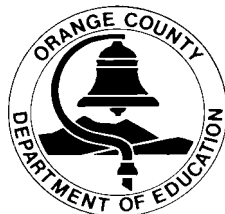


Alternate Language Proficiency Instrument for Students with Significant Disabilities (ALPI)

Manual



WILLIAM M. HABERMEHL
County Superintendent of Schools

Formerly Severely Handicapped Language Proficiency (SH-LPI)

Acknowledgements

As with many projects, the development of the ALPI (formerly known as SH-LPI) took on a life of its own. Numerous individuals provided their support and input over the course of development. I would like to thank all those who encouraged, supported, read and refined the work. Roxanne Schnell-Torosian was invaluable providing conceptual clarity, feedback and discussion. Shelly Joseph kept a watchful eye on simplicity, ease of use and general clarity of the product. Dr. Steve Valdez provided assistance and support in all phases of development, including hours of theoretical discussions. At the State level, Leroy Hamm and Dr. Daniel Zuckerman provided encouragement throughout the process. A special thanks is given to the schools, the principals, the program specialists and the staff that assisted in the field testing of the instrument.

Fullerton School District
Woodcrest Elementary

Los Angeles County Office of Education Special Schools

Montebello Unified School District
Rosewood Park Elementary

Orange County Department of Education Special Schools
University High
Venado Intermediate
Huntington Beach Special Center

Cheryl Valdez
February 1989

Introduction

RATIONALE

This language proficiency instrument for with individuals with significant disabilities was developed to address the needs of a small but growing segment of the school age population, children with significant disabilities from homes where a language other than English is spoken. State and Federal laws require that all students from homes where other than English is spoken be assessed to determine their proficiency in English and in their home language. With individuals with significant needs, this is often difficult because the severity of the disability limits expressive language ability. Many of these children utilize communication devices, sign language or gestures to express themselves. Even when no expressive skills exist, students with significant disabilities may have receptive language skills. These skills should be identified not only so that legal obligations are met, but so that a full picture of the skills, abilities and background of each student is created to better plan an instructional program. We now know that many children with significant disabilities can be bilingual to the level of their ability. Their linguistic needs, based on their language proficiency must be addressed. The Alternate Language Proficiency Instrument for Students with Significant Disabilities (ALPI) was designed to accommodate the needs of these students in initial language proficiency testing. These students are eligible as individuals with exceptional needs in the following categories:

autism, blindness, deafness, severe orthopedic impairments, serious emotional disturbances, and severe mental retardation. (California Education Code 56030.5)

In some situations it may be appropriately used with the communicatively disabled or other health impaired. Only when a student with disabilities is **unable** to respond to (or score on) a State approved English Language Proficiency Test, should the ALPI be utilized. Whenever possible, a State approved language proficiency instrument should be used to determine language proficiency.

DEFINITIONS (California Education Code, 52163 (m), (n): EC 52164: EC 400 (a))

- LEP** Limited English Proficient. Students who do not have the clearly developed English language skills of comprehension, speaking, reading and writing necessary to receive instruction only in English at a level substantially equivalent to students of the same age or grade whose primary language is English.
- FEP** Fluent English Proficient. Students whose English proficiency is comparable to that of the majority of students of the same age or grade whose primary language is English.
- (SH)EO** English Only (for students with significant disabilities). A student who scores at the lowest level of a designated oral language proficiency assessment instrument based on his or her primary language skills... [who, after further assessment] ...shows no primary language proficiency, and the parent concurs in writing, need not be considered LEP.
- ELL** English Language Learners. Students participating in the English Language Acquisition Program to meet grade level English language development standards established pursuant to Section 60811, as well as grade level standards in reading, writing, mathematics, science, and history/social science established pursuant to Section 60605.

CURRENT PRACTICE

In many districts the language status of students with significant disabilities is not determined or a designation of English Only (EO) is made because the student is perceived to have no language. In other districts, every child with significant disabilities whose Home Language Survey indicates a language other than English is automatically classified as ELL. In yet other districts, the basic Home Language Survey is not requested when students with significant disabilities enroll. None of these alternative practices provide information on the child's actual language proficiency in the primary language or in English, nor do they comply with current legal mandates.

HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT

In 1978, Los Angeles Unified School District responded to a Lau¹ complaint that dealt in part, with issues of identification of LEP students. As a portion of their response, an informal language proficiency observation instrument for use with the individuals with significant disabilities was developed. At that time, it was accepted by the Office of Civil Rights as a portion of Los Angeles Unified School District's compliance response and became part of their identification procedure.

In the early 1980's, the author of the current instrument became concerned about the process of language identification for individuals with significant disabilities. Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) was kind enough to share their instrument and the difficulties encountered in its application. Thereafter, a lengthy process of discussion, adaptation and modification began.

During the spring of 1988, the Bilingual Education Office of the California State Department of Education conducted a language census audit of special education programs operated by three county departments of education. These programs serve students whose educational needs cannot be met within their district of residence and include students with severe to profound disabilities. The language audit process increased the field's awareness of the needs for and problems associated with the identification of language proficiency in individuals with significant disabilities. This increased awareness of the need created a renewed enthusiasm for the modification of the LAUSD checklist into a quantifiable proficiency instrument that could assist district and county special education programs in a more appropriate determination of language proficiency.

The present instrument has been reviewed and refined by specialists in both the education of students who have significant disabilities and the education of students with limited English proficiency. Existing language proficiency tests were reviewed as well as current research on severely disabled LEP students. The receptive language items were selected from the original LAUSD questionnaire and existing proficiency tests. The responses were quantified to show relative differences in proficiency. The expressive items are organized in a sequential developmental fashion. Parallel instruments for use in the primary language and in English were combined into one instrument with items balanced between home and school related areas. Parents or primary care providers, serve as the informants for the primary language, while school personnel are the informants for English. A bilingual parent may serve as an English informant; however, the parent or primary caretaker must **ALWAYS** be the principal informant for the primary language. Bilingual school personnel may provide additional information in conjunction with that supplied by the parent.

FIELD TEST

A field test of the instrument was conducted during the fall of 1988, in order to determine the range of appropriateness for the instrument. It was field tested on twenty-two students, having a variety of disabilities, in two districts and two county offices of education. While the number of students in the field test was small, it is considered adequate for the population under consideration because of the limited size of the total group. As an example, Orange County Department of Education Special Schools in the Fall of 1988 served 698 students with significant disabilities. Of those, fewer than 60 had a language other than English noted on the Home Language Survey. The State approved English Language Proficiency tests were appropriate for only a few students in the deaf/hard of hearing program.

Students in the field test group were from language groups common to the Orange County, Los Angeles County area. This included Cambodian, Farsi, Korean, Spanish and Vietnamese. The following disabilities were present within the field test population: deaf (5), severely to profoundly multiply disabled (7); orthopedically impaired (5); severely to profoundly retarded (5). The scoring on one expressive language question was modified as a result of the field test. Additionally, several presentation changes were made in the form and the score sheet to facilitate administration. Instructions were modified or added to increase clarity.

¹ This refers to a specific type of Civil Rights complaint, based on the 1974 Supreme Court decision Lau vs Nichols, which dealt with the lack of full access to education for students who did not speak English.

TECHNICAL DATA

The ALPI is a criterion-based instrument; no attempt was made to establish norms. The range of physical, mental and linguistic abilities of individuals with significant disabilities precluded the selection of a sufficient sample size in each of the categories for adequate norming. Rather, it is each child's skill in English and the primary language that is of legal and educational significance, not a comparison to a normative group. The ALPI provides information to determine the initial classification of a student as ELL or FEP or, in some instances, EO. It may be used as an instrument in the subsequent reclassification of the ELL student as RFEP.

VALIDITY

In the broadest sense a measuring instrument is valid if it does what it is intended to do (Nunnally, 1967). The intent of this instrument is to differentiate students with significant disabilities as ELL, FEP or EO according to their receptive and expressive language skills.² Based on the field testing, the instrument unambiguously divided the sample students into two categories: LEP or FEP. The designation of EO was also determined in a few select cases. Content validity depends primarily on the adequacy with which a specified domain of content is sampled. It is ensured by the plan of the content and the plan for constructing items. This instrument has strong content validity. The items on the instrument were taken from previously validated language proficiency instruments, speech and language instruments and developmental lists of language. They were structured in a simplified, sequential format that permits sufficient sensitivity to the emerging language of the severely disabled student. The child's skill in the home language becomes the criterion of performance against which to measure his skill in English.³

Finally, the Alternate Language Proficiency Instrument for Students with Significant Disabilities has substantial face validity. Face validity concerns the extent to which an instrument "looks like" it measures what it is intended to measure. A component of content validity concerns judgments about an instrument after it is constructed. An examination of the final version of the instrument by a panel of bilingual and special educators indicated that the ALPI was designed to measure what it purports to measure.

RELIABILITY

Reliability concerns the extent to which measurements are repeatable - either by the same person or by another person. One prerequisite for achieving repeatability is the documentation of procedures. The instrument record sheet, as well as the directions, provide for and permit such documentation. The provision of discrete items, scoring and specific directions elevate this instrument from an informal questionnaire to a measurement instrument.

Test-retest reliability was measured for the English Observation Instrument. Within two weeks of the first administration of the ALPI, the English Observation portion was completed a second time for eight of the field test students. School personnel, who had not previously completed the form but had knowledge of the student's English language abilities, served as the informants for the retest. Reliability between the initial and second testing was calculated using a Pearson r. All scores correlated at the .88 level or above ($p < .001$). Thus, the instrument shows reliability over time based on test-retest criteria established by Anastasi (1976).

² The terms language processing and production are avoided here because of their technical implications.

³ There was no attempt to create an equal interval or developmental age scale. The items were ordinally scaled in terms of well accepted stages of language development. (Piaget, Dulay and Burt, Furst)

DIRECTIONS FOR ADMINISTRATION

QUALIFICATIONS TO ADMINISTER THE INSTRUMENT

Individuals serving as either the English Language Informant or the Primary Language Interviewer must be familiar with the manual, these directions for administration and the instrument. Any school personnel who have sufficient **first-hand** knowledge of a student to answer the English language questionnaire may do so. This includes administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals and assessment staff. The English Language Informant will vary with each student, depending on who has the most familiarity with the student's English language receptive and expressive skills.

The Parent Interview and Primary Language Questionnaire require responses from the parent or primary careprovider. At **NO** time should the form be given to the parent for a written response. Information should always be obtained through an interview process, which should be conducted in the primary language of the parents. An interpreter may be used. The interview may be conducted over the telephone.

GENERAL DIRECTIONS

In order for any response to be scored on either the English or Primary Language Questionnaire, the response **MUST** be written on the response sheet. Primary language responses should be written in the primary language. Questions regarding responses or scoring that are not specifically addressed on the forms or in the manual should be directed to the district coordinator(s) who are familiar with the instrument and with both bilingual and special education populations. The critical element is consistency in reporting for each child. Equal diligence must be applied to obtain the information recorded in both English and the primary language. (e.g. If great time was expended to recall and note every instance of English the student was ever known to respond to or say, that same diligence must be applied to obtaining the information in the primary language).

PARENT PREPARATION

To obtain accurate information on the primary language portion of the instrument, it is important that parents be given some advance notice about the type of questions that will be asked. Most parents do not maintain a log of the language used by their child, while many teachers do maintain such a record. Therefore, talk with the parent several days or a week before the information is needed to let them know that you will be asking some very specific questions concerning their child's ability to understand and express him/her self in the primary language. Provide examples of the types of questions and perhaps suggest that they jot down the child's responses over the next few days. In this way the quality and quantity of the information obtained from the parent will be greatly enhanced.

DIRECTIONS WHEN INFORMANT IS THE PRIMARY CAREPROVIDER AND NOT THE PARENT

If a student resides in a setting with other than his or her natural parents, the language of the home may be different than that of the original home environment. Every effort should be made to determine what language was spoken to the child initially and obtain primary language information from the natural parents. If this is not possible, and the careproviders do not speak the same language as the child's parents (e.g. child's parents spoke Spanish, careproviders speak English) and have limited ability to communicate with or provide information on the receptive and expressive abilities of the child, a school person knowledgeable in the first language spoken to the child should serve as the primary language informant. Documentation as to why the informant on the primary language was other than the parent/primary caretaker must be made on the questionnaire.

DIRECTIONS FOR DEAF/HARD OF HEARING STUDENTS

A student with a mild to moderate hearing loss, who is otherwise not severely disabled, should always have the opportunity to take a state approved language proficiency test. If appropriate, those students with a severe to profound loss may be afforded the same opportunity. If a student is unable to be tested using one of the standard instruments, the ALPI may be used. For students who sign or have no intelligible speech, only the Parent Interview Questionnaire needs to be given. The following guidelines should be used on the sign language section of the Parent Interview:

Parent Interview Questionnaire

Where did s/he learn to sign? Indicate the country where the signing was learned. If the family uses informal gestures but no formal system was ever taught, note "informal gestures-home".

What sign language does s/he use? Indicate the type of sign language if known (i.e. ASL, Signed English, etc.). If the name of the language used is not known, a signed interpreter may interact with the student in an effort to determine the sign language. If this is not possible, or if this does not result in a determination of the type of sign language, then document this information. If informal family gestures are used, write "gestures".

Score Sheet

- ASL and any English system of sign language are FEP.
- Informal gestures, non-English system sign languages or sign languages taught in non-English speaking countries are ELL.

Non-Signing Deaf/Hard of Hearing Students

For the non-signing student, the general directions listed at the beginning of this section continue to apply. If a state approved instrument is not appropriate, the ALPI may be given. Administer the complete instrument including the Primary Language and English observation sheets. Consult the language proficiency score sheet for the determination of the language status.

DIRECTIONS FOR COMPLETION OF THE OBSERVATION INSTRUMENT FOR STUDENTS WITH SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES

Directions for the Receptive Language Portion

The intent of this area is to obtain information on how a student understands language spoken to him/her in common, everyday situations. It is not necessary (nor desirable) to create an artificial situation. The informant should answer the questions based on the student's **actual** responses in everyday situations and give as many examples as possible for each of the questions. Answers need to be specific, a response of "He knows lots of things" must be probed. Ultimately, if the informant cannot give a specific example for any item, a score of zero must be reported. **A response can be scored only once**, therefore, if the child responds to "Where is your desk?" by pointing and the informant supplies that information when asked about household objects and again in reference to school related objects, it may be counted only the first time. The language informant should be reminded to provide only information that s/he has seen/heard. Responses must be noted on the score sheet to be counted.

- Item 1 This item deals with the student's ability to correctly understand the names of familiar objects, people or pets in his/her **normal home** situation. The informant should think of instances when they might have asked, Where is Daddy? Where is your shirt?, etc. List each word that the student has been able to demonstrate an understanding of by pointing, looking or touching. If a communication board is used and the student can signal his understanding using the board, each item should be noted on the form. A maximum of 21 words may be listed and scored.
- Item 2 This item deals with the student's ability to respond to commands. Write down each command that the student can respond to, e.g. sit down, look at me, point to the _____. The same command with different objects is counted only once (e.g., "look at me"/"look at the book" is the same command with different objects). A maximum of 9 commands may be listed and scored. (A student may only have the physical ability to respond to a limited number of commands but with a large variety of objects. In this case, each of those objects would be counted in items 1, 4, 5 or 6.)
- Item 3 Is similar to item 1; however, count only responses to body parts. Example: Where is your nose? A maximum of nine body words may be listed and scored.
- Item 4 Is similar to item 1; however, this item deals with objects more commonly found in the classroom. These might include a desk, the bus, the flag, a pencil, a stapler, etc. Do not include words counted in other items or proper names- i.e., Mrs. Garcia. Example: Where is your teacher? A maximum of 21 words may be listed and scored.
- Item 5 Is similar to items 1, 2, 4; however, this item deals with responses to color or number words. Example: Where is the blue one? Where is the number 2? A maximum of 9 words may be listed and scored.
- Item 6 Is similar to items 1, 2, 4 & 5; however, this item includes all foods. Multiple words for the same food (e.g., baby talk, nicknames) count as one word. Example: Where is your water? Where is your wawa? Both refer to the same concept so the words can only be counted once. A maximum of 21 words may be listed and scored.

Directions for the Expressive Language Portion

- Item 1 Record how the student indicates toileting needs. If the student does not indicate needs or is not aware of needs, score as a zero. If the parents report that they "just know", this too is a zero response.
- Item 2 Record the sounds/words that are heard during play. Unrecognizable sound/words are unscorable. The parent may indicate they hear sounds or words during play but do not know what they are. That is scored as a zero. Only words that are readily identified as either English or the primary language are scored as a 2 on the expressive score sheet. If school personnel hear words that are clearly known to be from the home language, this may be reported on the primary expressive language score sheet with the notation-*by school report*.
- Item 3 Write all the word the student says. Include all meaningful parts of speech, do not include: a, and, an, the. List a maximum of 21 words.
- Item 4 List phrases and sentences that the student uses. Each unique construction is counted as one response, e.g., I saw the dog, I like milk, etc. However, if the phrase maintains the same form with only the noun changing, count the different nouns under item 3, but count the phrase only once, e.g. I want the dog, I want the cup. (Phrases that consist of only an article and a noun should be counted in item 3 as a word, e.g. the cup, a dog, a ball.)

It is common for speakers of more than one language to mix the two languages in everyday speech. This is called code switching. In an instrument such as this, there may arise a question as to how to score a phrase or sentence that contains both English and the primary language. In these cases it is the structure of the phrase as well as the frequency of the words in each language that determines whether this is an English or primary language response. For example, if a child commonly says, "Te gusta apples", the structure is Spanish and the majority of the words are Spanish. You would not list that as an English phrase on Expressive item 4 on the English questionnaire, but you could count "apples" as an English word on expressive items 3. Conversely, if the student were to say, "I want la leche", the structure is clearly English even though there are two Spanish and two English words. You would list the sentence on item 4 of the expressive section of the English questionnaire. The Spanish words could be listed on and counted on the Primary Language questionnaire, expressive 3, with the note, *by school report*. Whenever a question exists regarding code switching, special educators and bilingual educators should collaborate together.

LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY STATUS

The last page of the ALPI is the language proficiency score sheet. Directions are located on the score sheet itself and are included here for clarity. Complete the student information at the top of the form. This information is needed to comply with the State requirement for data collection on an experimental instrument.

Specific Disability Condition: Indicate the category of the disability as precisely as possible, i.e., MR, Deaf, HH, OI, DB, AUT, etc.

Primary Language: Indicate language other than English that was listed on the Home Language Survey.

Age: Fill in the student age at the time of administration of the instrument.

MA: If the student's mental age is known, please indicate.

Use the following guidelines to complete the rest of the Instrument Score Sheet

1. Place the receptive and expressive scores on the appropriate lines in the score box. If the expressive section was not given, indicate DNA (did not administer).
2. Examine the statements in the Receptive Language Section. Circle the appropriate designation that corresponds to the language score.
3. Examine the statements in the Expressive Language Section. Circle the appropriate designation that corresponds to the language score, if it was administered.
4. Review the Language Proficiency Classification Section and complete as indicated. If only the receptive portion could be given, the score received on that section becomes the language status.

AUTHORITY TO DUPLICATE AND STATE REQUIREMENTS

Any educational agency who wishes to use an English language proficiency test that is not on the approved State list must submit a waiver request to the Department of Education, Management Systems Development Unit, along with a copy of the instrument and the manual. A waiver to use a different primary language instrument is not required. Questions regarding the waiver process may be directed to Leroy Hamm, Language Proficiency and Academic Accountability Unit, (916) 657-3699 or lhamm@cde.ca.gov.

INSTRUCTIONAL IMPLICATIONS

The ALPI will assist in determining the language proficiency classification of students whose needs have previously not been addressed by other instruments. Determining language proficiency classification is, however, only the first step in the educational process. Issues of assessment and instruction are of concern and will be discussed by language classification.

Students with a Language Classification of FEP or (SH)EO

Assessment

Students identified as having a language proficiency classification of FEP or (SH)EO may have their multidisciplinary assessments conducted in English.

Parental Notifications

Federal and state regulations dictate that parents must receive written notices of assessment and Individualized Educational Planning (IEP) meeting in their primary language. Even though the student may be FEP or (SH)EO, the parent may still need notices sent in a language other than English and require an interpreter at meetings. A translated copy of the IEP must be made available to the parent upon request.

Creating a partnership between home and school is beneficial for all involved. Meetings and programs where parents are included from the beginning, parent involvement in determining school activities, as well as parent-teacher training programs, will help create this partnership.

Instructional Program

Students receive instruction in English in all curricular areas. Often it is appropriate for these FEP or (SH)EO students to be involved in multicultural activities such as, music, foods and holiday celebrations from their home culture.

Students with a Language Classification of ELL

Assessment

Students with a language classification of ELL must receive a multidisciplinary assessment in their primary language. Assessment data obtained in English would be beneficial for determining progress in English acquisition yet would not be used to determine program eligibility. A trained interpreter may be used to assist the credentialed professional in gathering data in the primary language of the student.

Individualized Education Plan Development

Special education must be linguistically appropriate. Students whose primary language is other than English must have IEPs that include linguistically appropriate goals, objectives, programs and services. The school district must provide special help through a trained teacher to assist students to learn English to the extent appropriate and must provide special assistance to help the student meet IEP goals even if the student's ability to speak English is limited due to the student's disability. Cost shall be borne by the State Department of Education. This help must continue until the student no longer has a barrier due to English language skills (Cal. Ed. Code sec. 56345(b)(4), Cal. Code Regs. Title V, sec. 4301).

The IEP goals for an ELL student must be "linguistically appropriate." Linguistically appropriate goals and objectives:

1. are activities which lead to the development of English language proficiency through the use of the primary language of the individual with exceptional needs; AND
2. are instructional systems either at the elementary or secondary level which meet the language development needs of the limited English proficient student by building on the student's existing language skills in order to develop English proficiency.

Title V of the California Administration Code further address the student with significant disabilities by stating that:

Nothing shall preclude the individualized education program team from determining that instruction may be provided in the student's primary language provided that the IEP team periodically, but not less than annually, reconsiders the student's ability to receive instruction in the English language.

In determining language(s) of instruction and the type and quantity of primary language support necessary for a particular student, the IEP team might discuss these key points:

1. Prognosis for employment and language skills necessary to complete job related tasks
2. Language of family
3. Present and future residential status
4. English skills of the students
5. Present and future community interaction, including language of local community

Instructional Program

The optimal program components of bilingual education are equally applicable to ELL special education students and should be addressed on the IEP.

1. English language development: Use of English in a meaningful manner with contextual support including gestures, pictures, slower rate of speech, etc., to teach English language skills.
2. Primary language support using the primary language of the student as a vehicle for achieving identified goals and objectives. (See section on service delivery options for discussion of personnel to assist with the primary language support).
3. Involvement in multicultural activities: For the students with significant disabilities, these activities may be centered around functional life skills such as music, cooking activities and learning holiday themes. Even the aroma of food common in that students home, when smelled at school, might make the learning environment more appropriate to the student.

Coordination between Special and Bilingual Education

Many students need both bilingual and special education services. Here are some points to remember:

1. Children must be tested in English within 30 school days of initial enrollment. Then, the student is identified as either an English Language Learner (ELL) or Fluent in English Proficiency (FEP). CA Code Regs. Title V, sec. 4304(a).
2. LEP children are entitled to bilingual instruction, which teaches in their native language and also teaches English as a second language. CA Code Regs. Title V, sec. 4307. Cal Ed Code section 52165.
3. Instructional services can be provided by both special education staff and bilingual education staff, as appropriate. These services should be described specifically and included in the student's IEP.
4. No student should be placed in special education solely because the student does not speak English. However, ELL students should receive appropriate special education services if needed.

SERVICE DELIVERY MODELS

It is often difficult to find special education teachers who are also able to provide the primary language services to the ELL special education student. Nonetheless, there are many creative models school districts have employed in order to provide a linguistically appropriate program. Two possible service delivery models are listed below:

1. Special education teacher teaming. In cases where there is a bilingual special education teacher the students could be grouped for primary language activities, yet return to their classes for other activities. The monolingual English-speaking teacher would then have primary responsibility for English language development, while the bilingual teacher would have primary responsibility for primary language instruction and concept development.
2. Bilingual instructional assistant/paraprofessional. The special education teacher plans the activities with the bilingual assistant/paraprofessional who uses his/her knowledge of the primary language and culture to teach activities relevant to identified goals and objectives. The special education teacher evaluates progress by observing student behavior and in discussions with instructional assistant.

Adequate training/inservicing of professionals and paraprofessionals is critical for all successful educational programs and for providing appropriate services to ELL special education students. Universities, school districts, county offices and the State Department of Education are involved in the development of various trainings. It is hoped that both the ALPI and this manual will provide additional direction in this arena.