Improving the Identification of English Learner Students for Talented and Gifted Programs

English learner students are disproportionately underrepresented in talented and gifted programs. Today, English learner students represent about 10 percent of our nation’s students. However, fewer than 3 percent of students in talented and gifted programs nationwide are considered English learners. Research indicates nomination and assessment practices may be some of the key barriers to identification.

STRATEGIES FOR DISTRICT LEADERS AND PRINCIPALS FOR INCREASING EL STUDENTS IN TAG PROGRAMS

**Provide professional development**
Training and coaching that help educators challenge their implicit beliefs about giftedness and EL students is key. These professional learning opportunities can help educators:

- Examine biases about giftedness in English learners
- Challenge the strong value placed on English language proficiency as a characteristic of giftedness
- Examine cultural bias in what talent and giftedness should look like. Consider the tendency to favor behaviors that reflect dominant cultural values such as individualism and verbal expression

**Update processes**
It is critical to examine how English learners are nominated and assessed for talented and gifted programs—and to ensure these practices are equitable.

- Establish a task force that monitors the identification of English learners, making sure they are represented proportionately in talented and gifted programs
- Involve parents at every stage. For example, communicate the district-defined TAG identification process in their home language, as well as what to look for in their child
- Examine biases about giftedness in English learners
- Develop alternative assessment procedures for the identification of gifted English learners that do not rely solely on IQ or academic achievement tests and allow students to demonstrate their giftedness in nontraditional or unique ways

Giftedness can have varying meanings across cultures. Some researchers have re-defined giftedness among English language learners. Gifted English learners can display a wide range of skills, for example, the ability to:

- Acquire a second language at an accelerated rate
- Respect and appreciate languages and cultures that differ from their own
- Perform well in mathematics
- Switch between English and their native language with ease, sometimes referred to as code-switching
- Interpret the English language
- Grasp and use American idioms and expressions
- Adapt behaviors so that they are culturally relevant and appropriate

English learners make up 10% of all students in the U.S., but fewer than 3% of EL students are in gifted programs.

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