



# The Importance of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Assessments

Distinguishing between a difference and a disorder among Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD) students is a complex process even for the experienced bilingual assessment professional. Practitioners making such distinction need to have a strong understanding of the interplay between a student's acculturation level, language proficiency, cognitive and academic performance.

A basic consideration is the significant cognitive and academic development differences observed in bilingual/bicultural and monolingual/monocultural students. CLD students' emerging bilingualism and blended cultural backgrounds are not adequately represented in any existing norm sample; therefore, informal evaluation procedures must be performed to conduct a fair and equitable assessment.

Data gathered from formal and informal sources must substantiate that exclusionary factors such as inappropriate instruction, acculturation, second language acquisition, socioeconomic and experiential background, are not the primary source of the performance deficit in question.

Practitioners also need to be aware of the fact that bias may occur at all levels of the evaluation process. When practitioners select an instrument to evaluate a CLD student, they need to understand that bias is not a function of the measure's technical inadequacy; but rather a function of the differences in the experience between individuals in the norm group and the individuals to whom the test may be given.

Lastly and equally important, all school personnel are strongly encouraged to become culturally responsive professionals by reflecting and exploring their attitudes and beliefs about themselves and others to understand why they are who they are, with the ultimate goal of confronting biases influencing their value system.

Culturally responsive educational professional who are aware of their own biases and have a clear understanding of their students' past and current history create a welcoming and safe environment for their students and their families.