

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.¹ 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.^{2,3}

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



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.² These professional learning opportunities can help educators:

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.³

Examine biases about giftedness in English learners⁴

Challenge the strong value placed on English language proficiency as a characteristic of giftedness^{2,4,5}

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^{2,4}

Establish a task force that monitors the identification of English learners, making sure they are represented proportionately in talented and gifted programs⁵

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^{3,4,5}

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^{3,4,5}

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:^{3,4}

- 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



Select References

- ¹ U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), "Local Education Agency Universe Survey," 2016–17. (2018). Digest of Education Statistics 2018, table 204.20. Retrieved November 21, 2019, from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cgf.asp
- ² Pereira, N., & De Oliveira, L. (2015). Meeting the linguistic needs of high-potential English language learners: What teachers need to know. *TEACHING Exceptional Children*, 47(4), 208-215.
- ³ Sparks, S. D. & Harwin, A. (2017, June 21). Too few ELL students land in gifted classes. *Education Week*, 36(36), pp. 1, 14–15. Retrieved November 21, 2019, from <https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2017/06/21/too-few-ell-students-land-in-gifted.html>
- ⁴ Iowa Department of Education and The Connie Belin Jacqueline N. Blank International Center for Gifted and Talent Development (2008). *Identifying gifted and talented English language learners: Grades K–12*. Retrieved November 21, 2019, from <https://www.educateiowa.gov/sites/files/ed/documents/IdentifyGiftedTalentedELL.pdf>
- ⁵ Harris, B., Plucker, J., Rapp, K., & Martínez, R. (2009). Identifying gifted and talented English language learners: A case study. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 32(3), 368-393.

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