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Assignment #1: Assessment Bias

Serge’s skills were not assessed adequately. The first problem was perhaps placing him in the third grade. It is important to consider other countries teach different things at different ages and some children don’t even attend school until they are much older. From his Aunt’s story it seemed as if he missed at least a year or two of school due to the war and moving. His schooling in France seemed to be ineffective due to him receiving little or no special instruction and his lack of French skills.

Another issue was with his assessment (although this was not discovered until about 2 years later, he was given a test in English and only Serbian if he did not understand. It is my thought that initially he could have misunderstood questions on the assessment or perhaps was afraid of asking a question to be asked in Serbian.  An ELL teacher should have been present for the testing initially with Serge.

Multiple assessments should have been administered for initial testing and he should have been continually tested to measure his growth. Should they have noticed he was not making progress a new plan on how to approach teaching Serge should have been made. Although tests are ideally designed to be unbiased, a level of biasness will always exist. I do believe this shows in CLD students more prominently due to the differences in language and in culture.

Not all teachers are experts in all areas, therefore in cases such as Serge's- all the experts should weigh in from the beginning due to the multiple cultural and linguistic diversity of the student. If he was going to be placed into an LEP program I do feel as if an ELL teacher should been involved over the school psychologist.

I do not think he was correctly identified as learning disabled. He entered in third grade and went until fifth before receiving effective interventions. Serge’s third and fourth grade teacher should have been assessing his progress through out- if they noticed he was not progressing they should have made changes. It is also noted most new language learners need time to feel comfortable to use the language. There should have been earlier intervention for Serge. “ English language learners often show the same difficulties with learning, attention, social skills, and behavioral and emotional balance as students with learning disabilities” (Salend and Salinas, 2003), I think this statement is incredibly powerful in that it draws attention to one of the biggest issues- I do not believe Serge was learning disabled but perhaps just not at the same level due to his language learning.

Mrs. Evans intervened by participating in resource classes as well as going into his language art class several times a week. Previously, it seems as if the third and forth grade teacher did not provide these tier 2 or 3 interventions. I think the combination of the resource/inclusion is amazingly effective, and was shown by Serge’s progress he made in the fifth grade. Should this type of instructional strategy been employed earlier, Serge may have made progress sooner.

Mrs. Evans knowledge of her student’s background made a huge impact.  One of the best actions a teacher can take to ensure the most effective educational approach for a child is to first get to know the student, which Mrs. Evans did. Not only is this applicable for CLD students, but all students as well. Taking the time to get know your students and build a relationship allows you to further understand who they are, what different standards they have in their culture, or even an insight into their thinking process. By creating such a relationship teachers are able to learn about individual students interested or abilities and perhaps use this knowledge to help create content your students are interested in. This is particularly helpful in CLD students as being able to share your culture and interests with your class may be a source of motivation .

Teacher knowledge of CLD background is crucial. I personally just experienced a time when my lack of cultural background negativity impacted my lesson. They were doing a math lesson in which they used cards to calculate probability problems. My plan was contingent on their knowledge of a deck having 52 cards, half black cards, half red cards, etc. I incorrectly assumed the children would have the knowledge from playing cards- however; the younger generation did not play cards as I had assumed! So I can now imagine the different types of variation in cultural knowledge.

  Overall, I do think Mrs. Evans took the correct approach by getting to know Serge’s culture and changing instructional strategies. Early interventions may have helped Serge progress more quickly, but it could also be due to his comfort level of the language (English). His misdiagnosis of learning disabled hindered his education since teachers may have had a lower expectation and did not account for the cultural differences in education. Ultimately the steps Mrs. Evans helped to ensure success for Serge’s academics.