

Language: Culturally different students whose language is neither French nor English are perceived as low achievers. They think of themselves as French or English speaking, but in reality what they speak is a dialect of one or the other.

All the Same: When teachers and administrators are asked to describe their policies and programs for testing, assessing and placing minority students, their overwhelming response is that they treat them all the same.

Bias: "The research and most psychologists tell us the testing instruments are culturally biased... Sometimes ... a sensitive psychologist ... is prepared not to give it in exactly the standardized way because he or she knows this child has a dialect and maybe does not understand the pronunciation. They will change the pronunciation." (Intercultural Associates)

Accommodate: Treating all students alike is inappropriate because it equates equality with equal treatment. Making accommodations for children from the dominant culture and not doing the same for children from minority cultures means unequal treatment and, therefore, denial of equal opportunity.

North York: School Boards involved with student assessment procedures should be encouraged to adopt the approach of the North York School Board which stipulates:

- Assessment to be conducted in the student's dominant language.
- Proficiency in understanding, speaking and reading their own language.
- Proficiency in the expression of ideas in their own language.
- Proficiency in the handling of mathematical concepts.

Student performance levels corresponding to those of students with similar linguistic and educational backgrounds, taking into account any interruption in schooling.

Modifications: If assessment procedures are going to be used, modifications should be made to tests and testing procedures. Once a more accurate testing procedure is in use and the student is fairly placed in the appropriate classroom, the student may still be in need of language training and the curriculum may need to be changed to accommodate the cultural diversity of the student.

RECOMMENDATION:

The proposed Ministry of Multiculturalism should support research on assessment procedures which are used to place students in occupational and academic streams in schools.