

Appendix B-2. Case Study Interview Protocol for Service Providers

Notes:

- Interviews are expected to take no more than 90 minutes.
- District Service-Provider respondents may include a district-level psychologist, speech pathologist, or instructional specialist providing support to school-based personnel.
- School Service-Provider respondents may include a special education teacher, EL teacher, counselor, resource teacher, student support team leader, or general education teacher.
- Text in [brackets] indicates instructional notes to the interviewer. Text in *italics* indicates actual interview questions.

1. Introduction

[Thank respondent for their time. Confirm that they received and had a chance to read the Interview Information Sheet.]

First, I want to thank you for taking the time to talk with us today. My name is [name] and this is [name of the other site visitor]. Before we get started, did you have a chance to read the Interview Information Sheet that provides background on this study and what we'll be doing in the interview?

[If they did not receive/read the Interview Information Sheet, hand them a copy to keep and briefly summarize the purpose and content of the interview, and how the results will be used. Then define what is meant by English Learners.]

For the purpose of our conversation today, when we talk about English learners, we're referring to those students who the district has determined to be of EL status based on results of an English language proficiency (ELP) assessment. This would include students eligible for English language instructional services, as well as those students who have been reclassified as former ELs within the prior two years. Do you have any questions about the study or the interview?
[Answer any questions.]

[Provide them with the Informed Consent form for their review and signature.]

Your participation in the interview and responding to individual interview questions is voluntary. You may decide not to participate or to end your participation at any time. This consent form outlines some of the issues in the Interview Information Sheet with regard to potential risks, benefits, and confidentiality. Please take a minute to read it and let me know if you have any questions. I'd like to ask you to sign it before we begin.

[After obtaining their signed consent form, request permission to record.]

Before we begin, I want to check with you to see if it would be okay if we record our conversation today. We will try to take careful notes as we talk, but recording the conversation will assist us making sure our notes are accurate. We will not share the recordings and notes with anyone outside of the project. Would that be okay with you?

[Once permission to record is obtained, begin recording the interview.]

2. Respondent Role

[The respondent's job title will be obtained prior to interview. The question below will be asked to initiate the interview and provide context for the subsequent interview questions.]

1. *First, I'd like to get a little bit of background information on your role. As [respondent's job title], what are your general job responsibilities and how do those responsibilities put you in contact with English learners who have or may have disabilities?*

3. Pre-referral/Early Intervening: Service-Provider Practices (RQ 1)

[These questions are intended for district- and school-level service providers whose roles have been identified as relevant to pre-referral/early intervening procedures from policy documents or administrator interview. For those respondents whose roles would not make them actively engaged in pre-referral/early intervening (e.g., school psychologists, speech pathologists) thus they would not be asked the specific questions below, simply ask them to describe what their role is, if any, during this stage.]

1. *I'd like to ask you about your work with ELs prior to any referral to special education. What is your role in supporting ELs struggling academically or behaviorally in the general education setting? What strategies or supports do you typically provide?*

[Probe: Screening vision, hearing, other health issues; Observations of classroom instruction; Consideration of EL student's achievement in relation to true peers; Consideration of student's opportunity to learn the necessary content and skills]

2. *How do the strategies you use or supports you provide EL students prior to special education vary depending upon:*
 - a) *grade level,*
 - b) *content area,*
 - c) *level of English proficiency,*
 - d) *years in the US or in the district,*
 - e) *language background, or*
 - f) *something else?*

3. *Who do you usually collaborate with when working with ELs struggling in the general education setting?*

[Probe for district service-provider: Variation across schools in the district]

4. <i>What supports do you have available from the district [school] during this stage?</i>
5. <i>How are the parents of ELs usually involved during the pre-referral/early intervening stage?</i> [Probe: Kinds of information provided to parents; Degree of parent engagement in decision making; Stage at which parent is brought in]
6. <i>At what point does a referral for special education usually occur for an EL student with potential needs for services?</i>
7. <i>In what ways are your pre-referral/early intervening practices with EL students similar to or different from those you use with non-EL students?</i> [Probe: Methods and process used for pre-referral decision making; Personnel involved; Involvement of parents; Time to formal special education referral; Factors to consider for ELs] [Probe for district service-provider: Variation of practices across schools in the district]

4. Assessment and Identification: Service-Provider Practices (RQs 1 and 2)

[Prior to the questions below, the respondent will have been asked to have documentation accessible during the interview related to (a) one EL student who was assessed and found eligible for special education services and (b) one EL student who was assessed for special education services but found not eligible for services. Interviewers will not directly review student files; rather respondents will have files accessible for reference as needed.]

1. <i>Now I'd like us to talk about a recent EL student who was assessed and found eligible for special education services in your district [school]. Please walk me through the assessment and identification of this student. What procedures, practices, and instruments were used? What role did you have?</i> [Probe: Why was the student referred? By whom? When? What prereferral steps had been taken prior to referral? Once the child study team was convened, was there any discussion of English language proficiency v. disability? What assessments were used to assess eligibility? What were the results of the tests? Was there any doubt about the presence of a disability? Did all members of the evaluation team agree about eligibility?]
2. <i>Now let's talk about a recent EL student who was assessed for special education services but found not eligible. Walk me through the assessment and identification of this student. What procedures, practices, and instruments were used? What role did you have?</i> [Probe: Why was the student referred? By whom? When? What prereferral steps had been taken prior to referral? Once the child study team was convened, was there any discussion of English language proficiency v. disability? What assessments were used to assess eligibility? What were the results of the tests? What were the reasons for ineligibility? Did all members of the evaluation team agree about ineligibility? What services have been provided to the student since the assessment?]

3. <i>How typical are the cases you've described in terms of assessment and identification practices with EL students who are referred for special education?</i>
4. <i>How does your typical conduct during the assessment and identification of EL students differ by:</i> a) <i>grade level,</i> b) <i>language group,</i> c) <i>extent of English language proficiency,</i> d) <i>type of disability, e.g., LD, ED, ADHD, Autism, speech or sensory impairments, mental disabilities, or</i> e) <i>something else?</i>
5. <i>Who do you typically collaborate with in the identification and assessment processes with ELs specifically?</i> [Probe: What personnel are making decisions and what is done when specially trained personnel are not available]
6. <i>How are the parents of ELs usually involved during special education assessment and identification processes?</i> [Probe: Kinds of information provided to parents; Degree of parent engagement in decision making; Stage at which parent is brought in]
7. <i>How are assessment and identification practices with ELs similar to or different from those used with non-EL students?</i> [Probe: Methods and processes used; Tools and assessment instruments used; Accommodations; Language of assessment; Personnel involved; Involvement of parents; Factors to consider for ELs]

5. Assessment and Identification: Service-Provider Perceptions (RQs 2 and 3)

1. <i>In general, how confident do you feel in your ability to differentiate learning issues from second language issues? What strategies or tools do you use to help you in this determination?</i> [Probe: Assessment of the student in both English and their first language; Supplementing formal measures with informal, contextual assessment; Use of resources from district or school]
2. <i>Have you participated in any professional development related to ELs with special learning needs over the past two years? If so, how effective were these activities? Any plans for this year?</i>
3. <i>What challenges do you encounter in the identification of ELs with disabilities?</i>

4. <i>How do the challenges vary across:</i> a) <i>language background,</i> b) <i>level of English proficiency,</i> c) <i>years in the US or in the district,</i> d) <i>grade level,</i> e) <i>type of disability, e.g., LD, ED, ADHD, Autism, speech or sensory impairments, mental disabilities, or,</i> f) <i>something else?</i>
5. <i>What strategies have you adopted for dealing with those challenges? What have been the results?</i>
6. <i>What supports do you have available from the district [school] during this stage?</i>
7. <i>In what ways do existing state or district policies for assessing and identifying EL students for special education guide your practice?</i>
8. <i>In your observation, are there ways in which practices within the district [school] vary from established procedure? If so, how? In what part? Why do you think these variations occur?</i>
9. <i>Are there procedures, practices, or staff qualifications that you believe are linked to the appropriate identification of ELs with disabilities? What are they?</i>
10. <i>Are there policies, procedures, or practices that you believe hasten or delay the identification of ELs with disabilities? What are they?</i>
11. <i>What are your district's [school's] strengths related to assessing and identifying ELs with disabilities?</i>
12. <i>What additional resources or tools would help you in your efforts?</i>

6. Patterns of special Education Identification: Service-Provider Perceptions (RQ 4)

[District data on special education placements of ELs and non-ELs will have been obtained prior to site visit via district/school web sites or direct request to district contact. These will be used during the questions below.]

1. <i>The data on special education identification of ELs in your district shows [share data on EL special education placement by grade level and by disability as available]. How do you interpret these patterns in your district? What factors contribute to the pattern of special education identification for ELs in the district?</i>
2. <i>Are there subgroups in the population of ELs with disabilities that have unique patterns of special education identification that you think are masked by the summary data, for example, by language background, level of English proficiency? [include grade level and type of disability if not shown in data] If so, please describe the pattern.</i>
3. <i>Do you think the pattern has changed over time and, if so, what factors have contributed to the change?</i>

7. Exit from Language Instruction Education Programs: Service-Provider Practices and Perceptions (RQ 5)

[These questions are intended for district- and school-level service providers whose roles have been identified as relevant to LIEP exiting procedures from policy documents or administrator interview. For those respondents whose roles would not make them actively engaged in LIEP exiting thus they would not be asked the specific questions below, simply ask them to describe what their role is, if any, in this process.]

1. <i>What accommodations or modifications do you use when assessing the English language proficiency for ELs with disabilities who are receiving language instruction services?</i>
2. <i>What kinds of supports or services are provided to EL students with disabilities who are in the process of exiting or have recently exited? ? Are they effective?</i>
3. <i>What strategies do you use or supports do you provide for EL students with disabilities who are not able to meet exit criteria based on the state's English Language Proficiency assessment?</i> [Probe: Modified or alternative achievement standards]
4. <i>What challenges do you encounter when assessing the English language proficiency of EL students with disabilities who require modified or alternate standards? What strategies have you used to deal with those challenges? Are they effective?</i>
5. <i>What challenges do you encounter when assessing the content knowledge of EL students with disabilities who require modified or alternate standards? What strategies have you used to deal with those challenges? Are they effective?</i>

8. Coordination Between EL and Special Education: Service-Provider Perceptions (RQ 3)

1. <i>How does the organizational structure within the district [school] facilitate or hinder collaboration between special education and EL services?</i>
2. <i>Are there mechanisms in place in your district [school] to facilitate the coordination of special education and EL services? What are they? What factors hinder coordination, if any?</i>
3. <i>What challenges, if any, do you encounter when working with the EL (or special education) department/program? What strategies have you used to deal with those challenges? Are they effective?</i>

9. Additional Thoughts and Wrap-up

1. <i>Would you like to add anything about EL students with disabilities that we missed in our conversation?</i>
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[Thank respondent again for his/her time and input, and obtain contact information for potential follow-up.]

I want to reiterate that we very much appreciate you taking the time and sharing your knowledge and experience with us today. As is mentioned in the interview information sheet, after we return home and have had a chance to review our notes from this interview, we would like to have the option of a brief follow-up with you if there is a need to check our interpretation of information you've provided today. Would this be okay? [If participant agrees.]

Thank you. Do you have a preference for email or phone?

[Obtain contact information for follow-up.]