How to address ethical concerns in the workplace effectively

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The Tide is Turning

Melissa White.
Bilingual Therapies Symposium.
Las Vegas, 2010.

If you are a bilingual SLP, you will need to learn how to advocate for your students.

ASHA’s Code of Ethics

• Individuals shall provide all services competently (Principle 1, Rule A).
• Individuals shall use every resource. . . to ensure that high-quality service is provided (Principle 1, Rule B).
• Individuals shall not discriminate . . . On the basis of race or ethnicity. . . or disability (Principle 1, Rule C).

You are an SLP working in a school with a large number of new immigrants from Ghana. Your principal already had a monolingual SLP and psychologist evaluate them because there were no Twi-speaking evaluators. Now 40% of these students have IEPs.

What is the ethical issue?

Ethical Issues in Determining the Language to Use in Providing Services

Are there any ethical issues related to the SLPs regular admonition to parents to "use only English" with an ELL student?

That depends...
• Is the advice a personal choice for the SLP?
• A political choice for the SLP?
• Or, an evidence-based choice?

Only the latter leads to ethical advice.
You realize that a number of the preschoolers with IEPs are fine but speak varieties of English (AAE, Bajan English, and the English of Sierra Leone. You are told that it is okay because they benefit from the intensive services the preschool offers.

**What is the ethical issue?**

### ASHA’s Code of Ethics

- Individuals shall engage in only those aspects of the professions that are within the scope of their professional practice and competence, considering their level of education, training, and experience (Principle II, Rule B).

### ASHA’s Code of Ethics

- Individuals who have reason to believe that the Code of Ethics has been violated shall inform the Board of Ethics (Principle IV, Rule M).

### The Clinical World is Flat: Assessment and Evaluations in the Dark Ages Circa 2007


### Michigan study SLPs

- How frequently did school-based SLPs use recommended practices when assessing the language skills of bilingual students?
- SLPs used standardized English tests more frequently than non-standardized assessment procedures when assessing bilingual students.
- Years of experience or academic preparedness were not significant factors.
Ultimately the mismatch that now exists between actual practice and recommended guidelines will only be corrected when SLPs themselves commit to the responsibility of engaging in ongoing research and information gathering. . . . to adequately assess and serve bilingual children.”

(Caesar and Kohnert, 2007 p. 198)


- “Teachers and therapists said Bilingual SEIT's evaluators sometimes exaggerated the disabilities of children with mild speech and other problems to justify expensive instruction. ‘When students were quote-unquote not qualified to receive services, the psychologists made children sound more severe,’ a former therapist, said on the condition of anonymity to preserve his ability to remain in the field.”


First, know your stuff

“I...am working for the schools that are part of [an American Indian Reservation]. The standardized testing of course is required for qualification for special education here as part of the federal guidelines” but as you know, it's completely unfair to their background, experience, and exposure and many of them are being classified as "mentally retarded" because of their performance on IQ tests that are not normed on their population.”

“This email is quoted here before it contains wrong assumptions about the federal law.

Case study: ELLs with Disabilities

“A student with a speech and language disability cannot pass the NYSLAT and has been transferred to a classroom where the material is reinforced in Spanish. But he no longer speaks Spanish. What can an ELL with a disability do to end bilingual services when he cannot pass the NYSLAT?”

Get a sense of history

“I thought that IDEA 2004 is what they are going by. I have tried searching for what they are talking about but haven't found it. (T)he SLPs who have been here the longest have kind of set the standard for what should be in the evaluations so that is what the Powers that be are going by as well.”
Identify who or what can help you

- Federal and state law and regulations.
- State and district policy documents.
- Published research.
- ASHA policy documents.
- Mentors and advocates.
- Knowledgeable supervisors and employers.

Case study: Bilingual Speech?

“Lately I’ve been running into some trouble with my school psychologist, who is insisting language of instruction should be consistent across settings and services. Meaning that, if a child is mandated to receive speech in Spanish, he must also receive classroom instruction in Spanish, even if he’s in general education receiving ESL.”

Assume that everyone is doing his/her best.

- Don’t make it personal.
- Focus on quality work.
- Collaborate.

Don’t be a sour puss (or self-righteous)

Share your expertise

- Volunteer to give in-services.
- Bring up case studies.
- Share quality articles.
- Allow for open discussion.

Least Restrictive Environment

Email from the field

- “Yesterday I learned that two ELLs are being moved from general ed with no related services straight to a self-contained class. This is the 4th time it happened this year. I plan to communicate to the school staff expressing my concerns. I volunteered to be part of the RTI team.”
“Only do English with students with ASD.”

The two 2012 studies challenge that idea.

**Study 1.** 75 children with ASD, 3 to 6 years old. Three groups: monolingual, and bilingual pre- and post-12 months of first exposure to the second language.

After assessing the children, the researchers found no significant differences in language ability among any of the groups of children with ASD.


**Study 2.** Studied 28 children with ASD, 3 to 6 yrs old. Half bilingual in Chinese and English and half only English.

- The researchers found no differences between the two groups on four different language and vocabulary tests for bilingual and monolingual children with ASD.


Are two languages “too much” for our cognitively very young students?

- Within 24 hours of birth, newborns prefer to listen to the voice of their mothers than to the voice of another woman speaking to them. (DeCasper & Fifer, 1980).
- Infants only two months old can distinguish utterances in their native language from those in a foreign language. (Mehler, et al, 1988)

Know your personal ethical boundaries

Be Patient and Consistent

- The phone call from the Director of Human Resources, May 3, 2013.
- NYSED action in Suffolk and Nassau counties, June 2013.
You can’t change the Laws of Physics

Keep focused on the quality of your own work

• I did the OWLS on three siblings who are within a year of each other and intelligent and they all had SS of 40---I tried to have this discussion with other SLPs but they just kept saying it’s a severe delay....that’s what took me over the top in thinking about something different for these children.

Look for opportunities to improve

“Right now my point of reference is one of the [Native American] speech assistants here----and she is setting up norms in my head about what these children are exposed to.”

Create standards

• A group of bilingual SLPs wanted to raise the evaluation standards in New Jersey. The did their due diligence and learned that the best way now is to create a NJSHA document. They are in the process now.

REFERENCES

• Crowley, C. (2003). Diagnosing Communication Disorders in Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students. ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education. ED-EC-03-11.