Assessment of English Language Learners With Disabilities

Content Area and Special Education Teacher Collaboration in English Language Learner Identification and Assessment

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CASE STUDY

Goldstone High School is located in an urbanized area of the northwestern United States. The school is located in a district that has a total enrollment of between 30,000 and 35,000 students, yet only 1% of students are considered to be English language learners (ELLs). Due to the low number of ELLs, the district only employs between five and eight ESL teachers to service all schools in the district. In an inclusive classroom, this often means that a special education teacher must provide assistance to ELLs along with students who have learning disabilities (LDs).

Mr. Carson's ninth-grade civics class is an inclusive classroom with a sufficient level of academic need and number of students with identified LDs to merit having a special education teacher in the classroom. Ms. Trahan, the special education teacher, is also able to help Abdullah, an immigrant who arrived from eastern Africa 2 years earlier. Abdullah and his immediate family members spoke very little, if any, English upon their arrival in the United States. Although the use of a special education teacher to assess ELLs is not ideal, Ms. Trahan has 5 years of experience working with ELLs and is considered reliable and informed in the appropriate assessment and placement of ELLs.

Prereading Questions

- What are the defining characteristics of students who are English language learners versus English language learners with learning disabilities?
- How are English language learners with learning disabilities identified?
- What does the collaboration between Ms. Trahan and Mr. Carson look like? Does it lead to the appropriate classification of Abdullah?

WHAT ARE THE DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENTS WHO ARE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS VERSUS ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES?

The task of defining ELLs who may also have a learning disability is a challenge that the special education community struggles to clarify. Ms. Trahan, who is both a special education teacher and an ESL teacher, is charged with the responsibility of making the distinction clear for everyone working with Abdullah and, more important, for Abdullah himself. In that regard, Ms. Trahan, like others who are responsible for both ELLs and students with LDs, has to keep in mind three categories of students: (a) non-ELLs with learning disabilities, (b) ELLs without learning disabilities, and (c) ELLs with learning disabilities. In the third case, when a student is an ELL and has a learning disability, appropriate assessment is more difficult.

This chapter focuses on factors for special education teachers to consider in assessing an inclusive classroom of ELLs and students with LDs. The discussion is based on practices in the Riverview School District in Vancouver, Washington, including the joint efforts made by a social studies teacher and a special education teacher to appropriately assess and assist an ELL.

How Are Students With Learning Disabilities Identified in This District?

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA, 2004) defines federal guidelines and provides partial funding for the education of students with disabilities; the 2004 reauthorization includes an increased focus on early identification of disabilities. One method that is being considered in this district as a means to assess for LDs is *response to intervention* (RTI; Gresham, 2002).

In RTI, a student struggling with literacy skills is considered as possibly having an LD if he or she is dually discrepant, that is, he or she has low achievement levels, and makes little or no progress in a three-tiered intervention program. In the first tier, students participate in reading instruction activities that are similar to those used with students generally across the nation (Fuchs, Mock, Morgan, & Young, 2003). Each student's rate of reading growth is evaluated periodically throughout the year. A student who is dually discrepant is designated as possibly having a learning disability. This student moves to the second tier in the RTI process, in which progress monitoring is conducted again—this time in a small-group or individual instructional format. The aim of the second tier is twofold: (a) to prevent reading difficulty by delivering a more intensive intervention that improves reading development and (b) to assess the level of responsiveness to intensive instruction from which most students should improve. If progress occurs, the student

returns to the regular classroom program and is no longer viewed as dually discrepant. If the student does not make appreciable progress over time, an intrinsic deficit is implied. Failure to improve at the second tier of instruction indicates the need for the third and final RTI tier: special education placement following a condensed special education evaluation (Donovan & Cross, 2002; Fuchs et al., 2003; Heller, Holtzman, & Messick, 1982).

How Are English Language Learners Identified in This District, and Why Is Proper Identification Critical?

In the Riverview School District, ELLs undergo two placement tests: the Comprehensive Inventory of Basic Skills (Brigance, 1999) and the Washington Language Proficiency Test (WLPT; Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, 2006). The assessments reveal a gradient of English language ability within the ELL population that can often be directly related to the students' various backgrounds. Some students may be born in countries other than the United States and speak languages other than English at home, some may attend English language schools for years before coming to the United States, and some may come to the United States with some formal instruction in their first language (L1) but not in English. This education may have been very different from U.S. education, so it may be difficult for the student to adjust to a new style of education. In other situations, such as that of Abdullah's, formal education in his native country may not have been available or accessible. Further complicating the situation is that some ELLs, like other students, come from low-income families and have parents who work long hours, which increases the complexity of the task of learning at school (Catts & Kamhi, 2005). The descriptions above are by no means comprehensive, but they do provide a view of the great diversity of educational and linguistic backgrounds of ELLs within the district.

When ELLs demonstrate great difficulty with academic tasks, the question of the presence of an LD can be posed. There is awareness in the teaching profession that it can take 5 to 7 years for an ELL to attain academic English skills (Chamot & O'Malley, 1994; Cummins, 2000). Thus, the idea of identifying a student with a disability in the early elementary grades is problematic. Yet the earlier students' academic difficulties are identified and addressed, the less pronounced their skill deficits are by middle and high school (Lyon et al., 2001). As with all districts, Riverview School District encounters situations in which some ELLs are prematurely referred for special education services and are consequently classified as having an LD. This leads to an overrepresentation of ELLs in special education classes, a situation that is attested to in many studies. For example, Wilkinson, Ortiz, Robertson, and Kushner (2006) found that Spanish-speaking ELLs were receiving special education support in reading because they had been referred for assessment of an LD without proper attention being paid to factors such as documentation of general education interventions, sufficient attendance at school, and other prereferral intervention practices. This could easily happen in a school like Goldstone, where lack of ELL services could lead to incorrect referrals of ELLs. Fortunately for Abdullah, the experience and expertise of Ms. Trahan, as well as the collaboration between Ms. Trahan and Mr. Carson, played a significant role in helping to steer him toward the type of education he deserved.

HOW ARE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS WITH
LEARNING DISABILITIES IDENTIFIED?

Students who are ELLs are distinctly different from students with LDs, yet certain cases in which persistent difficulties with language skills are involved may indicate that a student's difficulties are due to both being an ELL and having an LD. IDEA (2004) states that ELLs should be excluded from LD identification; however, school teams receive referrals in which language difficulty appears to be attributable to something beyond having an L1 other than English. This happens when the following factors are present:

- Ability/achievement discrepancy: Based on observation of what the student comprehends and does in class, he or she appears to have ability, but has difficulty actually demonstrating that knowledge when asked, even in a conversational format.

- Processing difficulties: Part of the theoretical model of LD is that these students do not process information the way normally achieving students do. There is no specific assessment to test for this characteristic. Rather, teachers may make conclusions about behavior and peer relationships noticed over time, which indicate processing difficulties of the student in question.

- Expressive (oral language and writing) and receptive (reading and listening comprehension) difficulties in both the student's L1 and English.

- Difficulties with reading in both the student's L1 and English.

When these factors are present, teachers are asked to consider them carefully in conjunction with input from all involved with the student in order to facilitate an informed decision about possible classification.

The imperative to address students' needs at an early point in school is often in conflict with the need to allow language proficiency to develop before assessing a student as having an LD. As previously mentioned, it can take ELLs 5 to 7 years to develop academic English language skills (Chamot & O'Malley, 1994; Cummins, 2000). Theoretically, an ELL could participate in middle and high school programming for 6 years and not know if he or she has an LD until adulthood—long after the opportunity for public school remediation has passed. Therefore, it is imperative to define at the earliest point in a student's life whether special education services are needed (Lyon et al., 2001) while allowing for typical language difficulties that ELLs face. Given the situation, it is also imperative that ESL, content area, and special education teachers collaborate to help differentiate ELLs who are experiencing natural language acquisition development from those with special needs.

How Can ESL Teachers, Special Education Teachers,
Content Area Teachers, and Parents Collaborate to Appropriately
Diagnose English Language Learners With Learning Disabilities?

Given that most students who are referred by their classroom teachers for assessment of a possible LD have a high likelihood of being formally identified as having an LD, the power of the classroom teacher to make the initial referral and the subjectivity of

that process should be considered (Thurlow, Christenson, & Ysseldyke, 1983; Ysseldyke & Algozzine, 1981; Ysseldyke, Algozzine, Regan, & McGue, 1981). The classroom teacher's evaluation can have immediate and long-term implications. For a general education classroom teacher, the difficulty of distinguishing the characteristics that separate an ELL who has a possible LD from an ELL who does not makes the task exceedingly challenging. Collaboration between teachers becomes very important when making proper diagnoses because a great deal of information is needed to make a correct assessment.

A team of teachers, in contrast to an individual teacher, can provide and consider a more comprehensive set of information. The information could include a student's background experiences, home life, personal interests, and strengths and weaknesses across the different subject areas and how these factors relate to academic performance. A team of teachers, because of the broader view of the students who are accessible to them through their combined knowledge of the students, can more likely prevent the premature referral of students such as Abdullah, whose primary challenge is due to limited exposure to schooling and instruction in English. Although categorically denying an ELL for referral should not be accepted practice, the referral should be considered as a last option if the student's difficulties are pronounced. The referral should also be considered if a student's difficulty cannot be attributed to other contextual factors (Wilkinson et al. , 2006) such as those that could emerge if two principal questions are asked: Can the student read and write in his or her L1? Can the stress of a new culture, language, and learning environment be provoking the difficulty with academics and cause the difficulties to appear worse than they really are?

To gather the appropriate background information, collaboration must exist between teachers. The team of teachers must also be able to centrally record questions and problems, such as students' current levels of performance and other extenuating factors, that remain after educational interventions. Doing so would enable teachers to make informed and unified decisions about ELLs so that their misclassification as students with LDs can be avoided, as it is unethical for the students, the family, the school, and the education system to incorrectly identify students as having a disability when it is not warranted. To facilitate a fair and judicious process, multidisciplinary school teams need to work together.

WHAT DOES THE COLLABORATION BETWEEN MS. TRAHAN AND MR. CARSON LOOK LIKE? DOES IT LEAD TO THE APPROPRIATE CLASSIFICATION OF ABDULLAH?

As mentioned in the case study, Abdullah is a student in Mr. Carson's ninth-grade civics class who speaks little English. Ms. Trahan is the special education teacher assigned to the room as well as the designated ESL teacher for the one ELL, Abdullah. These two teachers coteach, focusing on making the civics instruction accessible to students of varying abilities in the same classroom (Dettmer, Thurston, & Dyck, 1993). Together they address the three major components of coteaching: planning, instruction, and assessment. The planning component included a joint agreement early in the school year to become more knowledgeable about the geography, history,

and political situation in Abdullah's home country so that they could share the information with other students in the class. Also, because of their joint concern for Abdullah, the teachers decided to collaborate in advocating for him and identifying ways to assist him in realizing his potential.

Mr. Carson and Ms. Trahan's class was one of the classes periodically observed by the district's special education teacher candidates as a part of a teacher education training program. In their observations of the classroom, the candidates saw that neither teacher dominated nor led the class in a direction that the other partner was not expecting. It is critical for this balance to exist because ESL and special education teachers are often misconceived as service providers to content teachers. Mr. Carson and Ms. Trahan worked with an administrator to schedule a common planning time, and they continually asked two questions during that time, which has been a key element to their success as partners: Is what we're doing working for us? Is it good for the students?

In the case of Abdullah, the teachers provided him with activities in the classroom to dialogue with peers about topics, to participate in small-group discussions, and to contribute to group writing assignments. When reading was required, Mr. Carson or Ms. Trahan would paraphrase the content and have Abdullah note key vocabulary in his notebook. The nature of topics in the civics class provided for this highly interactive learning of academic material.

Collaborating to Adjust Referral

Abdullah was referred by the English teacher, Mrs. Fitzgerald, in January of his ninth-grade school year, to the in-school academic support (ISAS) team for consideration for special education services due to possibly being dually discrepant. Mr. Carson and Ms. Trahan received the referral notice and made plans to join Abdullah's other teachers in this discussion about next steps. The ISAS team was scheduled to meet on a Thursday during lunch to discuss Abdullah's case. Mrs. Fitzgerald commented about Abdullah's low reading ability. She had administered the Slosson Oral Reading Test (Slosson & Nicholson, 1994), a series of word lists organized by grade level, which can be administered in about 3 minutes and provides a quick gauge of a student's oral decoding ability. Abdullah's score was 2.4 (second grade, fourth month). However, she noticed that he was able to contribute in small-group discussions. To accommodate for his low English literacy skills, Mrs. Fitzgerald offered Abdullah oral tests and quizzes. Mr. Veinot, Abdullah's math teacher, commented that Abdullah was having real difficulty. While the civics class facilitated a very communicative format for class activities and assignments, math terminology and word problems posed a serious challenge for Abdullah. Mrs. Tate, Abdullah's chemistry teacher, was not able to attend, but the ISAS team agreed that he was probably experiencing similar difficulties in science as he was in math. Because regular education programming (tier one of the RTI conceptual model discussed earlier) with accommodations did not appear to be addressing Abdullah's academic needs, Mr. Carson and Ms. Trahan suggested that they follow up by having a meeting with Abdullah and his parents in order to create an intervention plan for him (a tier-two RTI intervention to explore the possibility of an underlying disability). The ISAS team would reconvene in one week. In the meantime, Ms. Trahan

would send Mrs. Tate an e-mail including the notes from the meeting and notice of the group reconvening the following Thursday.

Ms. Trahan and Mr. Carson quickly took action after the meeting and worked together to gather information regarding Abdullah so that they could decide on appropriate teaching interventions. They collaborated to identify and implement interventions that could help in distinguishing ELLs who are struggling with second language acquisition from those who have learning disabilities. Furthermore, Wilkinson et al. (2006) suggest that there needs to be documentation of the interventions used to help the ELLs improve before consideration for special education services should be formally considered. Also, an extensive review of all documentation and people involved with the student both at school and at home must be completed before the student can be referred for special education services.

Gathering Information and Garnering Parental Support

Mr. Carson and Ms. Trahan met after school to review Abdullah's scholastic record, including all assessment information to date. The previous year's teachers found him pleasant and cooperative. He appeared to understand much of what was presented and spoken to him, but expressive language (oral language and writing) posed an ongoing challenge. With accommodations in the classroom such as modified assignments and oral tests, Abdullah attained passing grades in seventh grade, and his eighth-grade year produced similar teacher remarks and grades. In physical education, he got an A.

Mr. Carson and Ms. Trahan then consulted with Abdullah's parents. This is a key step in the assessment process in terms of attaining up-to-date information about a student's language skills in the home, or L1 environment. His family gave the following report about Abdullah's early years: They had come to know a group of humanitarian workers while living in Africa. It was this organization that had arranged for Abdullah's family to come to Vancouver so that they could help teach African languages and provide social-customs training for U.S. citizens planning to work in African countries. Given their involvement with the humanitarian workers, the parents had learned some English. However, at home with Abdullah, they spoke mostly in the L1. Because the family had lived in a remote rural area, Abdullah's schooling had been noncontinuous; consequently, he was unable to read and write in his L1.

Mr. Carson asked the parents about Abdullah's home life in Vancouver. The parents described Abdullah as a quiet boy who was very helpful at home with cleaning, cooking, and yard work. They also explained that one of the neighbors was a police officer; he had shown Abdullah the police car and functions of the car's computer and communications systems. Last year for career day at Abdullah's school, this police officer had come to the school to speak to the students. They said that Abdullah was fascinated with policing. They told Mr. Carson and Ms. Trahan that Abdullah had also developed a group of friends in the community with whom he liked to play soccer. He often commented that he liked school, given the variety of experiences and people with whom he could interact. Nevertheless, the parents went on to say that many of the tasks at school posed a challenge for Abdullah, and he was becoming more frustrated as time passed. They felt that Abdullah knew far more than he could express

by speaking and writing. They also commented that he sometimes did not seem to understand everything, even in his L1.

Through an interpreter, Ms. Trahan and Mr. Carson discussed with the parents the next steps the school would take in helping Abdullah. The purposes of this discussion were to allay the parents' fears that their son would be neglected and, more important, to create buy-in as well as support for the teachers to undertake the interventions. Ms. Trahan and Mr. Carsen indicated to Abdullah's parents that they were going to gather from and share information with his teachers so that everybody would have a complete profile of Abdullah's academic progress.

Additionally, the parents were informed that before any interventions were made, Abdullah would be given two tests so that baseline information about him would be available for comparison: the WLPT and the Comprehensive Inventory of Basic Skills. The WLPT involves listening, reading, writing, writing conventions, and speaking subtests. Mr. Carson and Ms. Trahan described to Abdullah's parents the intervention types:

- Radio reading: This activity is derived from Crawley and Merritt's (2004) extensive lists of intervention ideas for students having difficulty with reading skills. Mr. Carson and Ms. Trahan would provide Abdullah with audio books to help improve his reading sight vocabulary and oral reading fluency skills. Both teachers would consistently spend 10 minutes a day providing Abdullah with the opportunity to repeatedly hear a story/chapter and vocalize the sentences along with the voice recording. Ms. Trahan, Mr. Carson, or a peer tutor in the class would ask Abdullah to retell the story in his own words and answer questions relating to the story's structure (see Table 1).

- High-interest/low-vocabulary textbook version: To help Abdullah study the Civic Engagement unit, Abdullah would use the high-interest/low-vocabulary version of the textbook, which reduces both the amount of text per page and the difficult vocabulary. The text also has a CD-ROM, which would give Abdullah the opportunity to listen to the text outside of class and at home. (For additional information on high-interest/low-vocabulary books and free activity sheets, see Tea Leaf Press, n.d.) Ms. Trahan and Mr. Carson noted that Abdullah's interest in policing

Table 1. Getting at a story's structure: WWW, W = 2, H = 2 Questions

W, W, W	Who is the main character?
	Who else is in the story?
	When/where does the story take place?
W = 2	What do the main character and other characters do or want to do?
	What happens when the main character and/or other characters do or try to do it?
H = 2	How does the story end?
	How do the main character and other characters feel?

Source: adapted from Graham & Harris, 2005

would be a great match for this unit, and they could include the police work in their discussions with him.

- Assistive technology software: To assist Abdullah with reading handouts, notes, texts, computer files, or Web sites, he would be taught to use Kurzweil 3000 (2000), an assistive technology software program that reads text on the computer screen to the student. The program would help Abdullah access aurally the information provided in the classroom and would help support his developing English reading skills.

- Interactive and multimedia assistance with composing written text: While assessing Abdullah orally, the teachers would also provide interactive means to support Abdullah in developing writing skills. They would use the ask, reflect, text (ART) strategy. The first step in the strategy is the review of the question prods identified as WWW, W = 2, H = 2 questions (Graham & Harris, 2005). After considering the answers, Abdullah would draw, paint, or sculpt from play dough to illustrate the components of the story. After presenting the story ideas in art form, Abdullah would write or type the text with the use of a computer. This strategy provides a preplanning stage in which Abdullah could illustrate his ideas before generating text. To assist with writing the actual text, Abdullah would also be provided with the option of using CoWriter:SOLO (1992) writing-assistance software. With a word-processing program such as Microsoft Word, this application appears along the bottom of the computer's monitor to assist with word choices. The application can also read the words aloud.

- Oral assessment: Since writing has continually posed a challenge for Abdullah because of his limited experience with formal writing, Ms. Trahan and Mr. Carson would provide him with an oral assessment while other students complete written tests. Given the written expectations at the high school level, Abdullah would need more time to develop composing strategies in order to be able to begin composing text. To give him that time, the two teachers would utilize oral assessment during the first 5 weeks of the interventions.

Ms. Trahan and Mr. Carson were planning to use multimodal and differentiated approaches to assist Abdullah in learning language and content. He would be given the opportunity to engage in learning and to access information in various formats that address several aspects of his multiple intelligences and his interests. Abdullah's parents were impressed with these ideas to help him improve his academic skills. Mr. Carson and Ms. Trahan stated that they would keep the parents updated every 2 weeks about Abdullah's progress.

Implementation Approaches

Ms. Trahan and Mr. Carson planned to implement the interventions in their own classroom and in their colleagues' classrooms. In their own classroom, they first considered three variations of coteaching models available at Gladstone between the special education/ELL teacher and the content area teacher: (a) teaching alongside the general education teacher (parallel teaching), (b) working with a small group

of students in the special education classroom while the general education teacher teaches the remainder of the class (one teaching/one helping), and (c) the special education/ELL teacher operating a pull-out resource room program. Mr. Carson and Ms. Trahan preferred the parallel teaching model that would enable them to equally rotate among small groups in the class, as this was their established practice. As they moved from one group to another, Mr. Carson and Ms. Trahan took turns working individually with Abdullah on the intervention activities.

To advocate for the use of the interventions in their colleagues' classrooms, Mr. Carson and Ms. Trahan attended the ISAS team meeting about Abdullah the following Thursday as planned. All of his teachers were present. Mr. Carson and Ms. Trahan discussed the results of their review of Abdullah's school record, past assessment results, the parent meeting earlier that week, and their suggested intervention ideas. Mrs. Fitzgerald posed a question about the intervention's timeline, and Ms. Trahan indicated that it was 5 weeks, in accordance with the Washington state guidelines. All of Abdullah's teachers chose to undertake the interventions 10 days after the meeting. Additionally, also in accordance with state guidelines, the teachers collected progress-monitoring data. Progress monitoring involves measuring student progress not only with periodic formative and summative assessments such as unit quizzes and tests, but also with daily measurements of progress—commonly referred to as curriculum-based measurement (CBM). (For a thorough discussion of CBM, see Curriculum-Based Measurement Warehouse, n.d.)

Lessons Learned and Next Steps

In math, Kurzweil 3000 helped Abdullah with his ability to hear the word problems (multiple times, if he wished). He found writing numbers on paper easier than writing words. He could use the computer to type his answers if he wished. Mr. Veinot provided Abdullah with a peer tutor to help explain vocabulary when needed. Mrs. Fitzgerald used the oral reading assessment described previously along with the WWW, W = 2, H = 2 questions to assess reading comprehension. Kurzweill 3000 and Co:Writer SOLO made a significant difference for Abdullah in English class as well as in science. To type science experiments, Abdullah found CoWriter:SOLO to be essential; his terminology may not have been as elaborate as that of the other students, but Mrs. Tate could see substantial progress during the 5 weeks.

At the end of the fifth week, all of the ISAS team members reconvened to consider the progress-monitoring/CBM results. The school psychologist joined the group to offer insight. Due to Abdullah's progress during the 5-week intervention, he was no longer considered as dually discrepant (low academic skills and little/no progress over time). As a result of this intensive strategy instruction, Abdullah's difficulty with processing language was less pronounced. He had demonstrated his ability to make progress, which indicated that no underlying disability was present. These strategies would be continued given the degree to which Abdullah benefited. Abdullah's parents were very pleased with his progress and with the fact that he would not need further identification or special education placement at that time. The processing problem

noted by his parents had not made itself evident in terms of interventions and assessments. The teachers valued the new strategies and their own availability to assist other students who needed assistance. The interventions were appropriate for an ELL like Abdullah because they directly addressed his academic needs in a practical way.

Nevertheless, lingering questions remained after the successful collaboration between Ms. Trahan, Mr. Carson, and their colleagues to assist Abdullah. These questions and their responses follow:

- *Were 5 weeks sufficient to determine the nonexistence of a dual discrepancy with academic skills?* There is no definitive answer to this question given that response to intervention is a new conceptual assessment model. In intervention research, a minimum timeline to determine the effectiveness of an intervention is 25 days, one hour per day. Reading Recovery (Clay, 2002), a first-grade literacy skills intervention program, uses a 12- to 20-week timeline (30 minutes per day). Some states and districts provide no timeline at all, resulting in some schools considering a tier-three intervention assessment for classification after 3 years; however, to provide an informative and timely assessment, this may be too long. While the student is receiving the benefit of a targeted intervention during this 3-year period, there should be a point long before the completion of 3 years when the ISAS team can feel confident that an underlying disability is present, warranting consideration for long-term classification and placement.

- *How does one exactly define dual discrepancy?* Though generally it is defined as low ability and little/no progress over time, these are conceptual terms that, like the issue of a timeline, have no definitive agreed-upon answer; for example, one cannot universally define how much progress is "little" progress. The essential component in considering whether a student continues to be dually discrepant is whether or not progress has been made during the intervention. If even a small amount of progress has been made, does that indicate the student's capability to improve given that no special education services have yet been provided? Each ISAS team's student case data will need to be reviewed to determine whether or not the team agrees that the student has made progress.

- *If Abdullah's assessment had resulted in a dual discrepancy following the 5-week intervention, would he then be immediately assessed for a tier-three intervention?* As the practice of intervention becomes more widely implemented, there seems to be a growing preference for two or more intervention attempts before moving on to tier three. If Abdullah had not made progress, the team could have considered other interventions from the intervention/assessment Web sites and books mentioned previously.

- *Why not provide Abdullah with an intensive one-on-one intervention with a paraprofessional, literacy coach, or resource teacher?* RTI interventions typically occur in the regular education classroom; they are often referred to as problem-solving RTI models, which, depending on the state or district, may or may not result in official classification and placement in special education—some districts no

longer officially classify students. An alternative RTI format to the classroom-based problem-solving model is the *standard protocol* approach in which, for example, students with a specific need (e.g., difficulty with reading decoding) receive a targeted intervention with one paraprofessional, literacy coach, or resource teacher (who is trained in the intervention strategy targeting the skill in question) in a resource room for 30 minutes a day. In Abdullah's case, he was comfortable in the regular classroom, and the intervention components could be implemented there without much adjustment for him or the rest of the class. For ELLs, maintaining a supportive and interactive environment facilitates their exposure to academic and functional language, which promotes their practice and use of English.

Questions for Discussion

Review the case study at the beginning of the chapter. Discuss the following questions that aim to extend the discussions included in the chapter.

1. What complications do you anticipate when the special education teacher is also the ESL teacher?

2. Goldstone's district reports that only 1% of its student population are ELLs. How are ELLs identified in your district? What is their percentage in relation to the total student population, and what services and resources are available to ELLs, given their number, in your community?

3. Abdullah and his parents speak very little English and are from Somalia, in East Africa. To your knowledge, what are the special needs of African immigrants in your district, if it contains any immigrants from that region of the world? In addressing these needs, who have you and your colleagues collaborated with, or who do you plan to collaborate with and why?

Summary of Main Ideas
1. It can take 5 to 7 years for an ESL student to attain academic English skills.
2. The reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act calls for an increased focus on early identification of learning disabilities—referred to as *response to intervention* (RTI).
3. ELL and special education teachers must collaborate to help differentiate between ELLs with learning disailities and ELLs who are experiencing acquisition difficulties that are part of the natural process of second language developmental stages.
4. The classroom teacher has a pivotal role in initiating special education referrals.
5. For ELLs, nomination for special education services may occur if prereferral intervention has not been successful, exclusionary factors have been considered, formal and informal assessment in the student's first language and English has been provided, a synthesis of all available student data has been compiled, families have been consulted, and an ESL teacher is included in a multidisciplinary team.

6. At Goldstone High School there are three general coteaching arrangements:
    a) Parallel teaching: the special education teacher teaching alongside the general education teacher
    b) One teaching/one helping: the special education teacher working with a small group of students in the special education classroom while the general education teacher teaches the remainder of the class
    c) Pull out: the special education teacher operates a pull-out resource room program

7. The collaboration between Mr. Carson and Ms. Trahan had several benefits:
    a) They had a mutual commitment to advocate for Abdullah.
    b) They developed the intervention component ideas together and displayed leadership in collaboration by taking the initiative to employ the interventions in their own classroom for Abdullah's benefit.
    c) Their collaborative example encouraged Abdullah's other content area teachers to use the same intervention components and report back with their own findings— collaboration was catching on!
    d) Finally, their collaborative effort resulted in an appropriate determination of Abdullah not being classified as having a learning disability.

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