



英語學習  
aprendizaje del inglés  
imparando l'inglese  
영어 학습    học tiếng anh  
apprentissage de l'anglais  
изучение английского



**What is the difference between Dual Language Learners and English Language Learners?**

**Dual Language Learners (DLLs) are:**

- generally younger students
- trying to master their native language while learning English

**English Language Learners (ELLs) are:**

- generally older, non-native English speaking students
- proficient in their native language
- are now learning English while mastering content (NCSL, 2017)

Be **Ready** to identify English Language Learners who may also have a learning disability. This can often be challenging. The multidisciplinary team must be able to establish that the ELL's learning difficulties are not primarily the result of language acquisition (IDEA, 2006).

In order to consider referring an ELL with suspected disabilities, educators should take into account the students':

- background experiences and home life
- personal interests
- strengths and weaknesses across content areas

As part of a **pre-referral intervention**, teachers should:

- gather and provide additional documentation reflecting evidence of modifications provided over a 4-6 week period of time
- differentiation strategies used to help teach content
- interventions used in the classroom to help monitor student progress
- document areas where the student shows lack of progress despite the modifications provided
- consult with an ESL professional to acquire additional information regarding the students' language background and struggles
- consult with the in-school problem-solving team, teacher assistance team, child study committee or other central office personnel who can assist in the completion of a Student Data Checklist to create an intervention plan or request that a Dual Language Assessment (DLA) should be performed

**SET** a course of action for an ELL with a suspected learning disability by administering a partial or complete Dual Language Assessment (DLA).

**The DLA is:**

- usually performance based
- delivered in the student's primary language and English

**The DLA will gather information on the student in order to:**

- determine an ELL's home language proficiency and skills
- establish English language proficiency and skills in the second language acquisition continuum

- identify the student's dominant language(s), if any, for the purpose of further evaluation and assessment, if determined necessary

The completed DLA report will be reviewed by the school's in-school problem solving team and ESL lead teacher/department chairperson and determination will be provided regarding whether or not a referral for special education services is warranted. (Virginia Department of Education, 2015)

**For more information on determining special education eligibility for ELL students and the**

**DLA, [GO](#) to:**

- [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act](#)
- [Handbook for educators](#)
- [Council for Exceptional Children](#)

## References and resources

- Handbook for Educators of Students Who Are ELLs With Suspected Disabilities, (2015). Virginia Department of Education  
[Read more »](#)
- Identifying and supporting English learner students with learning disabilities: Key issues in the literature and state practice (2015). Institute of Education Sciences.  
[Read more »](#)
- Dual language learners: State options under the every student succeeds act, (2017). National Confederacy of State Legislatures.  
[Read more »](#)
- Klinger, J., & Eppolito, A. (2014 ). Differentiating between language acquisition and learning disabilities Council for Exceptional Children.  
[Read more »](#)

This news brief is a collaborative effort of the Virginia Department of Education Training and Technical Assistance Centers at George Mason University and James Madison University. This issue was prepared by the staff of the VDOE TTAC at George Mason University. For questions about content, please contact [Janet Ratzlaff at jratzlaf@gmu.edu](mailto:jratzlaf@gmu.edu) or call (703)993-4496.

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