The Culturally Relevant Assessment of Ebonics-Speaking Children

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Professional organizations and federal legislation stipulate that assessments of all students must be fair and unbiased. Although these entities provide guidance, there continues to be a gap between guidelines and practice. This article examines the nature of culturally competent practice with Ebonics-speaking youth. Many school psychologists face challenges such as large caseloads, lack of knowledge about Ebonics, and limited access to culturally appropriate assessment materials. The present article fills this gap by providing practitioners with information on the history of Ebonics, implications for the students they assess, and practical ways to address these issues with limited resources.

KEYWORDS African American, Ebonics, cultural competence, assessment, school psychologists

School psychologists are held to a certain standard of practice. They are charged with the responsibility of serving as an advocate for and promoting the welfare of their clients, typically children. In accepting this responsibility when entering the field, they are prepared with ethical principles and legal guidelines that are designed to help guide decision making. Upon entering practice, however, school psychologists frequently encounter situations that are not directly addressed by existing guidelines. They inevitably discover that the profession’s legal and ethical standards do not always fit neatly into the schools in which they must operate.

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The purpose of this article is to help school psychologists bridge the gap between the ethical and legal guidelines (i.e., statutes, constitutional law, and judicial decisions) that guide practice, and the real-world situations that they encounter, specifically with regard to Ebonics-speaking youth. First, we examine the definition and history of Ebonics. We then outline the ethical and legal guidelines that underlie culturally competent practice and some of the constraints of school systems that may thwart the implementation of these guidelines. Last, we provide suggestions for advocating in the best interests of children and for being culturally competent in the assessment process.

HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF EBONICS

Ebonics is a term coined by Robert L. Williams (1975) in the book The True Language of Black Folks and was developed by combining the words ebony and phonics. Ebonics is defined as "a system of oral communication used by Americans of African ancestry that consists of phonology, syntax, morphology, semantics, lexicon, rate, rhythm, stress, and nonverbal communication" (Wofford, 1979, p. 368).

Geneva Smitherman (1986) sums up the origins and history of Ebonics in a simple sentence: "Black Dialect is an Africanized form of English reflecting Black America's linguistic-cultural African heritage and the conditions of servitude, oppression, and life in America" (p. 2). Ebonics began during the trans-Atlantic African slave trade during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The Africans who were brought over to the new world spoke languages such as, Ibo, Yoruba, Haussa, Wolof, Twi, Hausa, Dogon, Akan, Kimbundu, and Bambara, among others. Dillard (1972, as cited in Smitherman, 1986) describes the process of the slave trade in which slave owners would often buy slaves of different ancestry so that they would not be able to communicate and thus conspire together to run away or overturn the slave owner. Despite the use of these isolating tactics, slaves developed ways to communicate with one another. White slave owners also realized that they needed a way to communicate their needs to their slaves and vice versa. This led to the development of a mixture of different African languages and English. This form of a language is commonly referred to as pidgin (a simplified mixture of two or more languages) or the language of transaction (Smitherman, 1986). This version of pidgin was widely used among slaves and eventually developed into a Creole. Creole is a mixture of two or more languages, often including English (DeCamp, 1968). Creole, however, differs from pidgin in that it is a native language and one not just used for communication for transactions. The following is a passage from Dillard (1972, as cited in Smitherman, 1986) in which he quotes "slave language" from the eighteenth century:
Kay, massa, you just leave me, me sit here, great fish jump up into da canoe, here he be, massa, fine fish, massa; me den very grad; den me sit very still, until another great fish jump into de canoe; but me fall asleep, massa, and no wake 'til you come... (p. 11).

This version of Creole, which does not conform to the traditions of standard English, has been passed down through generations of African Americans. This may be due to the long history of segregation between African Americans and European Americans in the United States. This segregation served only to reinforce the language spoken by African American communities. We currently refer to this language as Ebonics.

Ebonics, just as any other dialect or language, plays a major role in the ways that African Americans communicate with one another. Table 1 presents some examples of West African grammar, structure, and sound rules still in effect.

Ebonics is often a marker and central aspect of African American identity and community. Approximately 80 to 90% of African Americans use Ebonics some of the time, and black communities often have expectations that African Americans will speak Ebonics (Smitherman, 1986). Many African Americans however, may also learn standard English in order to be socially and professionally accepted in mainstream society. Individuals that do speak standard English in their communities may be ostracized and labeled as "acting White" (Ogbu, 2003; Smitherman, 1986). This "push" toward European culture and standard English, and "pull" toward African American culture and Ebonics is termed the "push-pull" syndrome or double consciousness (Smitherman, 1986).

Although many African Americans speak standard English, many solely speak Ebonics either by choice or by circumstances in which they do not have the opportunity to learn to speak standard English. As a result, Ebonics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rule</th>
<th>Examples</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deletion of &quot;r&quot; sounds</td>
<td><em>mo</em> for &quot;more,&quot; <em>po</em> for &quot;poor&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alteration of &quot;th&quot; sounds</td>
<td><em>dat</em> for &quot;that,&quot; <em>soul</em> for &quot;south&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deletion of the verb &quot;to be&quot; or substitution of &quot;be&quot; for &quot;is&quot; in the present tense</td>
<td>&quot;She late everyday,&quot; or &quot;He be sleeping in class.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dropping of final consonant sounds</td>
<td><em>tes</em> for &quot;test,&quot; <em>fas</em> for &quot;fast&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misuse of personal pronouns and nouns to show possession</td>
<td><em>they school</em> and <em>John book</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shortening of words and phrases</td>
<td><em>dis</em> for &quot;disrespect,&quot; &quot;hood&quot; for &quot;neighborhood&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of double negative for emphasis</td>
<td>&quot;I ain't got no candy.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reversal of word meanings</td>
<td>&quot;bad&quot; means &quot;good,&quot; &quot;my nigga&quot; means &quot;my good friend&quot;</td>
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</table>

is passed down from one generation to the next as children of Ebonics-speaking parents learn the dialect complete with gestures, mannerisms, and intonation at an early age (Johnson, 1979).

Ethical and Professional Guidelines

The American Psychological Association (APA) and the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) provide several ethical principles for engaging in culturally competent assessment (Ysseldyke et al., 2006). The APA specifies two ethical principles: Principle D: Justice and Principle E: Respect for People’s Rights and Dignity. Principle D, Justice, states that psychologists should “exercise reasonable judgment and take precautions to ensure that their potential biases, the boundaries of their competence, and the limitations of their expertise do not lead to or condone unjust practices” (APA, 2002a, p. 3). Principle E, Respect for people’s rights and dignity, states that “[ethical] psychologists are aware of and respect cultural, individual, and role differences, including those based on age, gender, gender, identity, race, ethnicity, culture, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, language, and socioeconomic status and consider these factors when working with members of such groups” (APA, 2002a, p. 4; APA, 2002b). In addition, the National Association of School Psychologists declares that school psychologists are expected to respect differences of all kinds and to select and use appropriate assessments and treatment techniques for these populations (NASP, 2000). Ethical standards require that school psychologists are aware of factors that could potentially affect their practice. They are required to ensure that they consider all these factors when working with ethnic and language minority students and take their knowledge into consideration when trying to provide fair and accurate assessments.

APA also requires that when conducting assessments that “(a) Psychologists use assessment instruments whose validity and reliability have been established for use with members of the population tested. When such validity or reliability has not been established, psychologists describe the strengths and limitations of test results and interpretation” (9.02) (APA, 2002a, p. 13). They are also required to “(c) use assessment methods that are appropriate to an individual’s language preference and competence, unless the use of an alternative language is relevant to the assessment issues” (APA, 2002a, p. 13).

In addition to APA standards, NASP (2000), in Practice Guideline 5, specifies that school psychologists need to “have the sensitivity, knowledge, and skills to work with individuals and groups with a diverse range of strengths and needs from a variety of racial, cultural, ethnic, experiential, and linguistic backgrounds” (italics added) (p. 46). They stipulate that interventions should be adapted to the individual needs and characteristics of each child. School psychologists should also promote practices that help children of all backgrounds feel welcomed and appreciated in the school and community.
In general, the ethical guidelines were put into place to help guide professionals in ethical decision making, not to make clinical judgments for them. They incorporate issues regarding culture, yet they leave many school psychologists unprepared to implement these guidelines and perplexed about the procedures that should be followed. Many may ask themselves, "What exactly is culturally sound practice?" Many acknowledge key ideas such as using a non-culturally biased assessment or ruling out ecological/cultural factors in the assessment process (e.g., Rogers & Lopez, 2002), but these can often be difficult to implement.

Legal Considerations

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) of 2004 mandates that states will be required to keep track of how many ethnic minority students are being identified for special education services as well as the number of disciplinary referrals they receive. Schools are also required to provide early-intervention programs for students who are overrepresented in their school, and these programs should be tied to services for students who show difficulty learning to read. New regulations also suggest that staff may also use a Response to Intervention (RtI) approach to determining eligibility for specific learning disabilities. This raises even more questions surrounding how school psychologists would address cultural factors in this model.

Another implication for school psychologists is the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 passed by the Bush administration. This regulation's purpose is to "close the achievement gap between high- and low-performing children, especially the achievement gaps between minority and non-minority students, and between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers." This law has several implications for school psychologists and the role they play in addressing the needs of minority and low-income children. According to NCLB, schools should be doing everything they can in order to address these children's needs, including addressing their language needs. NCLB goes on to say that its primary goal is to "close the achievement gap" and that a child's "demographics is not their destiny." School psychologists can play a role in their districts by ensuring that students' academic performance is based on more than their demographics, poverty, and heritage.

These examples of legislation provide the legal basis and authority for school psychologists to address cultural factors, but they do not specify ways in which they are to complete the tasks set before them. The NASP and APA ethical principles and legislation such as IDEIA and NCLB are examples of guidelines that are intended to inform the practice of school psychologists. Both the ethical guidelines and legal considerations, however, leave much
up to the interpretation of the school psychologist. This article examines the many difficulties associated with addressing these guidelines in the school setting.

CULTURAL COMPETENCE IN APPLIED SETTINGS

In all, there are a total of four broad, common themes across the ethical guidelines and legislative issues that practitioners should address. These are (a) engaging in nonbiased interactions with students, (b) using culturally appropriate assessment techniques, (c) keeping track of overrepresentation in special education and disciplinary practices, and (d) closing the achievement gap between Caucasian and African American students. The following section addresses each of these issues, discusses ways that the ethical or legal guidelines fit with school psychologists' practice in schools, and suggests strategies for overcoming these barriers.

Nonbiased Interactions

This ethical concept concerns the assessments and interactions school psychologists have with the child and his or her family. Nonbiased assessment encourages school psychologists and other school personnel to examine their own personal biases and how these might interfere with their duty to advocate for the best outcome of the child. One way to do this is for practitioners to learn more about the students with whom they are working by talking to parents and students, visiting the community, and reading about the culture. One of the very first things that school psychologists should do before working with Ebonics-speaking children is to understand the legacy and culture behind the students who speak it. It is easy for those who are unfamiliar with the history of Ebonics to unwittingly view it as an inferior and simpler version of English, when in fact it is a complex and rule-based Creole form of language. A lack of knowledge about Ebonics can, thus, introduce bias to the assessment process by negatively influencing the assessor's view of the child.

An important implication of this ethical concept for school psychologists is to first make sure that they are culturally competent enough to deal with linguistically different children in a way that does no harm. School psychologists should refer these children to professionals who are more culturally and linguistically aware if they believe that they are not able to assess or develop appropriate interventions for the child due to lack of knowledge or biases. For instance, school psychologists and other professionals can work together to create a list of individuals within the district who have expertise working with students and families of different cultural backgrounds. If.
school professionals in the district have limited knowledge of diverse cultural backgrounds, individuals can select to focus on one distinct culture that addresses the needs of the district. This allows for school psychologists who have limited knowledge of the cultural background of the students and families they are working with to draw on the knowledge and skills of professionals who have offered themselves as a resource.

Culturally Appropriate Assessment Techniques

One of the foremost concerns of practicing school psychologists is time (Proctor & Steadman, 2003). Ideally, school psychologists are expected to assist in special education eligibility decisions, be system change agents, engage in consultation, and implement evidence-based interventions (Thomas & Grimes, 2005). Adding the expectation that these activities be carried out in culturally relevant ways can be overwhelming even for the most experienced school psychologist. A study conducted by Quinn (2000) addressed only one of the many roles of the school psychologist, assessment. Quinn compared the amount of time it took practitioners to engage in traditional assessment versus culturally relevant assessment. This study found that it took twice as long to adequately assess a child who was ethnically or linguistically different from the majority as it did to assess a child who was in the cultural or linguistic majority. The biggest discrepancies were in the pre-referral consultation and testing stages because school psychologists had to become familiar with the child’s culture. Engaging in several other procedures to rule out cultural or ecological factors during the testing process took substantially more time. Results from Quinn’s study are presented in Table 2.

In addition to not having sufficient time initially to complete evaluations, let alone the time it takes to adequately assess a student who is from a cultural or linguistic minority background, school district constraints also add to the challenge. Districts may not have the funds to purchase materials and to

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITY</th>
<th>Evaluation of student from nondominant culture or linguistic group</th>
<th>Evaluation of student from the dominant culture and linguistic group</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-referral Consultation</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testing</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report Writing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow-up/Consultation with Parents</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Paperwork</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>22</strong></td>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
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*Source: Adapted from Quinn, 2000.*
train personnel adequately to work with these students. This may prove to be problematic, as many Ebonics-speaking children often perform poorly on standardized assessments. There are a number of reasons thought to account for this discrepancy including the child's ability to speak and comprehend standard English.

There is a strong correlation between the lack of knowledge of standard English and IQ scores for African Americans. A study done by Hall and Freedle (1973) compared low-income African American children to high-income Caucasian students. The children were presented four stories to recall and the children were randomly assigned to groups varying by race (White, Black) and by dialect (standard English, Ebonics). The results of the study indicated that White children performed better when presented with standard English, whereas Black children performed better when presented with Ebonics. Overall, the scores of Black children tested in Ebonics were equal to the scores of White children tested in standard English. Although this study is older, its results should give us pause to consider how our assessment techniques affect assessment results.

There have been a few attempts to remedy the effects of Ebonics on assessment. For example, a procedure was developed to supplement the Developmental Sentence Analysis (DSA) called Black English Sentence Scoring (BEBS) (Nelson & Hyter, 1990). This supplement was intended to make the DSA more appropriate for African American children. BEBS would give credit to students who responded correctly in Ebonics, as well as credit for correct responses in standard English. However, BEBS had several issues with it, including the problem that the norms for Ebonics were based on adults and there were no norms using BEBS with African American children. Therefore, this created a problem with the validity of the instrument (Washington, 1996).

A previous attempt was made by Hemingway, Montague, and Bradley in 1981. They attempted to modify the Carrow Elicited Language Inventory (CELI) scoring procedures. These researchers analyzed the CELI and identified parts of the assessment that would be affected by using Ebonics. They developed scoring procedures for these questions, while the rest of the unaffected questions continued to be evaluated by the original CELI scoring procedures. In the end, this procedure also had validity and norming complications (Washington, 1996).

Due to the lack of assessment measures that accept Ebonics responses, it could be concluded that most, if not all, of the assessments today are not appropriate for these students. This is mainly because many of these assessments are not normed on Ebonics-speaking students (Gopaul-McNicol, Reid, & Wisdom, 1998). Assessors should not use an assessment on a population for which it is not normed, because the first tenet of selecting an assessment for an evaluation of a child is, “Is this measure suitable for the child I am testing?” Due to the lack of assessment measures that take children's
dialectal differences into account, many of these assessments are still widely used. Many assessments may be normed on a sample of African American children, but this sample may or may not include those who speak Ebonics. As demonstrated previously, there is a difference in IQ scores between those African American students reared in middle-class homes and who have internalized standard English (among other factors) compared to those from homes who speak Ebonics and are missing some of standard English's core concepts. Therefore, if the assessment measure is one that is not normed on an Ebonics-speaking child, psychologists should place this in the limitations section of their psychological assessment reports.

School psychologists should also try alternative ways to assess students who may not be best served by standardized assessments. Some alternative assessment recommendations for Ebonics-speaking children are contextualized (or situated) assessment, ecological assessment, and curriculum-based assessment (Gopaul-McNicol et al., 1998). Due to differences in pronunciation and meanings of words in different contexts, it is beneficial to use contextualized assessment. Contextualized assessment permits an understanding of the context in which the skill is being demonstrated. For example, contextualized assessment allows students to provide responses (written or verbal) to indicate whether they are providing Ebonics or standard English responses to vocabulary items. Once it has been determined that children who speak Ebonics consistently give incorrect answers to specific items due to dialect, then those items are eliminated from the test battery. These measures should therefore be used as a tool to qualitatively assess the child's strengths and weaknesses.

Ecological assessments are important because they gather information about the whole child. For example, ecological assessments may include interviews and questionnaires about the language used at home, language samples, and observations at school and in children's home/community environments (Gopaul-NcNicol & Armour-Thomas, 1997). This information yields valuable information about the child and can assist the examiner in selecting standardized assessment tools that are appropriate for the child's background based on the information gathered. In addition to aiding in the selection of appropriate standardized measures, ecological assessments allow the examiner to determine whether environmental or cultural factors, which must be ruled out, are contributing to the difficulties observed in the school setting.

Curriculum-based measurements are a set of short standardized and validated assessments that are based on the material that is typically covered in the child's curriculum. They are given several times per year and are therefore sensitive to student change over time (Shinn, 2002). This has often been considered a viable alternative for Ebonics speakers because it provides a nonbiased way to assess students in a way that is relevant to instructional experiences (Fore, Burke, & Martin, 2006). Also, curriculum-based assessments such as informal reading inventories (reading from classroom or homework
assignments), error analysis, and task analysis can be used to understand children's actual achievement within the classroom setting (Gopaul-McNicol et al., 1998). This is especially important for Ebonics-speaking children, as it gives the examiner information that may not be gained through standardized measures. A thorough investigation of the writing samples of an Ebonics-speaking student who is demonstrating difficulty with spelling and sentence structure may reveal that the difficulties are related to the syntax and structure of Ebonics. For example, the child may write "ax" for "ask" or "I ain't got no homework" rather than "I do not have any homework." In addition, reading errors made by students who speak Ebonics that can be caught by curriculum-based methods may be due dialectical differences between Ebonics and standard English (Jones, 1979). This information would suggest that the difficulties demonstrated be addressed by looking at language or cultural factors rather than special education placement.

A model developed by Barnett et al. (1995) provides some promise for conducting culturally competent assessments. The Ethnic Validity Model for school psychology uses a problem-solving approach that systematically evaluates cultural difference. It is constructed from a problem-solving framework and ensures that the assessment involves "acceptable" procedures with respect to the child's unique cultural background. Therefore, it assumes that the measures used will be diverse and reflect data gathered from a variety of contexts. Information should be gathered about the child's culture and development, and should be compared to the development of other children from a similar background. It is also important to determine whether the student has had an opportunity to learn. This involves examining both the quantity of schooling (whether the student has been in school continuously and has received instruction) and the quality of schooling (including teacher variables and instructional variables). If the student's learning problems are related to either factor, interventions should be directed to him or her. Among teacher variables are experience, expectations, teaching style, and track record with diverse students. All of this information helps to determine the acceptability of the evaluation and the intervention that will be created from this all of these data.

The final component of the ethnic validity model is "teaming," which dictates that a variety of professionals make up the evaluation team. At least one of these individuals should be knowledgeable about the child's cultural background. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Amendments of 1997 requires that any formal tests that are considered for use be examined for cultural bias by a person from the cultural group and administered by a person who is very knowledgeable about the child's cultural group and speaks the child's language or dialect (McLean, 2000). If modifications are required to make the instrument appropriate, the test should be used to provide descriptive information only (rather than scores), since modifications may invalidate the scoring of the test. Teaming is viewed as a way
of making the assessment more accurate and fair for the child being evaluated. In the end, the goal is to decrease the number of inappropriate special education placements, especially for children of minority backgrounds. As noted previously, in IDEIA (2004), the government explicitly highlighted this disproportionality problem and made it a goal to decrease the disparate gap that exists between minority and culturally dominant students.

Closing the Achievement Gap

Children's use of Ebonics can interfere with their ability to understand basic reading concepts. The different grammatical and syntactical aspects of Ebonics and standard English often require Ebonics-speaking children who are reading stories in standard English to translate the text into Ebonics in their mind, and then translate it into standard English. However, many children just learning to read cannot complete this process and often produce the Ebonics form of the word when reading orally (Jones, 1979).

Some reading techniques have been used with Ebonics speakers that have proven successful with English language learners. For example, Simpkins, Holt, and Simpkins (1977) developed bridge readers that consisted of three books: one in Ebonics, one in a mixture of Ebonics and standard English, and the last a standard English-only version. The results of this attempt to help Ebonics-speaking children to learn to read were successful but were not adopted on a wide scale due to the growing controversy surrounding Ebonics as a language or dialect.

School psychologists should understand the impact that Ebonics has on the academic functioning of those who speak it. This understanding can prevent mistakenly labeling a child as having a disability and promote the careful examination of the effect of the child's dialect on his or her performance.

Tracking Overrepresentation in Special Education and Disciplinary Action

As systemwide change agents, it is important for school psychologists to note that the education of linguistic minority children, specifically Ebonics-speaking children, has been a controversial subject among school districts. One of the biggest controversies surrounding this issue concerns Oakland, California's, Resolution on Ebonics that was introduced on December 18, 1996. The average grade point average (GPA) of the African American students in the district was 1.8, with 71% of their African American students in special education. This resolution called for recognizing Ebonics as a language or dialect and teaching African American students reading, writing,
and math in their own dialect. This resolution stipulated that African American students would be taught in their own dialect while helping them to become bilingual and teaching them standard English. Its purpose was to promote better academic achievement in African American students by recognizing Ebonics as a valid language, consisting of grammatical rules and norms, rather than as a substandard form of English. As a result, resolution supporters hoped that teachers would understand that students' language was not a reflection of an intellectual deficiency but rather evidence of a different language.

There was one main argument surrounding this resolution. The Oakland resolution was attempting to call Ebonics a language, while theory on the issue at the time stated that it was a dialect and not a language. The acceptance of this argument by school districts would be costly, as districts would have to provide English as a second language to these students. The Oakland school board members passed this resolution unanimously. Following its passage, however, new board members holding different political views rejected it.

The problem of achievement and overrepresentation in special education that spurred this controversy is not one that belongs only to California. Figure 1 presents national data from the 2003 Office of Civil Rights indicating that Black children are more likely to be served under IDEA than Whites or Hispanics. These statistics indicate that professionals need to pay particular attention to how they are assessing children for special education, particularly children from nondominant cultural backgrounds, as they are often overly represented in the special education population.

![Figure 1](image-url)  
**Figure 1** Representation in special education by ethnicity.
CONCLUSION

The purpose of this article was to address culturally competent practice in relationship to Ebonics-speaking children. This knowledge is vital for school psychologists to practice competently with this population because of the effects of language on reading performance and biased assessments. As the ethical guidelines and legislative considerations state, it is important to take culture into account in our roles as school psychologists. It was noted however, that applying ethical and legal guidelines in the schools in which we work is often difficult.

School psychologists can, however, engage in specific practices to ensure that the culture of the child is taken into account. The first strategy is to understand the history and logic behind the Ebonics that these children speak. This process will give practitioners a greater understanding of the child and may reduce biases in interactions with the child and his or her family. Ecological assessments, contextualized assessments, and curriculum-based evaluation can also be used to ensure that the child is given a fair and unbiased assessment, as these tools take into consideration context and have direct implications for classroom functioning. In addition, the ethnic validity model offers some systematic ways to account for ethnic differences in the assessment process.

Although these strategies are good ways to reduce the bias in the assessment process, there are limitations that might interfere with their implementation. School psychologists may initially have to devote more time to alternate assessments for Ebonics-speaking children, but they will emerge with more valid results. School psychologists may have to advocate within their districts for professional development related to linguistic minority children, alternate tools, and nonbiased practices that are relevant for these children. Nevertheless, school districts that make culturally competent practice a priority will enhance the learning and achievement of all children.

REFERENCES


