

# English Language Learners and Special Education Standardized Assessments

## Standardized assessments can be difficult for English language learners (ELLs) because ...

- Vocabulary is unfamiliar
- Language in the instructions may be too difficult
- Tests are based on North American values, experiences and curricula
- Visuals/manipulatives may be unfamiliar
- Expectations of testing differ (responding to direct questions, sitting for long periods)

## Before you decide to use standardized assessments

### 1. Collect background information – academic (note educational gaps), social, behaviour

### 2. Perform informal/observational assessments (use the Language Line Telephone Translation Service if necessary)

- Storytelling – is the story organized? Are there details? Can the student remember details?
- Retell – can the student retell a culturally-relevant story told to him/her?
- Cloze – can the student fill in every missing 7th word or every “th-” word?
- Language samples – can the student carry on a conversation, relate a story, or describe pictures?
- Observational checklists – note: behaviour and independence vary in different cultures

## If you use standardized assessments

### 1. Consider including non-verbal tests. However, these tests:

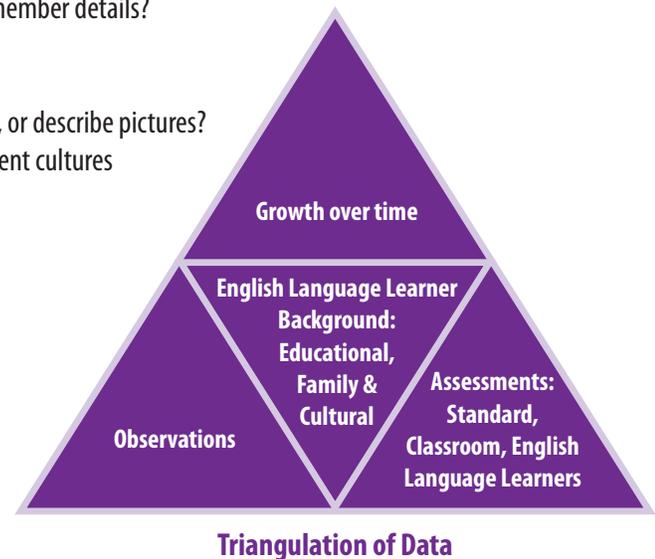
- Measure a limited range of skills
- Are culturally-biased (pictures, concepts)
- May be less useful than verbal tests as students get older
- Still have instructions in English, which students may not understand

### 2. Consider re-administering parts of the tests with language support

- Once a student has finished the official test, ask the student to redo parts of it. Explain the questions in simple language
- Try asking some of the questions in the student’s first languages. You can use the Language Line, a telephone translation service
- Redoing the test may show whether the student’s challenges are related to special education or second language learning

## After you use standardized assessments

- Interpret findings cautiously; ensure all language issues have been addressed
- Consider omitting percentile rankings
- Provide feedback to parents using the Language Line Telephone Translation Service if appropriate
- Work with ELL Resource Teacher to plan accommodations or modifications



## English Language Learners – Background Information

<b>Name</b>			
<b>Country of birth</b>	<b>Age of arrival in Canada</b>	<b>Current age</b>	<b>Status in Canada</b>
<b>Personal history (medical, social, mental health)</b>			
<b>Proficiency in first language(s) – oral and literacy skills</b>			
<b>Parents' literacy skills in first language(s) and English</b>			
<b>Exposure to English before arriving in Canada</b>			
<b>Academic history – note gaps/countries/languages</b>			
<b>History of school support (academic, social, behavioural)</b>			
<b>In-class observations (academic, social, behavioural)</b>			