



State of Arizona
Department of Education



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SPED FACTS FOR ELLs

English Language Learners with Disabilities

1. What is the correct placement for students who are both limited English proficient and enrolled in special education with regard to the implementation of the Structured English Immersion (SEI) models?
 - a. Like all limited English proficient students, students enrolled in special education must have intensive support for language acquisition. The location and nature of that support should be determined by each student's IEP team with appropriate participation by the school's English acquisition staff.
 - b. Students with disabilities may not be categorically denied access to or be required to enroll in the supports available to all students. In other words, the "I" in the IEP continues to drive the decisions with regard to where, when, and by whom English acquisition supports are provided.
2. Can hybrid programs be crafted to meet the needs of English language learners with disabilities?

Yes. For some students, an IEP team might decide that the four hours of English language instruction should be split between the special education program and the SEI program. Examples include:

 - A student who is SLD in math might receive assistance with math from a special education teacher who is also supporting English language acquisition skills and then return to the SEI classroom for additional intensive English instruction.
 - A student who is blind might attend SEI class during oral language instruction but receive reading and writing instruction in special education classes.
3. Can some special education students be excused from the intensive English instruction class altogether?

Yes. For some students, an IEP team might decide that the impact of the disability is so generalized that participation in the SEI classroom will not meet the specific needs of the child and that all instruction in language development should be delivered through special education.
4. Can students with disabilities be classified as fluent in English even when they have not passed the Arizona English Language Learner Assessment (AZELLA)?

No. Students can only be classified as Fluent English Proficient (FEP) by scoring proficient on the AZELLA.
5. Can a student with a disability be removed from the classification of "English Language Learner" without passing the AZELLA?
 - a. Yes. This is most likely to occur when language development is comparably delayed in both the child's home language and in English and the severity of the disability is likely to result in insufficient language development to pass the AZELLA regardless of the intensity and duration of English language instruction. Following an IEP team decision, the student may be "Withdrawn due to SPED Criteria."
 - b. No. When the language development of the child's home language is markedly better than English language development and when the child is demonstrating the ability to acquire English at a reasonable rate when receiving appropriate instruction, the child should continue to have the intensive support required by Arizona statutes, either through special education, SEI instruction or a combination of both.
6. How does a team decide?
 - a. There is no litmus test. IEP team members, including the ELL coordinator/tester, should consider the results of the most recent special education evaluation, teacher and parent observations of progress, the length of time the child has been receiving intensive language instruction, the ELL guidelines regarding classification, and the impact of the disability on language development sufficient to pass the AZELLA.
7. How is the team decision documented?
 - a. While ELL services are not considered special education, the documentation of the child's participation in ELL programs can be noted on an IEP. Several options are available, depending upon the individual circumstances and the IEP format used by the school. Suggestions include using the sections that document:
 - i. Consideration of special factors;
 - ii. Participation in regular class, extracurricular and nonacademic activities, and;
 - iii. For students with post-secondary transition plans, courses of study.
8. How does the requirement in A.R.S. 15-753.B.3 for a Parental Waiver Application apply?

When the IEP team makes the decision about how the student is to receive English language instruction, A.R.S. 15-753.B.3 does not apply.