

Proficient Communicators who are Deafblind A Tool for Identification

Purpose of Tool: This screening tool is intended for the use of families, district IEP teams and state deafblind project staff to aid in the identification of students who are proficient communicators. The purpose of this tool is to flag students who are deafblind and may require additional supports in order to receive appropriate instruction in general education curricula. While the tool needs to be succinct for ease of use, it will be better understood with any supporting reference documents you may choose to include regarding proficient communicators.

The tool consists of six elements that are associated with this segment of the deafblind population. A student may have all or some combination of the six elements. There are some caveats associated with the elements and these will be included to aid in the identification process.

Elements:

- Language/communication
- Intellectual ability
- Curriculum used with the learner
- State testing on state adopted curriculum
- Diploma track and transition trajectory
- Social

Summary of discussion regarding the elements:

Language /communication

The learner communicates primarily with conventional language (e.g., ASL, English, Spanish, other sign systems) as opposed to non-symbolic communication modes typically used by emerging communicators (e.g., prelinguistic object cues).

Intellectual ability

Testing of intellectual functioning and cognitive abilities indicate functioning in the normal range as opposed to an intellectual disability. The student engages in critical thinking demonstrated by problem solving abilities and benefitting from analogies to understand new information.

Caveat: The deafblind population is at risk for being labeled as intellectually disabled due to inappropriate testing. Some students who should be flagged may be missed if this label is the only consideration.

Curriculum used with the learner

The learner uses the state adopted general education curriculum. This curriculum may be adapted in terms of scope but is not an alternative curriculum.

State testing on state adopted curriculum

The student either takes the regular state test as their peers or takes it with accommodations. This information may be gleaned from your state deafblind census.

Caveat: Some families and their IEP teams may decide to opt out of state testing so the learner may not be identified through the state deafblind census.

Diploma track and transition trajectory

The student is working towards a high school diploma that meets state requirements for graduation with or without accommodations.

Caveat: For a variety of reasons, some proficient communicators may not be appropriately tracked to graduate with a high school diploma.

Social

The student may have good understanding of social dynamics, be keenly aware of peers, and be able to compare themselves to others, but may still need support to interact with others and make friends. The student will have the skills to generalize social skills to new/unfamiliar people.

Caveat: Some students who are deafblind may have challenging behaviors but can still be considered proficient communicators.

NCDB Proficient Communicators Workgroup – Identification Subcommittee

Debbie Sanders, Robbie Blaha, Maurice Belote

May 1, 2020