Frequently Asked Questions
regarding:
ELL - English Language Learners

1. **What should we do if we have concerns for an ELL student?**

   Follow the Multicultural Considerations process; the packet can be found on the intranet.

2. **Why do we need this packet to address second language and cultural issues?**

   We would never want to label a student as “disabled” if indeed, it is a second language, environmental or cultural issue. IDEA regulations state that a student should not be discriminated based on race, language or cultural issues.

3. **Is there a set waiting period before a referral to special education can be made?**

   No, as long as second language issues are considered. If there are extenuating factors, such as medical, developmental, significant emotional issues or an obvious disability that is not attributable to a second language, there is no need to wait to make a referral. The Multicultural consideration packet must be completed.

4. **What is the difference between language dominance and language proficiency?**

   Language dominance is simply a relative measure of two or more languages spoken by an individual, indicating the one language that the individual uses **most commonly, productively, and comfortably**.

   Language proficiency on the other hand is a measure of how well an individual can speak, read and comprehend a language relative to the individual’s peers.

5. **How does the CMIT determine language dominance?**

   Language dominance can be determined by reviewing the following information:
   a. Interview Questions for Parent of ELL students
      1. page 2; questions 15-18
      2. page 3; educational background
   b. Informal Interview with students
      1. What is the primary language spoken at home?
      2. What is the primary language spoken by others at home?
      3. What is the primary language spoken in informal social situations?
      4. What language are you most comfortable speaking?
   c. Home Language Survey (HLS)
   d. Scores from the LAS LINKS/Woodcock Muñoz Language Survey-Revised (WMLS-R), and/or Bilingual Verbal Abilities Test (BVAT)
6. **If a student scores “FES” Fluent English Speaker on the LAS-Links, can we conclude that they are English dominant?**

No, not necessarily. The CMIT committee needs to look at all of the information from the Multicultural Consideration Process packet before language dominance can be determined. Once the CMIT team makes a determination, both languages still need to be assessed if a referral is made.

7. **How do we address native language concerns?**

Information from the Multicultural Consideration Process packet will assist the CMIT in making this determination, especially information obtained from the parent interview.

8. **What if there are behavioral concerns for ELL students?**

A Multicultural Consideration Process packet must still be completed. Attention issues “could” be a result of acquiring a second language. If there are more significant emotional/behavioral concerns, please consult with your campus LSSP before making a referral for Emotional Disturbance (ED).

9. **Do I need to complete a Multicultural Considerations Process packet if there are only speech/language concerns?**

Yes; second language issues, cultural, environmental and educational opportunities must still be addressed. A speech/language disorder is identified only if it exists in both languages. If speech/language development in the native language was normal, poor skills in English must be addressed through ESL/Bilingual strategies.

10. **What do we do if a student speaks only English in school, but there’s another language spoken in the home?**

If there is another language spoken in the home a Multicultural Consideration Process packet must be completed. We must document the extent to which that other language is/is not impacting academic progress.

11. **What if there are three different languages spoken in the home?**

All three languages must be addressed by completing the Multicultural Consideration Process packet. If the campus has a volunteer interpreter available, he/she can be consulted.

12. **What if the parent reports that the student does not speak the other language?**

If another language is listed on the Home Language Survey, a Multicultural Consideration Process packet must be completed. The campus assessment team can document in the minutes that the parents reported that the child does not speak the other language. If a referral to special education is made, the speech and language pathologist and/or assessment specialist will investigate further.

13. **What if the student was born in the United States, has only been instructed in English, but there is another language spoken in the home?**
The Multicultural Consideration Process packet should be completed since the “native” language may have been the only language the child was exposed to for the first 2, 3, or 4 years of his/her life. This may be the language in which the child acquired his/her basic concepts and/or skills.

14. **What do we do if the parents do not speak English or if they have minimal English skills?**

The campus should offer the parent an interpreter if they schedule a CMIT meeting. If the parent denies an interpreter, document in the CMIT notes that one has been offered. If it is clear that the parents do not understand and cannot “fully participate” in the meeting, stop and offer an interpreter again. Continue to document your efforts.

15. **What do you mean when you refer to “concerns in both languages”?.**

In order for a disability to exist, the disability must be present in both languages. This is especially true if the campus is suspecting a learning disability (LD) or speech impairment (SI).

16. **What if a parent denies bilingual education and/or ESOL services?**

It is the parent’s right to deny services; however, the CMIT should reconsider the need for Bilingual/ESOL services when discussing “educational” opportunities. While this is only one factor when conducting the Multicultural Consideration Process, a CMIT team (including parent) should consider that denial of services may be denial of an appropriate program for academic success.

17. **What is the difference between BICS/CALP?**

BICS are Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills; the skills necessary for everyday, conversational skills. This could be equated to pragmatic skills. CALP is Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency Skills; the “academic” language skills needed for classroom success. It should be noted that CALP skills are “basic” academic language skills. It takes many years for a second language learner to acquire strong CALP skills.

18. **What if the Home Language Survey says “English/English” or “Ingles/Ingles” but we know there is another language spoken in the home?**

A positive phone call to the parents would be appropriate. One might want to explain that the child reported another language is spoken at home and the school wants to verify. This would be important so the school does not inadvertently assume a child has a disability, if indeed, it is because of second language/cultural issues.

19. **If the parent indicates there “is” another language spoken in the home but he HLS doesn’t reflect that, what should we do?**

Proceed with completing the MCAT prereferral packet so those issues can be considered prior to making a special education referral.

20. **How does our campus access an interpreter?**

If someone on your campus speaks that “other” language, he/she may be asked to assist. Be considerate; however, of that person’s primary job responsibilities. If the campus has colleagues throughout the district or parent volunteers entrusted with confidentiality, they too, may be
considered. Otherwise, please email Amy Brown at Shiloh ext 28706. She will send you names and numbers for different individuals. While using a volunteer helps the district’s budget, very few are listed. You may identify potential parent volunteers through a campus receptionist or office manager. If you are happy with that volunteer’s service, please request permission to add his/her name to Amy’s list. Whether you are using a professional agency interpreter, a district hired interpreter, or a volunteer, a short training should always be conducted to ensure your needs are met. Please refer to the MCAT website on the intranet for further details.