

# **The Pre-Referral Checklist for English Language Learners (PReCELL)**

**Developed by: Skip Cleavinger, M.A.**  
**Director of English Learner Programs**  
**Warren County Public Schools**

## **Pre-Referral Checklist for English Language Learners (PReCELL)**

This worksheet is intended as an aid to Response to Intervention (RTI) teams, Problem Solving Teams, School Psychologists and administrators who are reviewing data to determine if a struggling ELL student may have a disability. Every case is different, but it is hoped that this checklist will provide assistance in the data gathering and reviewing process by outlining critical cultural and linguistic information and ELL-specific educational considerations that should generally be brought to bear before a decision to refer is made in any case involving a student who is *culturally and linguistically diverse* (CLD) and in the process of learning English.

There are many factors that can contribute to educational struggles in the cases of ELL students, and all of them should be reviewed in the pre-referral and referral stages. Likewise, if an evaluation is conducted, the role of each of these factors should be weighed when considering if the observed problems are due to factors related to being CLD and in the process learning academic English or to a disability.

The information needed to complete this worksheet can be collected from the student's permanent record file, the ESL file (housed in the ESL room), and interviews with the student and the student's family. An interpreter may be required, and the "In Every Language" phone translation service is available in all Warren County Schools. Call 1-866-908-6156 and, when asked, give the operator the code 270.2. You'll need to give your name and phone number. To obtain information about various languages and countries, online resources such as Wikipedia are useful, although do exercise caution with Wikipedia. The Center for Applied Linguistics ([cal.org](http://cal.org)) has a lot of information about the refugees who come to the U.S., and these "Culture Briefs" describe the countries, cultures, customs and languages of several refugee groups.

The worksheet draws heavily on the work of several prominent researchers in the field of ELLs with disabilities, such as Dr. Alba Ortiz, Dr. Janette Klingner, Dr. Sam Ortiz, and Drs. David & Yvonne Freeman. Please seek out the work of these important contributors to the field.

Some facts to keep in mind throughout the data collection and review:

- All CLD/ELL students come to U.S. schools with important "funds" of information (i.e., previous experiences, previous academic learning, etc.)
- ELLs are doing "double work" because our schools provide content instruction exclusively in English. Thus, they must learn new content, as well as support/maintain/build upon previously learned content while they are learning English.
- Learning academic English takes time. The time it takes depends a great deal upon the quality of instruction they receive in English as a Second Language (ESL) classes AND mainstream content classes.
- ALL educational staff, including content and ESL teachers, are responsible for academic English language development for both ELL students and native English speaking students.
- English language development (ESL) is a Tier I service. It is not an intervention.
- ELL students can have disabilities. They can be served in ESL and have an IEP. The evaluation process will be difficult, particularly if the suspected disability is mild (LD or MMD).

**Section 1: Identifying Information:**

Name:	Date of birth:
School:	Date(s) of data collection/review:
Grade:	Age:
Parents names:	Address:

**Section 2: Residential/Cultural Background:**

Country in which student was born:	Length of time the student resided there:
List any countries the student lived in prior to coming to the U.S.:	Did the student reside in a refugee camp in any of their countries of residence?
Date of entry into U.S.:	Reason for coming to the U.S. (immigration, refugee resettlement, parents' job relocation with an international organization or business, etc.)

**Section 3: Linguistic Considerations:**

Native language of the student:
At the present time, to the best of available information, how proficient is the student in listening and speaking skills in their native language?  (This determination should be based on observations and reports from others who speak the student's native language [i.e., parent, relative, friend of the family, bilingual staff members, bilingual professionals, etc.], observations of native language use when conversing with other speakers, results of tests in native language if available, performance on informal language tasks, such as wordless books, etc.)
Very Proficient  1            2            3            4            5  Low Proficiency
Does the student listen to music in the native language?

Does the student watch TV shows, movies or other visual/auditory media in native language?
SCHOOL-BASED LANGUAGE USE: What language does the student speak most of the time in academic situations?
SCHOOL-BASED LANGUAGE USE: What language does the student speak most of the time during nonacademic situations and social contexts?
COMMUNITY-BASED LANGUAGE USE: What language does the student speak most of the time when not in school?
NATIVE LANGUAGE LITERACY: Is the student literate in their native language?
Are the student's parents and/or siblings literate in the native language?
Are there native language books, magazines, newspapers in the home?
Have the parents read to the child in the native language? If so, do they still?
Were there any reported concerns or delays in the student's native language development? If so, explain:
At what age was English introduced to the student?
Do any of the student's family members also speak English?  If so, are these English speakers considered proficient in English?  Explain:
Was the student proficient in listening and speaking skills in the native language at the time that English was introduced?
Was the student to any degree in reading and writing in the native language when English was first introduced?

How long has the student been receiving English language development (i.e., through ESL, after-school programming)?

What are the ACCESS score results for the student?

Listening \_\_\_\_\_ Speaking \_\_\_\_\_

Reading \_\_\_\_\_ Writing \_\_\_\_\_

Oral Language \_\_\_\_\_ Literacy \_\_\_\_\_

Comprehension \_\_\_\_\_ Composite \_\_\_\_\_

How many ACCESS Tests has the student taken?

Has growth been evidenced in the scores?

Describe the patterns of growth or other trends in the data:

Rate the degree of similarity between the native language and English. Many languages have features that can be very similar to English. Many languages use the Roman alphabet to represent sounds and sound units. Additionally, languages can share many of the same phonemes. There are always syntactical differences between languages, but the use of noun markers, nouns and noun modifiers can be similar in some respects to English. Semantically, some languages have many “cognates”- words that look similar to the English word with the same meaning. 30-40% of words in English have a Spanish cognate, while Chinese and English have very few cognates, for example. There are several resources online which can be help in determining the linguistic similarity of a particular language to English.)

Very Similar

Very Dissimilar

1

2

3

4

5

How many other students in the school building speak the native language of the student being studied?

Could it be stated that the student is “linguistically isolated” (i.e., there are few or no other students or adults in the building who can understand and speak the native language of the student in question)?

YES

NO

**Interpretation:** As mentioned, it takes time to learn English, so the student needs to have had some opportunity to be some programming to develop his or her English. There is no magic number with regard to the amount of time, but they must have been given the opportunity to learn some English. The quality of English language programming is critical of course. The ESL teachers must be using a research-based curriculum and implementing it with fidelity.

If the obtained ratings in this section are high and other risk factors or problems seem evident, then a lack of English language proficiency may be the primary cause for the educational difficulties.

Is the student's current level of English language proficiency consistent with what would be expected based on the time he or she has been receiving English language development through ESL or some other program?

YES NO

Is the student's growth in English proficiency commensurate with that of his/her EL peers (i.e., students who entered EL programming at roughly the same English proficiency level and have been receiving services for approximately the same amount of time).

YES NO

Is some evidence to suggest that the student's native language development was delayed or interrupted?

YES NO

Does the evidence suggest that the educational concerns are due primarily to the student's lack of proficiency in academic English?

YES NO

Notes & Considerations: Development in the first language is a very strong piece in the assessment puzzle for English learners who are suspected of having a disability. It is important to obtain some evidence of first language development via interviews with the parents and other family members.

**Section 4: Cultural Considerations:**

How long has the student been in the U.S.?				
How long has the student been attending school in U.S.?				
Rate the similarity of the cultural/societal features of the student's native country and the U.S. (For example: Was the native country of the student similar in terms of governmental structure, access to electricity/plumbing, roads, transportation, technology, access to adequate and safe food and water supplies, access to education, etc.)				
Very Similar	Very Dissimilar			
1	2	3	4	5

Rate the similarity geographical features and climate of the student's native country and their current community in the U.S.:				
Very Similar		Very Dissimilar		
1	2	3	4	5
Rate the similarity of living circumstances in native country and their current living circumstances. (For example: If student lived in a refugee camp in Tanzania and they are now living in an apartment near busy streets and a commercial area, the circumstances are would be "Very Dissimilar.")				
Very Similar		Very Dissimilar		
1	2	3	4	5
Rate the similarity of family and gender roles in native country and those in the U.S.: (For example: In some societies, the males are expected to get an education, and the females are expected to stay home and help with cooking, cleaning, etc. In some societies, children marry and bear children much earlier than in the U.S. Some societies expect young males to start working earlier than U.S. standards and mores in order to support the family)				
Very Similar		Very Dissimilar		
1	2	3	4	5
Based on observations and interviews with others, rate the degree to which this student appears to have "acculturated" (i.e., accepted and adapted to differences between their native culture and U.S. culture):				
Has Acculturated		Has NOT Acculturated		
1	2	3	4	5

Interpretation: The degree to which a student has adapted to the cultural differences between their native culture and U.S. culture does have an impact on educational functioning. Thus, the higher the score given in each of the boxes, the more likely that a lack of acculturation may be contributing to the educational concerns.

Is the student's level of acculturation consistent with expectations given the amount of time that they been in the U.S. and their characteristics of their native country and culture?

YES NO

Is there reason to believe that educational problems being evidenced are due to factors related to acculturation?

YES NO

**Section 5: Educational Considerations:**

Current School:												
Previous schools in U.S.:												
Did the student attend school in any countries prior to coming to the U.S.? If so, list them												
<table border="1"><thead><tr><th>School Name</th><th>Location</th><th>Grades and Year Attended</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>1.</td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>2.</td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>3.</td><td></td><td></td></tr></tbody></table>	School Name	Location	Grades and Year Attended	1.			2.			3.		
School Name	Location	Grades and Year Attended										
1.												
2.												
3.												
If the student attended a school prior to coming to the U.S., was the language of instruction the same as the native/dominant language of the student?  Comments:  (Tip: Schools in refugee camps can potentially serve several language groups; however, instruction is often provided in primarily one language. In these cases, the language of instruction may be one in which many of the students are not proficient)												
Is the student currently receiving English language development (i.e., ESL)? YES NO												
Describe the type of support. For example, is the student pulled out for ESL instruction or are they supported through monitoring & support only?												
If the student is being pulled out for ESL instruction, how many hours per week are they seen in the ESL room?												



Is there a current Program Services Plan (PSP) developed for the student?	
YES	NO
Are the ESL services being provided to the student consistent with the PSP?	
YES	NO
Do the services being provided in ESL, as described by the PSP, align with the current ACCESS scores for the student?	
YES	NO
<p>(Comment: In many cases, ELs will develop proficiency in listening and speaking skills relatively quickly, and reading and writing skills lag to some degree. If students with this particular profile are served for 30 minutes a day for general development in listening, speaking, reading and writing, the reading and writing needs of these students may not be adequately addressed.</p> <p>Likewise, the overall proficiency level is often used to determine whether a student is pulled for ESL instruction or supported through monitoring only. The profile described above (i.e., relatively high L,S &amp; relative low R,W) can potentially result in an overall proficiency rating that is high enough to warrant monitoring and support. Thus, these students are not receiving ANY direct instruction in academic English reading and writing skills.</p>	
Are the students' content teachers aware of the PSP?	
YES	NO
Do the content teachers state that they are knowledgeable of the stages of second language acquisition and have a working knowledge of where the student of concern is currently functioning (based on current ACCESS scores and the services described in the PSP)?	
YES	NO
Notes:	
Are the content teachers implementing the accommodations described in the PSP in INSTRUCTION and ASSESSMENT?	
YES	NO

<p>Have interventions been implemented with the student?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">YES                      NO</p> <p>If so, describe the interventions and targeted skills:</p>
<p>How long have interventions been in place?</p>
<p>What have the results been?</p> <p>***** Attach Documentation (i.e., results of formative assessments)</p>
<p>Is there evidence that the selected intervention programs have been successful with ELLs?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">YES                      NO</p>
<p>Were the cultural and linguistic differences of the student taken into account during the implementation of intervention program(s)?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">YES                      NO</p> <p>If so, please describe how the program was modified:</p>

Interpretation: Ensuring that culturally and linguistically appropriate instruction has been provided is a critical piece in determining whether or not a struggling ELL student may have a disability.

Based on all of the information presented in Section 5, is there reason to believe that the instruction, assessment and interventions have been appropriate given the cultural and linguistic background of the student?

YES                      NO

Is there reason to believe that instruction, assessment and interventions have been appropriate given the student's academic English language proficiency?

YES                      NO

**Section 5: Final Considerations:**

Based on the data collected, the recommendation of this committee is to move forward with interventions and data collection:

YES

NO

This recommends that there is sufficient reason to suspect a disability and a referral is recommended:

YES

NO