ELPA Validity Evaluation Instrument:

Survey of district-level identification and placement
procedures for English learners

evea

Washington	edCount, LLC
Idaho	Center for Assessment
Indiana	UCLA
Montana	Synergy Enterprises, Inc
Oregon	PIRE

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About EVEA

The U.S. Department of Education funded Enhanced Assessment Grant *Evaluating the Validity of English Language Proficiency Assessments* (EVEA; CFDA 84.368) was awarded to the Office of the Superintendent for Public Instruction of the State of Washington in fall 2009. The project brought together five states – Idaho, Indiana, Montana, Oregon, and Washington – to work on collaborative and independent validity plans for English language proficiency assessments (ELPAs) over an 18-month period. During the EVEA funding period, none of the partner states belonged to an existing ELPA consortium; rather each had worked with commercial test developers to create state-wide ELPAs that are aligned with their state English language development (ELD) standards. The main project goal was for each state to create a validity argument for its ELPA system. Additional project outcomes included:

- Building individual State Interpretive Arguments for the validity of each state's ELPA,
- Building a Common Interpretive Argument for any ELPA;
- Designing a set of studies and instruments to support and pilot test these arguments; and
- Making instruments publically available at the close of the project for the wider education community to access.

This research instrument is one product of these efforts.

Collaborating institutions

edCount, LLC
the National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment (NCIEA, the Center for Assessment)
The Graduate School of Education and Information Studies (GSE&IS) at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA)
Synergy Enterprises, Inc. (SEI)
The Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation (PIRE)

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Research Objective

A precursor condition for any English language proficiency assessment (ELPA) system is that the students who participate in the ELPA and generate scores are the appropriate population of students for whom the assessment was intended. ELPAs differ from general content assessments in that they are designed for administration to a certain specific sub-population of students, so it is important that states identify 'the right' population of students to participate in the assessment. States and districts typically use ELPA scores and performance levels to evaluate and make decisions about student placement, classroom instruction, and program design. If states or districts over- or under-identify their EL populations (meaning, they miss students who should be ELs, or identify students as ELs who are not), this could threaten the meaning of ELPA scores, and threaten the validity of decisions made based on those scores. As a result, students may miss out on services that they need, or instructional programs may fail to meet student or district needs.

This document outlines the claims, underlying assumptions, and research questions that can serve as the foundation for studies to determine whether and how well districts within the state are identifying ELs by consistent and appropriate means. In addition, it provides sample questions for a survey of EL identification and placement practices at the district level. This instrument was designed and piloted as a companion instrument to the **Focus group protocol for district administrators about identifying, placing, exiting, and monitoring English learners,** with the thought that a survey may be used to collect descriptive information about current practice, and a focus group may provide a forum in which administrators can provide feedback about challenges, and suggest potential improvements to that practice.

Claim

Students have been appropriately identified to participate in the ELP program and assessment.

Underlying assumptions:

> The state/district/school uses a consistent definition for EL-status that is based on linguistic proficiency.

> All newly enrolling students are screened for potential EL-status using a home language survey, or comparable screening instrument or protocol.

> The state/district/school's identification instruments (i.e., home language survey, enrollment questionnaire, ELP placement test, etc.) are well-designed and collect appropriate information to determine a student's EL-status and linguistic proficiency.

Claim

Teachers have the support and resources to provide instruction to promote students' acquisition of academic English.

Underlying assumptions:

> (Content and ELD) Teachers receive information about ELs who enroll in their classes (e.g., placement test scores, and information about personal and academic background for new ELs; previous year's ELPA scores for returning ELs).

(Content and ELD) Teachers understand how to interpret information that they receive about ELs who enroll in their classes.

(Content and ELD) Teachers understand how to use and apply information that they receive about ELs who enroll in their classes to support these students' needs.

Research questions

Research Question 1:   Which personnel are involved in the identification and placement processes for ELs?

Research Question 2:   To what extent do schools and districts have access to and use well-designed identification instruments?

Research Question 3:   To what extent do districts and schools have access to and use appropriate information to place ELs in language and content classes?

Method

States may begin to address the research questions above by circulating a survey to collect descriptive information about identification and placement practices throughout the state. Each state's particular concerns will direct the exact format or content of this survey, as well as the sampling method. In general, states should consider administering the survey to as broad a sample as possible (in terms both of geography and position) in order to obtain the most accurate picture of how its districts and schools identify and place EL students. States may consider surveying practitioners from a variety of roles (e.g., district administrators, building administrators, regional administrators, etc.), though district administrators should likely be included no matter what.

Depending on the sample, not all questions may be appropriate for all respondents (e.g., if respondents report that their district does not use a home language survey, they will likely not have answers to give to the questions that ask for further information about home language surveys). States may consider administering this survey electronically, using an online program like Survey Monkey; if so, the program's "question logic" functions can help to ensure that respondents only see questions that are appropriate, based on responses they have already given. Exhibit 1 shows the program logic for the survey, which will lead respondents through different series of questions depending on how they respond to each item. There are also notes in the following survey protocol about how to design the survey to direct users according to this logic. States that opt to administer the survey on paper or via a static document (e.g., a Word document form), will need to consider that not all respondents may be able to answer all questions, and may need to provide prompts or instructions to help respondents know how to respond to (or ignore) questions that they cannot answer.
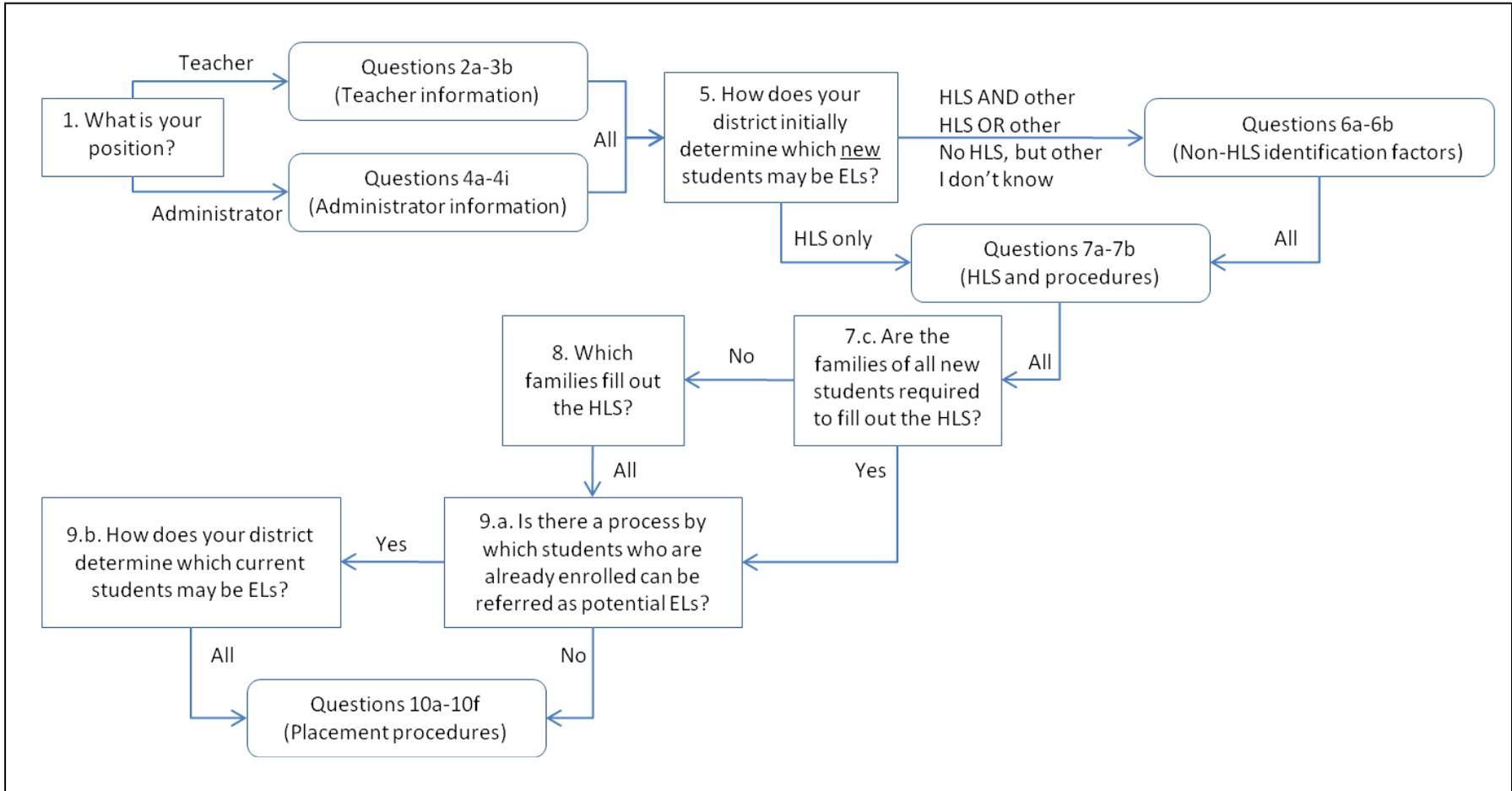
Analysis

States should analyze results should for patterns or trends within each district as well as across the state. The results may help states to identify recurring themes (e.g., many districts do not administer their home language survey (HLS) to all students) or outliers (e.g., a few specific districts do not administer their HLS to all students). For states that exert relatively more control over the identification process (e.g., by providing one home language survey and requiring that all districts use it), this survey may help to determine how well these mandated practices are being understood and followed at the district or school level. For states that allow more local control, this survey can collect baseline

information about what kinds of practices and instruments are actually in use throughout the state, and how comparable these may be from district to district.

The findings from this survey may help states to identify specific areas within identification and placement practices that warrant further study. The **Focus group protocol for district administrators about identifying, placing, exiting, and monitoring English learners** provides one sample focus group protocol, or states may wish to design and facilitate their own focus groups, or other follow-up research, based on their survey findings.

Exhibit 1. Survey sequence with question logic.

Survey

Survey Question	Response Choices		Question Logic/ Administrative Notes
1. What is your position?	- ELD instructor - Content Instructor - District administrator - School administrator Other (*please specify*)		*Respondents who select 'ELD instructor' or 'Content instructor' will be directed to **Question 2.** Respondents who select 'District administrator' or 'school administrator' will be directed to **Question 3.***
2. *If you are a teacher*: a. What grade level(s) do you teach? (Choose all that apply.)	- K • 4 • 7 • 10 1 • 5 • 8 • 11 2 • 6 • 9 • 12 3		*Only respondents who have indicated that they are an instructor (in **Question 1**) will see this question.*
b. What content area(s) do you teach? (Choose all that apply.)	- ELD/ESL - General elementary classroom - English language arts - Mathematics - Science - Social studies/history		*States may alter the options for this question according to the naming conventions used in their state and districts.*
c. Do you teach ELs?	• Yes • No		*Respondents who answer 'yes' will be directed to **Question 3.** Respondents who answer 'no' will be directed to **Question 5.***
3. *If you teach ELs:* a. How many EL students do you teach?	[Open-ended]		*Only respondents who have said 'Yes' to **Question 2.c.** will be directed to this question.*
b. If you do teach ELs, in what kind of program or setting do you do so? (Choose all that apply.)	- Inclusion classes in general ed content areas (SIOP/SEI/SDAIE) - Pull-out ESL - Push-in ESL - Newcomer program	- Transitional bilingual - Developmental bilingual - Dual-language/two-way immersion - Other (please specify)	*States may alter the options for this question according to the program offerings used in their state and districts.*

Survey Question	Response Choices		Question Logic/ Administrative Notes
4. *If you are an administrator:* a. What is your exact title:	[Open-ended]		*Only respondents who have indicated that they are an administrator (in **Question 1**) will see this question.*
b. What programs do you oversee? (Choose all that apply.)	• Title I • Federal Grants/programs • Special populations • Accountability	• Title III • ESL/ESOL/ELLs/LEP • Assessment • Other (please specify)	*States may alter the options for this question according to the naming conventions used in their state and districts.*
c. Approximately how many ELs are enrolled in your district?	[Open-ended]		
d. Approximately how many languages are represented in your district?	• <10 languages represented. • 10-20 languages represented. • 20-30 languages represented. • 30+ languages represented	• **Optional:** provide an estimate of the # of languages in your district: _____ • I don't know. • Comments? (please explain)	*Depending on the format in which states distribute this survey (e.g., in hard copy, electronically via a program like Survey Monkey, etc.), this question can be presented as a table with 'languages' and 'nationalities' as rows, and the quantities ('fewer than 10,' '10-20,' etc.) as columns. Respondents place an 'X' or check a radio button in the cells that correspond to their answers.*
e. Approximately how many nationalities are represented in your district?	• <10 nationalities represented. • 10-20 nationalities represented. • 20-30 nationalities represented. • 30+ nationalities represented	• **Optional:** provide an estimate of the # of nationalities in your district: _____ • I don't know. • Comments? (please explain)	

Survey Question	Response Choices		Question Logic/ Administrative Notes
f. Regardless of the number of languages or nationalities, are a large majority of the ELs in your district (>75%) the same nationality, or speakers of the same language?	• Yes • No		
g. How stable has your district's EL population been over the past 5 years?	• Explosive growth or change (over 100%) in the past 5 years. • Substantial growth or change (75-100%) in the past 5 years. • Significant growth or change (50-74%) in the past 5 years • Steady growth or change (25-49%) in the past 5 years.	• Slight growth or change (1-24%) in the past 5 years • No growth or change (<1%) in the past 5 years. • Our EL population has declined in the past 5 years. • I don't know. • Comments? (please explain)	
h. What role, if any, do you play in the identification and placement of ELs within your district? (Choose all that apply.)	• I implement the state-level policy(s). • I implement the district-level policy(s). • I set the district-level policy(s).	• I don't play any role in identifying or placing ELs • Other (please explain). • Comments? (please explain)	
i. What kinds of language instruction programs does your district offer? (Choose all that apply.)	• Sheltered instruction • Pull-out ESL • Push-in ESL • Specially Delivered Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE) • Structured English immersion	• Transitional bilingual • Developmental bilingual • Dual-language/two-way immersion • Newcomer program • Other (please specify) • I don't know. • Comments? (please explain)	*States may alter the options for this question according to the program offerings used in their state and districts.*

Survey Question	Response Choices	Question Logic/ Administrative Notes
Identification practices and instruments		
5. How does your district initially determine which <u>new</u> students may be ELLs?	• Home language survey only. • Home language survey AND another assessment of language background. • Home language survey OR another assessment of language background. • No home language survey, but another assessment of language background. • I don't know. • Other (please specify) or comments? (please explain)	*Respondents who select "Home language survey AND…," "Home language survey OR…," or "No home language survey, but…" will be directed to* **Question 6.** *Respondents who select "Home language survey only" will be directed to* **Question 7.** *Respondents who select "I don't know" or "other" will be directed to* **Question 8.c.**
6. a. What methods, in addition to or instead of a home language survey, does your district use?	• Teacher recommendation • Administrator recommendation • Parental request or recommendation • EL status at previous school • I don't know. • Other (please specify) or comments? (please explain)	*Only respondents who have indicated that they use other methods in addition to or instead of an HLS (in* **Question 5***) will see this question.*
b. My district uses these methods:	• In addition to our home language survey. • Instead of a home language survey.	
7. a. Where did your HLS come from?	• The State provides our HLS (mandatory). • The State provides our HLS (optional). • The State provides a minimum set of mandatory HLS questions, to which we have added district-specific items. • We created our HLS within this district. • We borrowed or adapted our HLS from another district. • We found our HLS online. • Someone from outside of our district created our HLS for us. • I don't know. • My district does not use an HLS. • Other (please specify) or comments? (please explain)	*Although only respondents who have indicated that their district uses an HLS should see questions 7a-7c, the response "my district does not use an HLS" is listed as a precaution in case any respondents answer in error.*

Survey Question	Response Choices	Question Logic/ Administrative Notes
b. Who sees or receives HLS response information? (Choose all that apply.)	• ELD teachers • Content teachers • District administrators • State administrators • I don't know. • My district does not use an HLS. • Other (please specify) or comments? (please explain)	
c. Are the families of all new students required to fill out the HLS? (Choose only one)	• Yes • No • I don't know. • My district does not use an HLS.	*Respondents who answer "Yes" or "My district does not use an HLS" will be directed to **Question 9**. Respondents who answer "No" or "I don't know" will be directed to **Question 8.***
8. Which families fill out the HLS? (Choose all that apply).	• The families of students whom we feel are reasonably likely to be ELs. • The families of students from certain ethnic backgrounds. • The families of students who clearly speak a language other than English. • The families of students who have previously been identified as ELs. • The families of students who have been referred by teachers as potential ELs. • Any families that choose to fill out an HLS for their student. • I don't know. • Other (please specify) or comments? (please explain)	*Only respondents who answered "No" or "I don't know" to*
9. a. Is there a process by which students who are already enrolled can be referred as potential ELs?	• Yes • No • I don't know.	

Survey Question	Response Choices	Question Logic/ Administrative Notes
b. How does your district determine which <u>current</u> students may be ELs? (Choose all that apply.)	• Home language survey • Teacher recommendation • Administrator recommendation • Parental request or recommendation • EL status at previous school • Other (please explain) • Other (please specify) or comments? (please explain)	
Placement procedures		
10. a. For students who are flagged as potential ELs, how do you determine definitively whether they need special language instruction or services?	• We administer a dedicated placement test (e.g., the IPT, Woodcock-Muñoz, LAS Links, etc.). • We use a shortened or modified version of our ELPA as a placement test. • We administer our full English language proficiency assessment (ELPA) as a placement test. • We decide based solely the initial identification instruments discussed in earlier questions (i.e., home language survey and/or any other tools or procedures, but no placement test). • I don't know. • Other (please specify) or comments? (please explain)	*States that allow districts to choose from a variety of placement tests may wish to add a question asking respondents to clarify which test(s) they use, and possibly provide feedback about why they have chosen a certain placement test.*
b. Who interprets identification and/or placement results to determine whether a student should receive language services? (Choose all that apply)	• ELD teacher(s). • Content teacher(s). • The district administrator who directs assessment. • The district administrator who directs Title III programs. • Someone at the state level. • I don't know. • Other (please specify) or comments? (please explain)	

Survey Question	Response Choices	Question Logic/ Administrative Notes
c. Are you one of the people involved in this decision process in your school or district?	• Yes • No • Sometimes (please explain).	
d. What other factors may affect or determine whether a student is identified and placed as an EL? (Choose all that apply)	• Conversations with parents. • Conversations with teachers. • Conversations with the student. • Space in program. • Funding or resource limitations. • Scheduling issues with other classes. • I don't know. • Other (please specify) or comments? (please explain)	
e. Do ELD teachers receive any of the following information when ELs are placed in their classrooms? (Choose all that apply)	• Home language survey response information. • ELP placement test score. • Native language diagnostic assessment score. • Mathematics diagnostic assessment score. • Science diagnostic assessment score. • Social Studies diagnostic assessment score. • Transcripts or academic achievement information from previous enrollment in domestic schools. • Transcripts or academic achievement information from previous enrollment in international schools. • I don't know. • Other (please specify) or comments? (please explain)	*Depending on the format in which states distribute this survey (e.g., in hard copy, electronically via a program like Survey Monkey, etc.), this question can be presented as a table with each response option as a row, and column headings 'Always,' 'never,' 'If the student has this information already,' 'depending on student's language,' etc.*

Survey Question	Response Choices	Question Logic/ Administrative Notes
f. Do <u>content</u> teachers or general educators receive any of the following information when ELs are placed in their classrooms? (Choose all that apply)	- Home language survey response information. - ELP placement test score. - Native language arts diagnostic assessment score. - Mathematics diagnostic assessment score. - Science diagnostic assessment score. - Social Studies diagnostic assessment score. - Transcripts or academic achievement information from previous enrollment in domestic schools. - Transcripts or academic achievement information from previous enrollment in international schools. - I don't know. - Other (please explain) - Comments? (please explain)	*Depending on the format in which states distribute this survey (e.g., in hard copy, electronically via a program like Survey Monkey, etc.), this question can be presented as a table with each response option as a row, and column headings 'Always,' 'never,' 'If the student has this information already,' 'depending on student's language,' etc.*