionality approaches (over-representation concern) (2/23/16)
- **U.S. Dept. of Ed. 2015 EL Toolkit (Ch. 6: EL with LD)**  
[OCR, DOJ]
- **SBAC/PARCC testing accommodations (EL & LD)**



# REL West Report Part 1: Literature Review

# Key Elements for Success

- High quality school experience
  - Strong classroom instruction (GE & ELD)
  - Teachers with SpEd and second language understanding and capacity for best practices
  - Teachers with multicultural understandings
- Student supports to minimize non-academic factors: Poverty, mobility, physical and socio-emotional health, etc.
- Multi-participant & multi-data identification and placement process
- Ongoing monitoring & improvement process using data

# Barriers to Success

## Staff Capacity

- Difficulties in distinguishing between a second language learning need and a disability
- Lack of awareness of best practices for ELs with disabilities

## Systemic

- Poorly designed and implemented SpEd referral processes
- Insufficient use of assessment accommodations for EL & SWD
- No data system for tracking effectiveness or sharing information between EL and SpEd departments



# REL West Report Part 2: State Practice Review

# Guiding Principles from States

- Clear policy statement that additional considerations will be used in placing EL students in SpEd
- Test accommodations for EL students
- Exit criteria for EL support programs for EL in SpEd
- Early intervention approach (RtI)
- Comprehensive manuals to aid educators in identifying and supporting EL students who may have disabilities

# Policy and Practice Guidelines

Five states have comprehensive manuals for identifying and serving ELs with disabilities

- CT (2011, 38 pages)
- IL (2002, 167 pages)
- MI (2015, 97 pages)
- MN (2005, 319 pages, currently in revision)
- VA (2015, 60 pages)

# State Manual Overview

Features	CT	IL	MI	MN	VA
Pages	38	167	97	319	60
Info on second language acquisition and progress	X	X	X	X	X
Guidance on assessments	X	X	X	X	X
Checklists	X	X	X	X	X
PD program for educators		X			
Info on the role of culture/acclturation		X		X	
Sample pre-referral or intervention program	X (and early intervention flowchart)	X	X	X	X (early intervention flowchart and special education process flowchart)
Plan for continuous eval./ systemic review		X		X	
Laws and regs. related to the rights of ELs	X	X	X	X	X
Guidance for working with families	X (sample parent interview)	X	X (sample parent interview)	X	X
FAQs	X		X		X

# Key Features From the Five State Manuals

- Information on second language acquisition and progress (all)
- PD program for educators (IL)
- Info on the role of culture/acclturation (IL, MN)
- Info on avoiding over- and under-identification (CT)
- Early intervention flowchart (IL, MN)
- Plan for continuous evaluation / systemic review (IL, MN)
- Guidance for working with families, including sample parent interviews (all)
- Checklists (all)
- Laws and regulations related to the rights on ELs (all)
- FAQ's from educators (CT, MI, VA)

# Q & A





# Planning for the September PELL meeting

# How Can REL West Support You at the September PELL meeting?

- What are your challenges in educating EL students who may or do have learning disabilities?
- What topics, research summaries, or practice summaries would be most beneficial to you?
- REL West will collect information and tailor a panel presentation or workshop based on your needs



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# Resources

- REL West research:  
[http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/west/pdf/REL\\_2015086.pdf](http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/west/pdf/REL_2015086.pdf) (research report)
- and  
[https://relwest.wested.org/system/documents/pdfs/48/original/REL\\_West\\_Memo\\_State\\_manuals\\_on\\_EL\\_SWD\\_022016.pdf?1456533413](https://relwest.wested.org/system/documents/pdfs/48/original/REL_West_Memo_State_manuals_on_EL_SWD_022016.pdf?1456533413) (summaries of five state manuals)
- U.S. Department of Education toolkit:  
<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela/english-learner-toolkit/chap6.pdf>

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