



## Tip Sheet 10

### ***Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Screening Practices***

Because language and culture strongly influence child rearing practices and children’s behavior, traditional screening methods and instruments may not readily fit *all* children—especially those children whose home language is other than English. For example, screening instruments may or may not be available in the home language of the children and families being screened. Screening items may be based on Euro-American culture and may not adequately reflect the socio-cultural norms of the children being screened. Assessment results may be misinterpreted by staff members who are not familiar with the similarities and differences that occur in language development of young dual language learners or with the potential for cultural bias of screening items.



#### ***Why is developmental screening important?***

Routine universal screening of young children with a validated tool promotes a better understanding of each child’s development. Early identification of potential delays allows for timely access to appropriate supports and services promoting optimal development for every child.

Routine screening is important for all children but in order to make sure the results are valid, both the *method* and *instrument* must be culturally and linguistically relevant to the population being screened. If not, programs risk both over- and under-referral of children to special education resulting in children and families not receiving the kinds of services they may need. Here are a few tips to consider when screening young children who are dual language learners.

#### **Make the method culturally and linguistically responsive**

**Notification:** Make sure notices and advertising of screening events are routinely posted in families’ home language(s) in public locations and/or media that are *readily accessible and widely used* by families of dual language learners.

**Location:** Ensure that the screening location is *readily accessible, familiar and welcoming* to families of dual language learners such as free health care clinics, community centers, or early care and learning settings during “family friendly” times.

**Signage:** All signs during screening events are provided in the families’ home language(s) if possible *and/or* clearly delineated pictures and symbols of the sign’s written messages may be displayed.

**Group/Individual Events:** Consider allowing parents/caregivers to accompany their child during large group screening events and/or during direct child screening if preferred by parents/caregivers.

**Interpreters:** Enlist interpreters whenever possible who are able to act as cultural brokers and explain the screening process to both children and parents/caregivers *before, during, and after* screening process.

- If interpreters are unavailable for families/children who speak another language other than English (in rural areas or in cases of low-incidence languages), it is helpful to have staff available to assist families and “walk them through” every step of the screening process.



## Tip Sheet 10 *(continued)*

### ***Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Screening Practices***

#### **Interpreting Screening Results**

##### **Culturally competent**

Screening staff is considerate of the home culture of the children being screened.

- Staff are alert for the potential of cultural bias in specific screening items.
- Bilingual staff and/or interpreters clarify these items with parents/caregivers and interpret scores accordingly.

##### **Linguistically knowledgeable**

Screening staff is knowledgeable about language development in children who are dual language learners.

- Bilingual staff and/or interpreters consider children's home language environments when interpreting language items.
- Staff is knowledgeable in second language acquisition and how this process influences children's language development in both languages.
- Staff understands that screening results in English may be a reflection of dual language learner's level of acquisition of English as another language rather than their actual development and interpret results accordingly.

#### ***What's next for your team?***

What is the diversity of your community?

Who might assist you to assure that your screening practices are culturally and linguistically responsive?

#### ***For more information:***

- **Slide deck - WI Department of Public Instruction**  
*Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Screening Practices*  
[tinyurl.com/CultLingResp](http://tinyurl.com/CultLingResp)
- **WI Cooperative Educational Service Agency (CESA) 4**  
*Checklist for Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Screening Practices*  
[tinyurl.com/CultLingChecklist](http://tinyurl.com/CultLingChecklist)

**"Parents," throughout, refers to parents, family members who are primary caregivers, guardians and/or foster parents.**

Developmental screening is most effective when integrated into the context of families and local communities. Engaging families in the process of development screening in a way that honors their cultural and linguistic practices will result in more accurate identification of potential delays and increased follow through with referrals. After all, parents are the most important people in a child's life.