

Preface

At least one in every five children in US and Canadian public schools speaks a different language at home than at school. Yet many school psychologists lack adequate training to work with this population. Our ethical principles say that we should not operate out of our bounds of competency. Many practitioners feel most competent when using standardized tests in assessing children. Often English learners are not represented in the norming samples of these tests. These conditions create a maelstrom in which school psychologists and other educators are in a state of turmoil and, sometimes, paralysis.

At the eye of the maelstrom is the child. A learning disorder does not wait to start to affect an English learner until the child has learned sufficient English to be tested with the instruments we like to use. The learning disorder starts to affect the child the minute he or she walks through the door of the school. The consequences of educators being reactive rather than proactive can be devastating for these children—years of frustration, loss of self-esteem, and, for many, failure and dropping out of school.

This book is intended to empower school psychologists to work with all English learners, no matter the first language of the child and no matter whether the school psychologist is monolingual or bilingual. The first four chapters provide the basics. Chapters 5 through 10 each deal with categories of specific learning disabilities—basic reading, reading fluency, reading comprehension, math calculation, math problem-solving, and writing. Chapter 11 offers tools and procedures that are referenced in earlier chapters. Finally, Chapter 12 presents case studies in the form of psychoeducational reports.

We hope practitioners and trainers will find the information in this book to be helpful. We hope they will become motivated to learn even more. Working competently with English learners is complex, fascinating, and challenging. The rewards are immeasurable.

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