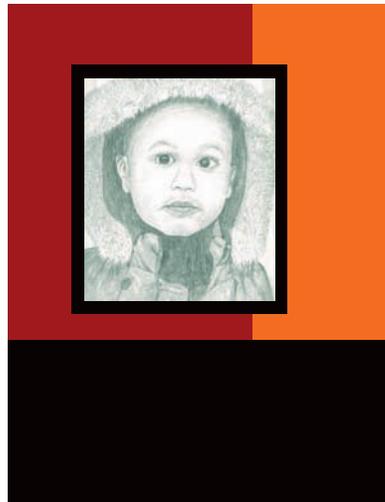


Identifying  
Gifted and Talented  
English Language Learners

Grades K-12

# Identifying Gifted and Talented English Language Learners

Grades K-12



Iowa Department of Education

The Connie Belin and Jacqueline N. Blank International Center  
for Gifted Education and Talent Development

2008



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# Identifying Gifted and Talented English Language Learners

## Table of Contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Acknowledgments .....   | 1  |
| Introduction .....  | 6  |
| How to Use this Manual .....  | 7  |
| Section 1: Who are Gifted/Talented English Language Learners? Defining Our Terms .....                                | 9  |
| Section 2: What’s the Challenge? Recognizing Bias .....   | 15 |
| Section 3: What Will We Do? Recommended Practices .....   | 19 |
| Section 4: How Do We Identify High Ability and Potential? Practical Implementation .....                              | 29 |
| Section 5: After Identification, Then What? Advocating For The Gifted And Talented<br>English Language Learners ..... | 35 |
| About the Arts: Recognizing the Artists .....   | 39 |
| Resources .....   | 47 |

The CD-ROM includes:

- Gifted/Talented English Language Learner Identification Programs Across The Nation
- Limited English Proficiency Iowa Code, Administrative Rule
- Gifted and Talented Education Legislation for the State of Iowa Resources for Educators
- Sample Interview Scripts for English Language Learners
- Sample Interview Scripts for Parent/Guardian of English Language Learners
- Sample Interview Scripts for English Language Learners
- Sample Interview Scripts for Parent/Guardian of English Language Learners
- Additional Research
- Forms for Duplication





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whose vision was for all Iowa educators to embrace all students as “Our Kids”  
so that all Iowa children receive a world-class education.

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**Damien Ihrig, MA, Belin-Blank Center Administrator**



# STATE OF IOWA

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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
JUDY A. JEFFREY, DIRECTOR

October 10, 2007

Dear Educators:

Our aspiration is that this manual will help educators discover the true potential and talents of children who are English Language Learners before they become proficient in English. The inspiration comes from the gifted children who are in transition between two languages, two cultures, and the teachers who serve as their bridge.

We thank those who dedicated themselves to this project from both the Iowa Department of Education and the Belin-Blank Center. They have made this a reality.

For the two of us, this was both a professional and personal project. We are both immigrants who know first hand the challenges and richness of learning English and American culture while maintaining our historic roots. We are indeed a nation of immigrants.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "C. Sosa".

Carmen Sosa, Ph.D.  
Iowa Department of Education

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nicholas Colangelo".

Nicholas Colangelo, Ph.D.  
Belin-Blank Center

NC: rh

10 de Octubre, 2007

Estimados Educadores:

Nuestra aspiración es que este manual ayudará a los educadores a descubrir el verdadero potencial y talento de los niños que son Aprendices del Idioma Inglés – antes de que sean competentes en Inglés. La inspiración viene por los niños talentosos que están en transición entre los dos idiomas, dos culturas y los maestros que les sirven como puente.

Agradecemos a todos aquellos que se dedicaron en cuerpo y alma a este proyecto tanto del Departamento de Educación de Iowa y del Centro Belin-Blank. Ellos han hecho de esto una realidad.

Para nosotros dos, esto fue un proyecto tanto profesional como personal. Ambos somos inmigrantes que sabemos por experiencia propia los retos y riquezas de aprender inglés y la cultura americana mientras mantenemos nuestras raíces históricas. Somos ciertamente una nación de inmigrantes.



Carmen Sosa, Ph.D.  
Departamento de Educación de Iowa



Nicholas Colangelo, Ph.D.  
Centro Belin-Blank

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CHESTER J. CULVER, GOVERNOR  
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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
JUDY A. JEFFREY, DIRECTOR

10. oktobar 2007.

Poštovani odgajatelji:

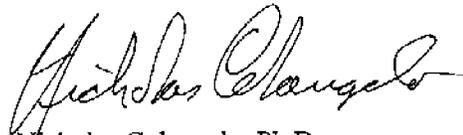
Naša želja je da ovaj priručnik pomogne odgajateljima da otkriju istinski potencijal i talente djece koja uče engleski jezik i to prije nego što ga u potpunosti savladaju. Inspiracija dolazi od nadarene djece koja su u prelazu između dva jezika, dvije kulture i od nastavnika koji služe kao most za taj prelaz.

Mi se zahvaljujemo osobama iz Departmana za školstvo države Iowa i Belin-Blank centra koje su se posvetile ovom projektu. Oni su učinili da ovo postane stvarnost.

Za nas dvoje, ovo je bio i profesionalni i osobni projekat. Oboje smo imigranti koji iz prve ruke znaju kakve izazove i bogatstvo donose učenje engleskog jezika i američke kulture, dok se u isto vrijeme održava naša historijska baština. Mi smo doista nacija imigranata.



Carmen Sosa, Ph.D.  
Departman za školstvo države Iowa



Nicholas Colangelo, Ph.D.  
Belin-Blank centar

يذيع المربي:

نتمنى ان يساعد ك هذا الدليل في اكتشاف المواهب والامكانات الحقيقية للاطفال الذين هم يتعلمون اللغة الانجليزية - قبل اتقان اللغة الانكليزية. الإلهام يأتي من الاطفال الموهوبين الذين هم بصدد الانتقال بين اللغتين والثقافتين والمدرسين الذين هم بمثابة جسر يربط بين اللغتين والثقافتين.

بدورنا نشكر اولئك الذين كرسوا انفسهم لهذا المشروع من كل من وزارة التعليم لولاية ايوا ومركز بلين-بلانك: هؤلاء جعلوا هذا المشروع حقيقة واقعة.

بالنسبة لنا لهذا المشروع بعدين: البعد المهني والشخصي. فكلانا من المهاجرين الذين يعرفون التحديات والتنوع الخلاق في تعلم اللغة الانكليزية والثقافة الامريكية مع قناعتنا بوجود الحفاظ على جذور تاريخية. نحن حقا أمة من المهاجرين .



Carmen Sosa, Ph.D.  
Iowa Department of Education



Nicholas Colangelo, Ph.D.  
Belin-Blank Center

## Introduction

**Identification of Gifted and Talented English Language Learners Grades K-12** is based on the *proposition* that broadening the scope of the methods used to identify English Language Learners (ELLs) for gifted/talented programs will improve their opportunities to achieve academically. With this proposition in mind, a practical process is introduced as a place to start when assessing the academic potential of gifted/talented English Language Learners. It is our hope that this manual will serve as the impetus for examining the countless ways that we, as educators, can help English Language Learners succeed.

This manual seeks to be a resource for change by providing multimethod/multimeasure indicators of gifted/talented student potential that will prove useful in the assessment of English Language Learners. The suggestions are based on the assumption that the dimensions of gifted/talented English Language Learner potential, while often masked by their limited English fluency, do not differ from nonEnglish Language Learner English Language Learner gifted/talented classmates. The challenge is that educators of gifted/talented English Language Learners must be aware that they display their potential within the cultural context of learning a second language. It is this awareness that will assist educators to confidently identify the English Language Learners' abilities and potential as they are uniquely exhibited in both their heritage and host cultures.

Teachers and coordinators of gifted/talented programs and English Language Learner programs have inherited and created processes accepted in past practice. The following proposed identification process is different. Although Iowa Administrative Rule, Chapter 12, requires "multiple selection criteria for identifying gifted and talented students from the total student population," the focus on standardized test scores; specifically the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) and Iowa Test of Educational Development (ITED) has become the primary identification criteria of choice by local school districts. While standardized assessments are certainly a consideration, the information is incomplete if used in isolation. The process outlined is intentionally designed to change the paradigm that identification of high ability and/or potential talent is determined primarily by a specific score or cut-point on a standardized assessment.

The success of identifying and serving high-ability English Language Learners relies upon the establishment of formal channels of communication among teachers of gifted programming, teachers of English Language Learner programs, and classroom teachers. Topics of discussion during its implementation should include ways to: (1) maximize an English Language Learners' ability to express knowledge of content while minimizing their need to rely on English to express it, (2) understand that the concept of giftedness within the boundaries of an English Language Learner's culture may vary from the traditional meanings of gifted education as indicated by Iowa Code (See CD-ROM), (3) resolve the individualistic identification of gifted/talented students within cultural contexts that highly value group solidarity, and (4) overcome the discrimination that results from believing limited English fluency indicates a lack of academic potential.

# How to Use this Manual

This manual and CD-ROM are the outcome of a collaboration between the Iowa Department of Education and the Connie Belin and Jacqueline N. Blank International Center for Gifted Education and Talent Development at the University of Iowa. The project was funded by the U.S. Department of Education as part of the Iowa Department of Education's *Our Kids* initiative (Funds for the Improvement of Education).

The primary goal of creating this manual and CD-ROM is to provide alternative procedures to better ensure that English Language Learners who meet standards would benefit from gifted programming, through identification. To assist educators in identifying eligible students, this document provides an introduction to gifted and talented programming for English Language Learners in Iowa schools.

In Sections 1-5 the manual provides practical guidance for understanding and implementing English Language Learners into gifted programming. The CD-ROM format provides additional support through resources and research.

**Section 1-Who are Gifted/Talented English Language Learners? Defining Our Terms** presents definitions essential to a productive discussion.

**Section 2- What's the Challenge? Recognizing Bias** brings to light several potential, but sometimes unrecognized, challenges in the process of identifying student abilities and needs.

**Section 3-What Will We Do? Recommended Practices** discusses the use of multiple criteria in assessing the readiness of English Language Learners for gifted/talented programming.

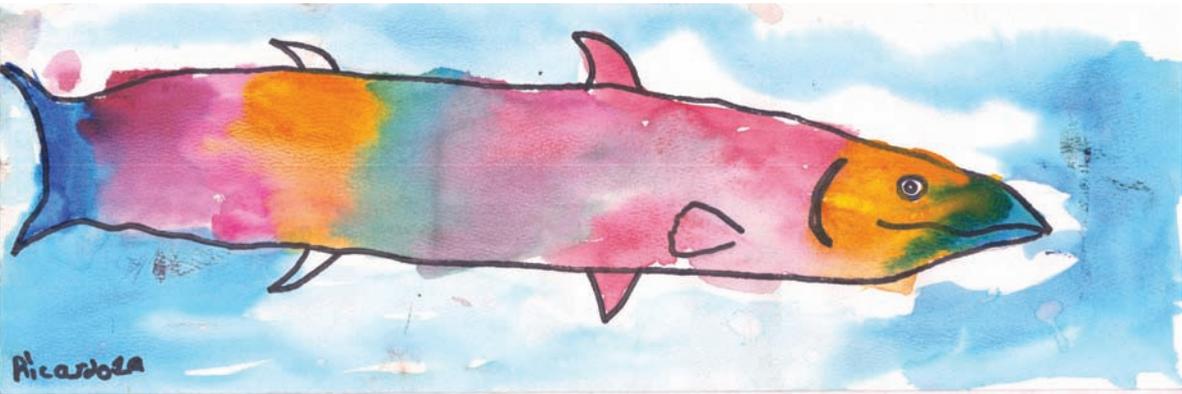
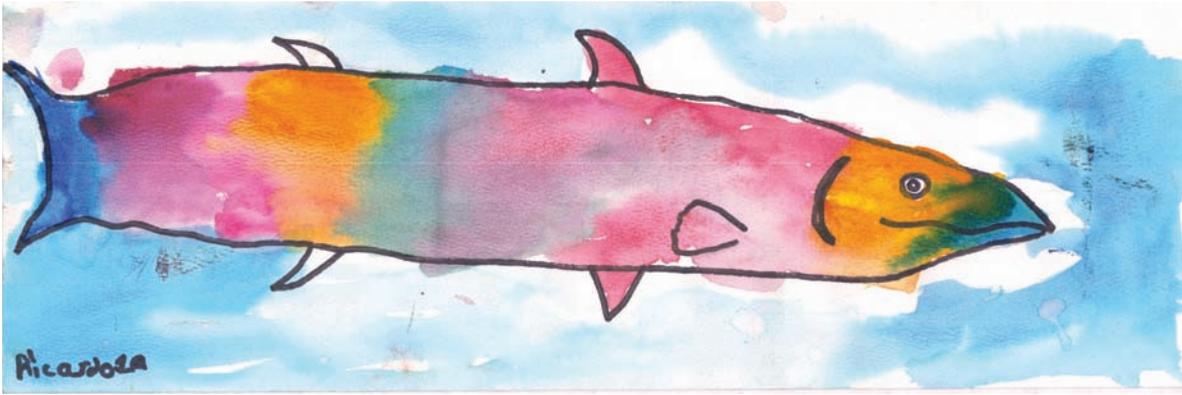
**Section 4-How Do We Identify High Ability and Potential? Practical Implementation** addresses the critically important collaboration among the teachers of English Language Learner programs, gifted/talented programs, and classroom teachers, as well as teachers of art, music, and physical education, and administrators in the identification process.

**Section 5-After Identification, Then What? Advocating for the Gifted/Talented English Language Learner** suggests how to successfully advocate for gifted English Language Learners.

## About the Art

The **CD-ROM** contains helpful tools and resources for educators, including brief synopses of successful programs across the United States, Iowa Code for English Language Learner Programs and Gifted Programming, student-interview-protocol additional research, interviews of English Language Learners, and forms for duplication needs.

We are interested in your feedback regarding this material and are open to suggestions for revisions. Please take the time to complete the Evaluation form included on the CD.



# Who are Gifted/Talented English Language Learners?

## Defining Our Terms

Gifted and talented English Language Learners are unique and challenging students. Like all gifted and talented students, they are curious, creative, observant, and sensitive. All gifted and talented students are the best and brightest of any community in which they live, whether in Iowa or abroad. They are members of our community and future leaders of their generation.

In order to have a respectful dialogue about gifted and talented English Language Learners, it's essential to define the basic terms we will be using in this document. The topic of gifted/talented students, and in particular, gifted/talented English Language Learners has few universally accepted definitions.

This section provides a starting point, as we narrow the scope of our ideas about the following Limited English Proficient (LEP) terms:

- ELL (also Limited English Proficient) student
- Gifted/talented student
- Gifted/talented ELL
- ELL program options

### English Language Learners

Who is an English Language Learner? The short answer, according to the U.S. Department of Education is that any student whose home language is not English and whose English language proficiency is considered limited. The *Bilingual Education Act* defines an English Language Learner or Limited English Proficient student as fitting any of the following criteria:

- Not born in the United States and whose heritage language is not English;
- Of American Indian or Alaskan heritage and who comes from an

environment where the dominant language is not English;

- A migratory person whose heritage language is not English; or
- A person who has difficulty speaking, reading, writing, or understanding English, which denies him/her the opportunity to learn effectively in classes where instruction is in English.

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO)-leaders from each state department of education-defines an ELL as having “a language background other than English, and their proficiency in English is such that the probability of the students’ academic success in an English-only classroom is below that of an academically successful peer with an English background.” In other words, by definition, an ELL or LEP student is academically challenged because they are not yet able to understand, speak, read, and/or write fluently in English.

Closer to home, the Code of Iowa defines fully English proficient as a student who is able to use English to ask questions, to understand teachers and reading materials, to test ideas, and to challenge what a teacher is asking in the classroom (see CD). The four language skills contributing to proficiency include reading, listening, writing, and speaking.

### It's the Law

The special needs of ELLs enrolled in public and nonpublic schools have been defined in several federal legislative actions, beginning with the 1964 *Civil Rights Act*. That was followed by the *Equal Educational Opportunity Act of 1974* and again by Titles I and III of the 2001 reauthorization of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965* (better known as *No Child Left Behind*). By law, ELLs have a right to education that specifically addresses their unique learning needs.

## The Path to Proficiency

For a student to move from little or no understanding of English to being fully capable of academic success is a long journey, usually taking from four to 10 years. As we think about identifying gifted/talented students among our English Language Learner population, we need to keep in mind Cummin's two stages of language acquisition used by the Iowa Department of Education. (See Resources in back.)

The first stage is Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS). Students at this level are using conversational English for "basic survival." This stage takes from one to three years to master.

The second stage, Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP), is highly significant to educators; this is the stage of language proficiency at which a student can fully achieve academic success. This stage takes an additional three to seven years to master. As with any skill, the time needed to achieve proficiency varies according to factors such as the student's background and experiences; age; first-language proficiency; and how much support the family, school, and community provide.

## Gifted and Talented Defined

Iowa and other states have developed definitions of giftedness based on the work of several researchers whose findings identified the characteristics of Gifted/Talented students.

Critically important to Iowa educators is the definition stated in the Code of Iowa (see CD-ROM). Iowa Code states that gifted and talented students are "those identified as possessing outstanding abilities who are capable of high performance and require appropriate instruction and educational services commensurate with their abilities and needs beyond those provided by the regular school program. Gifted and talented children include those children with demonstrated achievement or potential ability." The Iowa Code specifies that students with gifts and talents will demonstrate achievement or potential ability, or both, in any of the following areas or in combination:

## ELL Program Options

Schools have several options for transitioning students from their heritage language to English academic proficiency. Each option has its advantages. Yet it also has its own set of stressors for both the students and the teacher. Each school district must decide which type of program, or combination of program, options work best for their students, families, and faculty. Regardless of the program option, all programs must provide English language development instruction for English Language Learners

*Dual Language, or Two-Way Immersion (TWI)*, programs unite students from two native language groups, such as native speakers of English and native speakers of Spanish. TWI programs integrate language-minority and language-majority students for all or part of the school day. The goal of TWI is to promote bilingualism and biliteracy as well as grade-level academic achievement for all students. TWI is considered by some to be an enrichment model for both language-majority and language-minority students.

In *English as a Second Language* programs, most of the curriculum is taught in English with pull-out or push-in classes. Instruction concentrates on improving the students' academic English language proficiency.

In *bilingual* programs, the entire curriculum is taught in both English and the students' heritage language(s).

- General intellectual ability
- Creative thinking
- Leadership ability
- Visual and performing arts ability
- Specific ability aptitude

## Attributes of Giftedness

Fortunately, many scholars and educators now recognize that not all students will display their gifts through academic achievement and assessments. For example, a 1995 review of the literature yielded 10 central attributes of the concept of giftedness.



- Motivation to learn
- Effective communication skills
- Intense and sometimes unusual interests
- Effective problem-solving strategies
- Creativity and/or imagination
- Expansive memory
- Inquisitive
- High level of insight
- Logical approach to reasoning
- Ability to understand humor

For each of these attributes of giftedness, students manifested a variety of behaviors. Equally important, these behaviors were noted to be influenced by the student's cultural and environmental backgrounds.

## Disagreement over Definitions

To successfully identify an English Language Learner for gifted programming, let's first define "giftedness." What does it look like? How does the term apply to a student who is struggling to understand and speak the language we generally use to measure it? There are numerous and often nebulous definitions of what constitutes giftedness within our own society. So how do we determine what giftedness means for English Language Learners from another culture?

Research provides excellent resources for looking at giftedness and the factors involved in defining it. To investigate further, see references in bibliography. However, scholars find it hard to agree on what the term "giftedness" means.

To date, there is no one theory or definition of "gifted and talented." Some scholars say that giftedness is a psychological construct or mental state that can't be measured. Others argue that what giftedness is, isn't as important as how it manifests; in other words, the important thing is that we can measure the behaviors that result from it.

## What We Have Learned about Gifted Children

In 2004, the Gifted Development Center, as a service for the Institute for the Study of Advanced Development, summarized the results of a 23-year study in which they conducted 4,200 gifted/talented assessments. Their findings are summarized in 23 numbered paragraphs from "What have we learned about gifted children?" The following results are excerpted from eight of those paragraphs:

- There are more exceptionally gifted children in the population than anyone realizes.
- Mildly, moderately, highly, exceptionally, and profoundly gifted children are as different from each other as are other identified subgroups, but the differences among levels of giftedness are rarely recognized.
- Parents are excellent identifiers of giftedness in their children.
- Over 60 percent of gifted children are introverted compared with 30 percent of the general population. Over 75 percent of highly gifted children are introverted.
- Giftedness is not elitist. It cuts across all socioeconomic groups.
- Gifted children are asynchronous. Their development tends to be uneven, and they often feel out-of-sync with age peers and with age-based school expectations.



## Open Eyes and Open Minds

Various lists provide samples of gifted characteristics described in literature. Most of these lists include concepts such as inquisitiveness, motivation, curiosity, memory, inquiry, imagination, insight, reasoning, problem-solving, communication, humor, creativity, and identification of hobbies and project interests.

What educators must remember is that concepts such as these can look very different in individual students. Curious children do not necessarily show us that they are inquisitive, and they may not appear to be motivated. A student who has remarkable ability in all academic areas may not successfully complete advanced-level work. We have to be open to the possibility that we may be overlooking talented students who don't seem to "fit the mold" because they do not demonstrate stereotypical behaviors of native English speaking students.

## The Gifted/Talented English Language Learners

Although researchers agree that educators need to know the characteristics of a gifted English Language Learner, there is disagreement—and little research—about these characteristics. Research has described gifted English Language Learners as having varying degrees of the following characteristics:

- acquires a second language rapidly ,
- shows high ability in mathematics,
- displays a mature sense of diverse cultures and languages,
- code switches easily (think in both languages),
- demonstrates an advanced awareness of American expressions,
- translates at an advanced level (oral)
- navigates appropriate behaviors successfully within both cultures.

The researchers may have derived these characteristics from their earlier work called Project GOTCHA (Galaxies of Thinking and Creative Heights of Achievement), which emphasizes an English Language Learner's unique creative abilities.

## Project GOTCHA

### Galaxies of Thinking and Creative Heights of Achievement.

According to Project GOTCHA, the gifted/talented English Language Learner demonstrates the following characteristics:

#### School Based

1. Is able to read in their native language two grade levels above their current grade.
2. Shows high ability in mathematics.
3. Is advanced in creative domains (fluency, elaboration, originality, and flexibility).
4. Is a leader in multiple settings (playground, home, clubs, etc.).

#### Language Based

1. Demonstrates language proficiency levels that are above nongifted students who are also English Language Learners.
2. Learns multiple languages at an accelerated pace.
3. Shows the ability to code switch.
4. Wants to teach others words from their heritage language.
5. Is willing to translate for others.
6. Has superior knowledge of phrases and heritage dialects along with the ability to translate meanings in English.
7. Has a grasp on jokes related to cultural differences.

#### Culture Based

1. Balances behaviors expected in both the heritage and the new culture.
2. Is willing to share his/her heritage culture.
3. Shows pride in his/her culture and ethnic background.
4. Demonstrates a global sense of community and respect for cultural differences.

## Historically Speaking

The search to identify characteristics of gifted students from diverse populations is not new. What may be surprising to some of us is how little some things have changed in 30 years. We've come a long way, but we're not there yet.

**1974:** A study of gifted Mexican-American students reported that they exhibited leadership, acceptance of authority, self-control, and advanced school performance.

**1983:** When researchers investigated how teachers selected students for gifted/talented programs, they found that in addition to scores on intelligence and achievement tests, the teachers relied on socioeconomic status (SES), race, ethnicity, attractiveness, good behavior, and good grades. The study suggests that educators within the recent past were more likely to rely on stereotypical notions about SES, race, and ethnicity when identifying a student's potential. This would presumably happen even more frequently in the absence of academic records, as is often the case with economically disadvantaged and minority students.

**1995:** In a survey of attitudes titled, *Why do we identify so few children from economically disadvantaged and LEP backgrounds?*, in which 750 administrators, counselors, and teachers (65 percent elementary schools, 14 percent middle schools, 23 percent high schools) responded, survey participants perceived the following two factors as primarily responsible for the under-representation of disadvantaged and LEP students:

- Standardized tests are biased (70 percent).
- Teachers are unable to recognize indicators of potential giftedness in these pupils (62 percent).

Given these results, it is clear that educators were looking for ways to identify these children, but were often unsure how to do so.

**2002:** In a study that looked at the affective characteristics of children referred to gifted/talented programs, researchers found that they are typically quiet, well behaved and well dressed, and get good grades. The researcher concluded that by excluding the cultural or environmental influences on the ways in which students show their giftedness and talent, we may be limiting identification to particular cultural groups. Studies such as these likely served as a catalyst for the cultural diversity training that occurs in American schools to a much larger extent today.

## In the Context of Their Culture

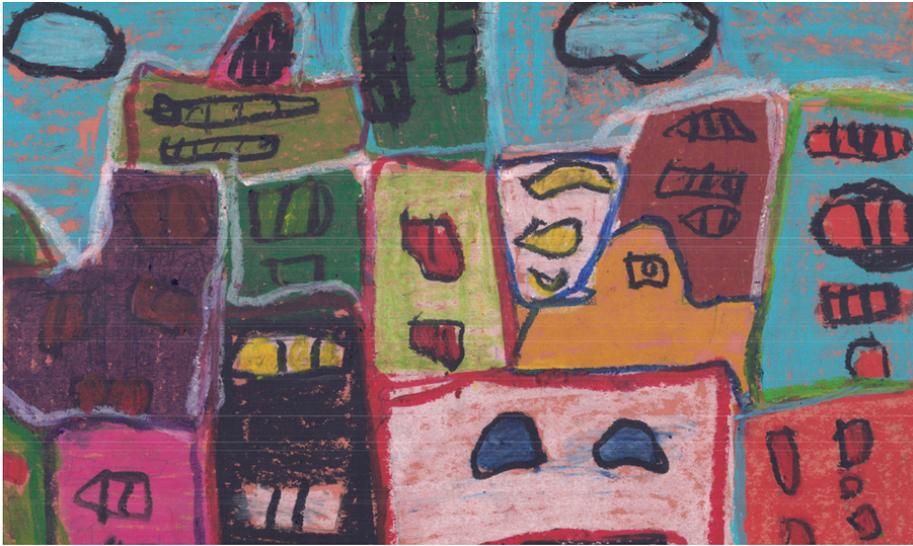
What is different for English Language Learners is the emphasis on their gifts *within the cultural context of learning a second-language*. In general, lists generated by various researchers suggest that gifted/talented English Language Learners essentially display characteristics similar to those of English-speaking gifted/talented students.

If we keep this fact in mind, we can identify English Language Learners whether they demonstrate their gifts in the cultural environment of their heritage or in their new home. These observations can be a valuable supplement to standardized test scores. In the end, we will have a more comprehensive

identification process for selecting high potential English Language Learners for gifted/talented programming.

There's little research to support that such lists are reliable and valid ways of identifying gifted/talented ELLs. However, doing our best to understand what a gifted/talented English Language Learner looks and acts like, we are more likely to recognize them in our schools.

Once we recognize English Language Learners as gifted, those of us who are entrusted with their future the caregivers in their homes, the teachers in their classrooms, and the administrators of the schools they attend can be more effective as their advocates.



# What's the Recognizing Bias Challenge?

With passage of the *Equal Education Opportunity Act* (1974), Congress effectively declared that human academic potential exists within all groups of people. Yet, even decades later, disproportionately few English Language Learners are included in gifted/talented educational programs. This section describes some of the factors that may be involved in these inequities for our English Language Learners.

## Reliance on Standardized Tests

Intelligence and academic achievement test scores are most often used to recognize and identify, as well as develop and evaluate, gifted/talented students' potential. Many researchers urge caution, however. Heavy reliance on standardized tests results in diverse groups of students being unequally represented, with greater concentrations in special education classes and fewer concentrations in gifted/talented classrooms.

This caution also applies when using standardized *non-verbal* intelligence tests. All tests assume a certain kind of language socialization, and students who lack this socialization are, by definition, disadvantaged. Even when the test is nonverbal, test administrators must use language to tell the students what they are to do. Selecting tests that reduce cultural and linguistic bias is not an easy task, and it's questionable whether any test is truly "culture free."

## Cultural Context

When identifying gifted/talented students who are culturally diverse, or have limited English proficiency, we must do so within the context of their cultural background. We need to understand, for example, that behaviors signaling giftedness in one culture may signal disrespect in another. To a teacher, a student who provides information the teacher doesn't know may be viewed as precocious.

But, when viewed by the student's parents, that same behavior may well be considered disrespectful.

Of course, the opposite is also true. Behaviors that a teacher might *devalue* as signs of conformity such as not correcting an adult who has given inaccurate information may be highly *valued* by the student's parents as serving the collective good of the family.

## National and State Data by Ethnicity

Data provided by the National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS) shows that, while 7.9 percent of all African American, 6.7 percent of all Hispanic, and 2.1 percent of all Heritage American students surveyed were enrolled in gifted/talented programs, a disproportionately high 17.5 percent of all Asian American students and 9 percent of all white students were enrolled.

The 2006-2007 Iowa Public School data of gifted students vs. total K-12 enrollment shows 4.6 percent African American, 3.3 percent Hispanic, 3.25 percent American Indian students were identified for gifted programming. Also, 12.4 percent Asian American and 9 percent white students were identified for gifted programming in Iowa public schools.

## Language Prejudice

Even differences in English Language Learner dialects have been found to influence initial administrator and teacher judgments. Such judgments are critically important because they can influence how administrators and teachers view an English Language Learner's potential giftedness.

If an educator stereotypes a certain culture as not valuing education, he or she is not as likely to view a student from that culture as bright. This attitude also may lead to fears that by admitting a student from that culture into the gifted/talented program, its quality will be watered-down.

Professional development that raises cultural awareness may help refute these stereotypes and result in more equitable representation in gifted/talented programs by students of all cultures.

When we do accept cultural differences, we still may not recognize or understand cultural behaviors that are different from our own. We may not even recognize giftedness if it is expressed in ways other than those we are accustomed to seeing. When parents, administrators, and teachers are able to recognize how the diverse expressions of giftedness and talent are impacted by cultural and linguistic factors, we will be able to recognize the indicators of potential.

When intelligence, achievement, and ability test scores are used as the criteria for admission to gifted/talented programs, African American, Hispanic, and Native American children are disproportionately underrepresented. In some cultures, the use of such test scores signals a lack of respect for the families' heritages and the ways in which giftedness may be expressed within them.

Steps to address these biases include conscious and intentionally directed K-12 multicultural professional development, the choice of culturally appropriate assessments, and the analysis and use of all data.

## Cultural Bias

Classroom teachers or other school personnel frequently refer students for gifted identification and programming. A particular challenge for educators who are responsible for teaching gifted/talented students who do not speak fluent English, can be the lack of training in identifying their gifted and talented abilities.

Research findings support that the limited inclusion of English Language Learners in gifted/talented programs is sometimes based on discriminatory attitudes. Although we may think we're aware of our own biases, we may have stereotypes and prejudices that devalue other cultures.



## Caught Between Two Languages

For English Language Learners, learning and living in two languages and cultures can be especially challenging. Many parents of ELLs try to transmit their cultural values by having their children learn and speak their heritage language at home. At the same time, English Language Learners may be pressured to accommodate the values of the school culture by being encouraged to speak only English. This challenge places many English Language Learners in the position of having to simultaneously learn the values inherent in two separate and distinct language cultures.



## An Inequitable Standard

For many people, the concept of “giftedness” equates to high academic achievement. For English Language Learners who are not yet fluent in English, this is an inequitable standard. It excludes English Language Learners, and minority children who do not do well on academic assessments, but who have elevated general abilities as measured by nonverbal ability assessments.

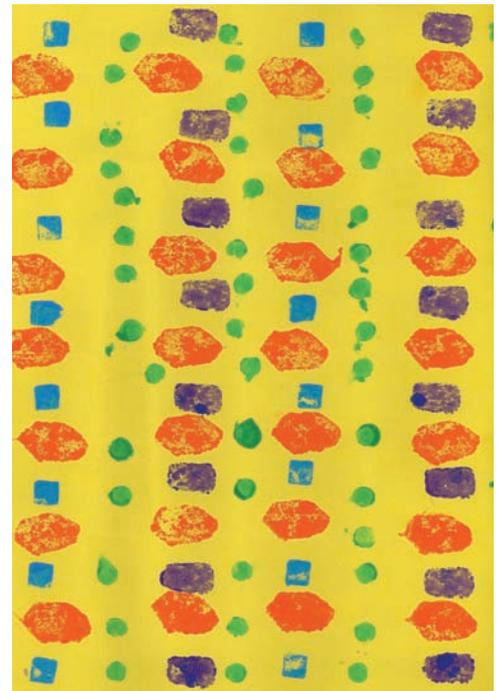
Instruments that can detect giftedness and talent in English Language Learners are sorely lacking, and inadequate assessment procedures continue to contribute to the under representation of English Language Learners in gifted/talented programs. Recommendations for assessment include the need for assessment measures that do not rely on language and to gather student information from multiple sources.

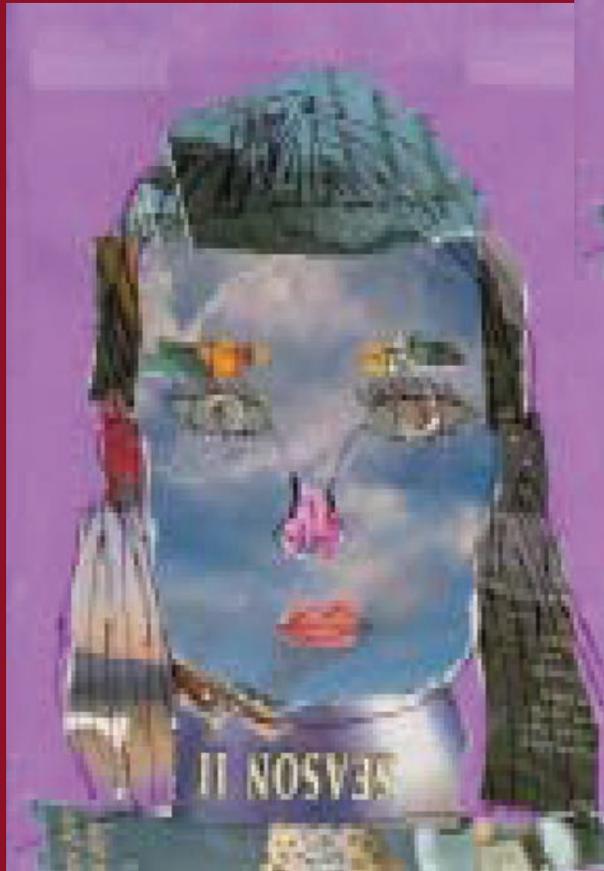
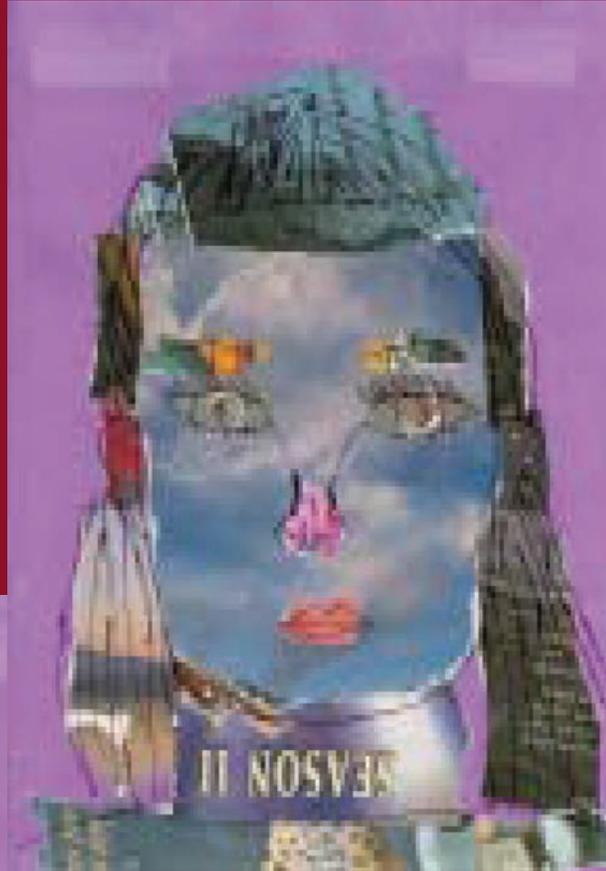
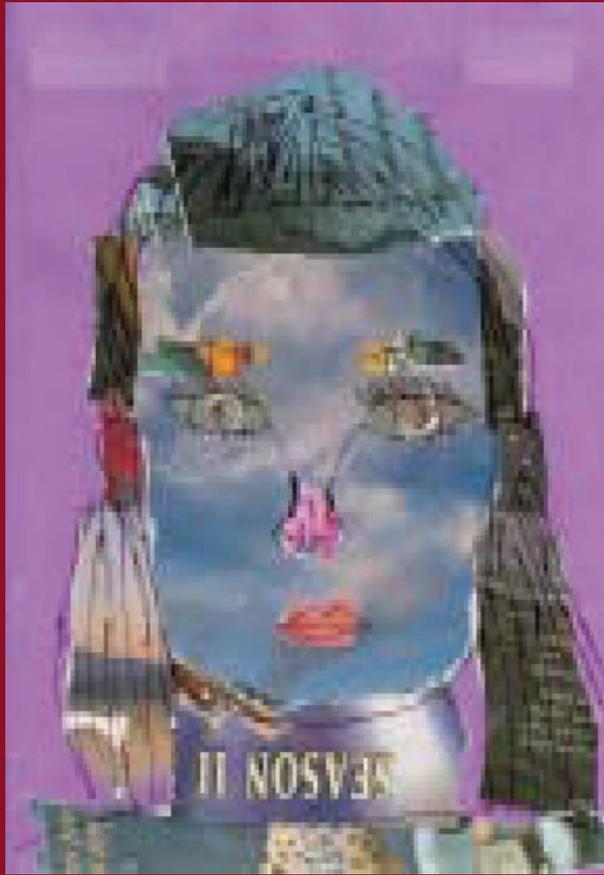
Iowa Administrative Code, Chapter 12, states that gifted and talented programming include multiple selection criteria for identifying gifted and talented students from the total student population. Standardized assessments are not required for identification in Iowa schools.

While some students show their gifts/talents in the classroom, others may only show the “potential for responding positively” to gifted and talented programming not enough evidence for program referral.

## What’s the Solution?

It’s clear that a variety of factors are responsible for the inequitable identification of English Language Learners for gifted/talented programs. So now that we know some of the challenges, what can we do about them? How can we ensure fairness in screening all students so that we can provide them with services tailored for their particular combination of talent and intelligence? Section 3 attempts to answer these question.





# What Will Recommended Practices We Do?

In this section, we'll look at best practices for identifying and screening English Language Learners who show exceptional strengths and talents.

## How Soon Do We Begin?

Ideally, attempts to identify English Language Learners for inclusion into gifted/talented programs should begin when they first enroll in school, if such programming options are available at their grade level. In this way, a student's mastery of English is not a requirement for consideration.

The challenge lies in determining what assessment tools to use. Any test written in English and given to students at this stage is not a true indicator of ability, but rather a reflection of their current exposure to the English language.

## Assessing Multiple Criteria

The Iowa Department of Education requires multiple selection criteria for identifying gifted and talented students from the total student population.

This approach involves obtaining student information from several quantitative and qualitative sources, and is helpful in making accurate referrals. The multiple criteria used to identify students for gifted/talented programming may involve any combination of the following:

- English language proficiency tests
- Acculturation scales
- Input from the student's cultural group
- Prior academic performance in the child's home school, and
- Parent interviews

In addition, it's helpful to consider other factors, such as:

- Assessment data
- Student observations
- Dynamic-performance-based indicators
- Portfolio assessments

- Teacher and /or parent nominations, and
- Behavioral rating scales

*How* we use information from multiple sources is just as important as *what* information we use. The following will provide some perspectives to consider when using the various criteria to screen English Language Learners for gifted/talented programs.

## Some Considerations

When a student's caregivers are not fluent in English, it's important to provide an interpreter, preferably a member of the case-study team. Having a team member who can communicate with the student's parents will increase the chance that the selection process is sensitive to the student's cultural and language learning context. It will also help parents participate in the important discussion of their child's educational future.

When an interpreter is not available, the selection team members should, at a minimum, make their interpretations and recommendations in light of what they know about the student's language and culture.

## English Language Proficiency Tests

Without understanding a student's level of English proficiency, any attempt at assessing their other abilities is premature.

English language proficiency tests are usually administered when a child first enters school, and then yearly with the Iowa-English Language Development Assessment (I-ELDA) until the student reaches a level of English proficiency that entitles them to exit the ESL/ELL program.

Students in different phases of English language acquisition have inherently different educational needs; therefore, knowing a child's English proficiency level is vital in deciding on their placement in a gifted/talented program.

Results from English proficiency tests offer descriptors of the child's English acquisition level that range from "nonproficient" to "superior" in the areas of listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Labels used on the Iowa English Language Development Assessment to describe the levels within each of the four domains and other commonly used descriptors are: prefunctional (also called nonEnglish proficient and preproduction), beginning (early production and speech emergence), intermediate, advanced, and fully English proficient (superior).

Considering a child's level of English proficiency when making decisions about placement in gifted/talented programming is not meant to be used as an exclusionary tool. Instead, it should be used to provide insight into the child's educational profile and to complement other information provided to the case study team.

For example, if a child is at the pre-production/non-proficient level of English acquisition, then it is not appropriate for the screening team to consider scores from verbal domains on tests written in English. Instead, it would be more appropriate to assess the English Language Learner's ability to verbally comprehend in their own language and compare their level of verbal skills to other students who also are pre-production. In addition, the screening team could observe their performance within other symbol systems (i.e., quantitative, nonverbal).

Domains on tests are written in English. Instead, it would be more appropriate to assess the English Language Learner's ability to verbally comprehend in their own language and compare the level of verbal skills to other students who also are "nonproficient." In addition, the screening team could observe how the student performs within other symbol systems (i.e., quantitative, nonverbal).

## A Sampling of Language Tests

Several language proficiency tests have been developed and are widely used. Sources such as the *Handbook of English Language Proficiency Tests* are excellent resources for discovering test characteristics and reliability and validity information. In general, English language proficiency tests seek to measure a student's reading, writing, listening, and speaking proficiency in the English language.

In Iowa, school district personnel must assess language proficiency for placement within the first 30 days of a new school year or within two weeks of a student's arrival if that is after the beginning of school. There are two assessments approved by the Iowa Department of Education for this purpose: the *IDEA Proficiency Tests (IPT)* and the *Language Assessment Scales (LAS)*. These are described in detail in the *Educating Iowa's English Language Learners: A Handbook for Administrators and Teachers* which is available online at <http://www.iowa.gov/educate/content/blogcategory/58/898/> and the assessments are available through each area education agency (AEA) and in many districts.

School district personnel in Iowa administer the *Iowa English Language Development Assessment (I-ELDA)* annually during the late winter early spring testing window. This assessment is used to document English Language Learner's growth in academic language which is a requirement of federal and state reports.

## Assessing in Three Domains

The following graphic illustration provides a visual representation of how the Iowa Department of Education and the Belin-Blank Center propose that educators use the domains to document a student's unique abilities.

Three overlapping circles (in Figure 1) represent the **cognitive, affective, and psycho-motor/behavioral domains** and their interrelatedness to one another. In this model, no single domain is more important than the other two, and none of them stands alone. They are interconnected.

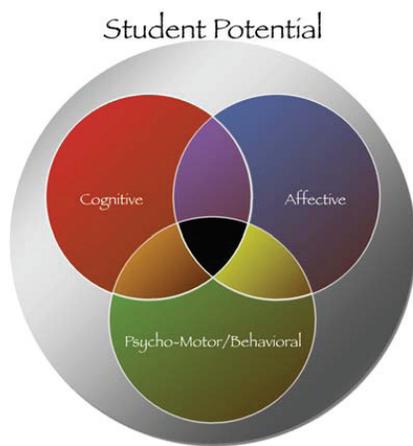


Figure 1

Keeping in mind the essential relationship among these three facets of a student’s potential will assist in identifying giftedness even when a student is not fluent in English. Use the model as a guide to describe and document academic potential and to construct a reliable and valid gifted/talented English Language Learner profile.

### The Cognitive Domain

Academic assessments fall into the cognitive domain, which encompasses a person’s knowledge and their development of intellectual skills. Academic and ability assessments have historically been the most frequently used factors when identifying gifted/talented students, but reliance on a single domain has its pitfalls, particularly with a gifted/talented English Language Learner.

### Assessment Data: A MultiEdged Sword

When an English Language Learner takes a test of academic content in English, they have a dual challenge: First, the student must understand the language, then respond to the content. The end result is that the student’s lack of English skills will likely affect their test performance.

The Iowa Department of Education offers the following suggestions:

- Provide an interpreter to answer questions.
- Use visuals to help the student understand what is being tested.
- Employ test tasks such as drawing, sequencing or matching pictures and/or concepts and using graphic organizers.

- When testing quantitative achievement and reasoning, use problems with “language free” calculation-but be aware that not all cultures use the same symbols for math operations.
- Avoid using timed tests, or requiring that test be timed.
- Permit the use of a translation dictionary.
- Read the test directions for the student (for nonreading tests); and/or offer word pronunciations or meanings when this type of assistance does not influence valid assessment of the subject of skills tested.

Educators should take all possible steps to maximize a student’s ability to express knowledge of content while minimizing the need to rely on English to express these ideas.

At the same time, we should remember that, for many English Language Learners, their culture and experiences are very different from those of the people who design and excel on assessment and ability tests. What that means is that testing itself may not be fair.

### A Question of Equity

Is it “fair” and “legal” to use different screening criteria for different groups of students?

Yes, according to the attorney for the Iowa Department of Education but with a caveat.

Because Iowa districts require **multiple measures** of giftedness/talent, using different criteria for different groups does not violate Chapter 12.

This is especially true because using multiple measures helps to remediate a problem that has existed for years: When a district only measures with a single standard, the result has been to disproportionately eliminate minority students, students with disabilities, and English Language Learners.

“As long as the criteria are clear and used consistently, there should be no problem ... [a] district could establish differing criteria for certain groups of students as long as the criteria are consistently used with that particular group of students.”

## ¿Habla Español?

Some researchers advocate that a good predictor for Hispanic/Latino students' ability to reason in English is their ability to reason in Spanish. For the Spanish-speaking English Language Learner population, educators have a choice of several published tests of ability and academic achievement.

Some examples follow:

- *Apranda* (1997) was designed to mirror the educational objectives measured in the Stanford Achievement Test Series, Eighth Edition.
- *Logramos* (2006 ed.), a group administered achievement test battery in Spanish was designed with content objectives that are parallel to those of the Iowa tests.

### Other K–8 Assessments

- *La Prueba* (1984)
- *Spanish Assessment of Basic Education* (SABE) (1987)

### Ability Tests

- *Woodcock-Johnson Test of Cognitive Ability - Revised*, Spanish form
- *Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children Fourth Edition* (WISC-IV, Wechsler, 2003), Spanish translation

## Home Language Testing

Some educators argue that testing a child in the heritage language will reduce assessment errors and increase test validity. They suggest that tests in the student's home language may be free of the types of cultural differences and nuances that are subject to misinterpretation.

Unfortunately, for English Language Learners whose heritage language is other than Spanish, translated tests are rarely an option. Few, if any, standardized measures of ability and achievement in languages such as Bosnian or Vietnamese are available to Iowa's school districts.

Even when the tests are given in the heritage language, they may not accurately measure English Language Learner's verbal abilities. Translated tests, such as those mentioned on this page, still contain items that may be misinterpreted due to the translation process itself. In addition, geographic variations in the student's heritage language may cause difficulty for English Language Learners whose regional dialect is not the language of the test.

In most cases, children's verbal abilities in their heritage language tend to decrease during the time they are away from their heritage cultures and their heritage language is not taught at school. This decrease often coincides with the time they are acquiring English in their U.S. schools. For students such as these, nonverbal tests may be the most culturally fair way of measuring global ability.

When available, another option is to use an interpreter. It's critically important when selecting an interpreter that they are fluent in the technical language of testing (the terms used to instruct the student on how to take the test), as well as the child's heritage language. It's also key that the interpreter does not hesitate to ask for clarification when necessary.

## Using Local Norms

Even if a district decides to use academic assessments to screen all students for gifted/talented programs, that doesn't necessarily mean English Language Learners' scores have to be compared to English-speaking students' scores.

"If students have not had the opportunities to develop verbal or quantitative reasoning abilities in the same way that others have, then the solution is not to refrain from measuring these critical aptitudes, but rather to compare students' test scores with others who have had similar learning opportunities."

In other words, compare students' scores with other students of the same age group who have had similar language and acculturation experiences.

Instead of using national norms to evaluate giftedness it is recommended to use local norms (which are available from many group-administered ability and achievement tests) to determine eligibility.

For example, while an English Language Learner's score on the Verbal Reasoning subtest of the Cognitive Abilities Tests (CogAT) may not be outstanding when compared to a heritage English speaker's Verbal Reasoning score, it may be unusually high compared to other English Language Learners in the school district, and should be regarded as evidence of talent.

There are still issues to consider, even when using local norms. For one thing, test developers do not provide score distributions based on race, ethnicity, or knowledge of the English language, and scores on tests such as verbal reasoning are likely to be influenced by an English Language Learner's level of English acquisition which varies widely among students.

So, if an English Language Learner scores unusually high on the Verbal Reasoning test of the CogAT, is it because the student has relatively advanced English language acquisition, or is it because the student is gifted in Verbal Reasoning? Resolving this issue is complicated. Still, especially in very large districts in which local norming practices are within the realm of possibility, this option is valid and needs to be considered.

### **NonVerbal Assessments**

Nonverbal assessments, by definition, do not rely on language to complete, so some researchers are convinced that these tests provide a more equitable method of identifying gifted/talented students from historically underrepresented populations. They may also be a more appropriate means of assessing bilingual students. But their suitability for English Language Learners depends on their not having elaborate verbal directions written in English.

Not all scholars agree that nonverbal assessments are a good idea, however, claiming that students should be assessed in the same academic area in which they will be receiving advanced instruction. When identifying students for a math enrichment program, for example, students should take a mathematics test not a more general test such as nonverbal reasoning ability.

They also argue that academic proficiency relies on *verbal* and quantitative reasoning abilities, not on *nonverbal* reasoning abilities. So students who

will most likely be successful in school are those who are capable of reasoning verbally.

But what should we do about the English Language Learners who have not been exposed to the English language enough to develop verbal reasoning skills? Waiting three to seven years for them to acquire English proficiency is hardly a viable option.

One solution is to assess students in all three symbol systems of language: verbal reasoning, nonverbal/spatial reasoning, and quantitative reasoning. That is, nonverbal assessment should not be used in isolation to identify gifted/talented English Language Learners.

We should also keep in mind that nonverbal reasoning ability is not the same as verbal or quantitative reasoning ability in any language. It should never be used in isolation for admission into a gifted/talented program.

The use of nonverbal assessments in isolation may even be more likely to exclude a gifted/talented learner who excels in other areas that have greater bearing on school success. For these reasons, screening for giftedness with non-verbal tests should be used as "the test of last resort, not the test of first resort."

Instead, we should measure all students in verbal, quantitative, and nonverbal reasoning, then pay particular attention to the highest scores within each ethnic and/or ELL group.

If an ELL who has been in a U.S. school for one year has a high score on the Naglieri Nonverbal Abilities Tests (NNAT) or the nonverbal subtest of the CogAT, they would also have to demonstrate upperlevel accomplishment in the particular subject area (such as math or reading) in which they will be placed in gifted programming. In addition, they would have to have a high score in comparison to other ELLs who had been in a U.S. school for the same length of time.

In this sense, the use of nonverbal scores adds to the student's portfolio, but does not make or break the admission decision.

## Testing Without Words

A variety of nonverbal tests is available, including the following:

*Naglieri Nonverbal Abilities Test (NNAT)*

*Universal Nonverbal Intelligence Test (UNIT)*

*Leiter R (Roid & Miller, 1997)*

*Comprehensive Test of Nonverbal Intelligence (CTONI)*

*Test of Nonverbal Intelligence, Third Edition (TONI-3)*

The nonverbal subtest of the CogAT.

## Tests of Specific Academic Aptitude

The *Purdue Academic Rating Scales* were developed to assess proficiency within the specific academic subject areas of mathematics, English, science, social studies, and foreign language.

The scales were created after gathering information from teachers working with talented students, and identify characteristics specific to each of the five academic domains they test. The scales have been used as a supplement to academic achievement tests when assessing students for admission into gifted/talented programs.

## Dynamic or Performance-Based Assessment

With dynamic- or performance-based assessments, students are initially tested on material, receive an intervention, and then are retested to see what improvements resulted from the intervention. In this sense, what they are being tested on is their ability to use cognitive, rather than affective, strategies to master new materials.

Performance-based assessments are a series of tasks a student completes in specific cognitive ability areas. The benefits of using performance-based assessments with all students are numerous. Performance-based assessments:

1. Emphasize fluency and complexity of response over speed of response;
2. Emphasize the ability to give several correct responses;
3. Use dynamic assessment, or a pre-teaching opportunity,
4. Focus on high-level thinking and problem-solving skills, and
5. Emphasize thinking on the process of arriving at answers.



## Portfolio Assessment

A portfolio is a collection of student information from a variety of sources and domains in order to obtain a holistic picture of the person's academic potential. Students, or their teachers, compile work samples in various academic domains specific to the program in which they will be identified (e.g., art, photography, creative writing, etc.).

Material in the portfolio can be completed in the student's heritage language, as well as in the English language whichever is more comfortable for the student.

## The Affective Domain

Gathering information about the affective domain is very different than the cognitive domain. This domain relates to values or perceptions about value-laden issues. Information gathered about an English Language Learner within this domain includes other people's perceptions of the student.

## Acculturation Scales

In this context, acculturation refers to individuals who have to learn rules and norms of a cultural environment that are different from their heritage culture.

For students entering U.S. schools from another country, this often means learning the rules that accompany being a student of the English language. It is, in a sense, understanding the hidden codes that are involved in learning any language and culture. Acquiring this code-breaking skill is more difficult for some students than for others and influences how the student will be perceived by their peers and teachers.

Knowing a student's level of acculturation is important when evaluating classroom performance. Students who are slow to acculturate in U.S. school settings may be perceived as not bright, regardless of their ability. Obviously, this perception serves as a barrier to inclusion in gifted/talented programs.

One way to determine a student's level of acculturation is to use an acculturation scale, described on the following page.

Several acculturation measurement tools have been specifically designed for individuals from various cultural groups (see *Collier, 2005* for a complete list). School districts considering the use of acculturation scales in their identification process should thoroughly review the body of literature about their usefulness.

Since less acculturated students are often perceived as "less bright" than more acculturated students, obtaining acculturation scale results can help prevent educators from inadvertently discriminating against certain groups of students.

Like language proficiency tests, acculturation information should not be used in isolation, but should serve to complement other data within the student's profile.

## Teacher, Parent, Peer, and Self-Referral

Rather than relying on parent or teacher nominations to screen for additional testing, we should use them as a complement to other data gathered through the multiple-measure approach. But nominations don't have to come solely from parents and teachers. Anyone in the child's environment who believes that the particular student has a gift or talent should be eligible to nominate that child, including peers or self-nominations.



## A Model Acculturation Scale

Acculturation scales can be helpful tools to supplement the identification of gifted English Language Learners. In particular, the *Acculturation Quick Screen* (AQS) has many assets for use in Iowa's schools:

1. It is not developed for any one language or culture.
2. It measures acculturation to the public school culture of the United States and Canada.
3. It is designed for educators.
4. It specifically measures adaptation to various academic settings.
5. It is a theoretically based way to predict successful integration.

If students are assessed with the AQS over time, their individual rates of acculturation can also help track areas in which they may be having difficulty. Finally, information gathered from the AQS can facilitate program changes required to address the needs of particular groups within the school's population.

Although the AQS was not specifically recommended for the identification of gifted students, the scale author, Dr. Catherine Collier, suggests that school psychologists and educators can use the AQS to supplement assessment information gathered from an English Language Learner.

The AQS is intended to be administered within the first month that a child enters the school system, with yearly retesting at approximately the same time (i.e., early in the fall semester). This way the child's rate of adaptation to the school system is documented. The information necessary in order for the AQS to be administered correctly includes:

- The amount of time the student has been residing in the United States.
- The amount of time the student has been enrolled in the current school and grade level.
- The amount of time and frequency of assistance that the student has been enrolled in bilingual or ESL classes.
- Language proficiency in the child's heritage language. (This can help inform school personnel what language would be appropriate for testing the child.)
- Language proficiency in English.
- Bilingual proficiency. (What is the proficiency that the student has in both the home language and English?)

## Psycho-Motor/Behavioral Domain

Within this domain, we look at a student's work product and any information we can gather about the child's prior school and life experiences.

### Rating Scales

Several rating scales are useful in helping educators refer students for gifted/talented programs. One of the most commonly used is the *Scale for Rating Behavioral Characteristics of Superior Students* (SRBCSS), in which students are scored from 1 – 4 on items within the following categories:

- Learning
- Music
- Motivation
- Dramatics
- Creativity
- Communication and precision
- Leadership
- Communication expressiveness
- Artistic
- Planning

Some rating scales have been created specifically for diverse populations. One example is the *Gifted Characteristics Checklist for Underrepresented Populations*, developed and used by the school district of Palm Beach County, Florida.

Another example, by Callahan and McIntire (1994), is a menu of characteristics separated by domain (e.g., artistic, creative, leadership, etc.), along with guidelines for how to use the menu. It is significant to note that these characteristics were developed specifically for identifying gifted/talented American Indian students and may not directly translate into identifying gifted English Language Learners.

The New South Wales, Australia, Department of Education and Training (2004) advocates tailoring nomination forms and student checklists to a district's particular school population, a suggestion expressed by others in the literature.

In doing so, they suggest beginning with a trait targeted by the program, then developing a question to see whether the trait is present. For example, to identify "leadership ability," educators might ask parents, "Does your child hold any leadership roles?"

They also emphasize that all forms should be translated to the child's home language and that the scales be tailored to the child's grade level. In assessing an English Language Learner for giftedness/talent, it is good practice to gather background information, such as the student's heritage school grades, test scores, and work samples. This information often can be gathered by talking to the student's parents with an interpreter present, if necessary. Additional data of interest includes the student's previous school setting, class schedule, and interests.

The parents' educational levels and previous employment information can also assist educators to gain a more holistic picture of the English Language Learner. This practice is common in many ESL programs. With consent from the student's parents, ESL teachers will have a wealth of information to share with gifted/talented educators to help with the screening process.

### A Model Portfolio

The *Early Assessment for Exceptional Potential of Young Minority and/or Economically Disadvantaged Students* examined student work in terms of 18 primary identifiers, grouped into four categories:

- Exceptional learners;
- Exceptional user of knowledge;
- Exceptional generator of knowledge; and
- Showing exceptional motivation.

Educators learned to examine anecdotal records and work samples, observe the students during sample lessons, rate peer and self-nominations, and score a home-community questionnaire in light of the 18 identifiers. This information was then used to construct appropriate programming for each student. Although the author recognized how time-consuming such an identification process can be, he suggested the importance of using multimodal assessment in order to provide relevant programming to students of all racial/ethnic, gender, and socioeconomic status groups. These same principles can be applied when assessing ELLs.



# How Do We Identify High Ability and Potential?

## Practical Implementation

### Invitation to Change

Teachers and coordinators of gifted/talented programs and English Language Learner programs have inherited and created processes that have been accepted past practice. The following proposed identification process is different. Although Iowa Administrative, Chapter 12, requires “multiple selection criteria for identifying gifted and talented students from the total student population,” the focus on standardized test scores; specifically ITBS/ITED has become the primary identification criteria of choice by local school districts. While standardized assessments are certainly a consideration, they are biased if used in isolation. The process outlined in this section is intentionally designed to change the paradigm that identification of high ability and/or potential talent is determined primarily by a specific score or cut-point on a standardized assessment.

Identifying English Language Learners for gifted programming begins with collaboration among classroom teachers, gifted/talented educators, and ELL educators. Formal channels of communication between gifted/talented and ELL teachers and coordinators are vital to gifted/talented ELL success. Within this relationship, educators should collaborate to:

- Maximize an ELLs ability to express knowledge of content while minimizing their need to rely on English to express it;
- Broaden the concept of giftedness, as influenced by the unique circumstances of an English Language Learners culture;
- Resolve the individualistic identification of gifted/talented students within cultural contexts that highly value group solidarity; and
- Overcome the discrimination that perpetuates when non-English fluency is equated with poor academic potential.

### Seek to Understand

As in meeting any person for the first time, we ask appropriate questions to get to know them personally. The same is true for new families entering the school system. For English Language Learners it may be necessary to provide forms with written translations and/or employ the use of an interpreter for a more personal interview. In addition to appropriate translations of the district’s required registration information, the classroom teacher may desire more specific academic and affective information about the student. Sample interview forms are provided to gather prior educational information from the student as well as parents (see CD-ROM). Remember to retain a copy for the student’s file.



### Be Aware of Both

In all cases, it is necessary to complete an English language proficiency assessment and evaluate results prior to any testing in English. Knowing a child’s level of English proficiency helps educators decide when to give various cognitive assessments, as well as how to interpret scores obtained.

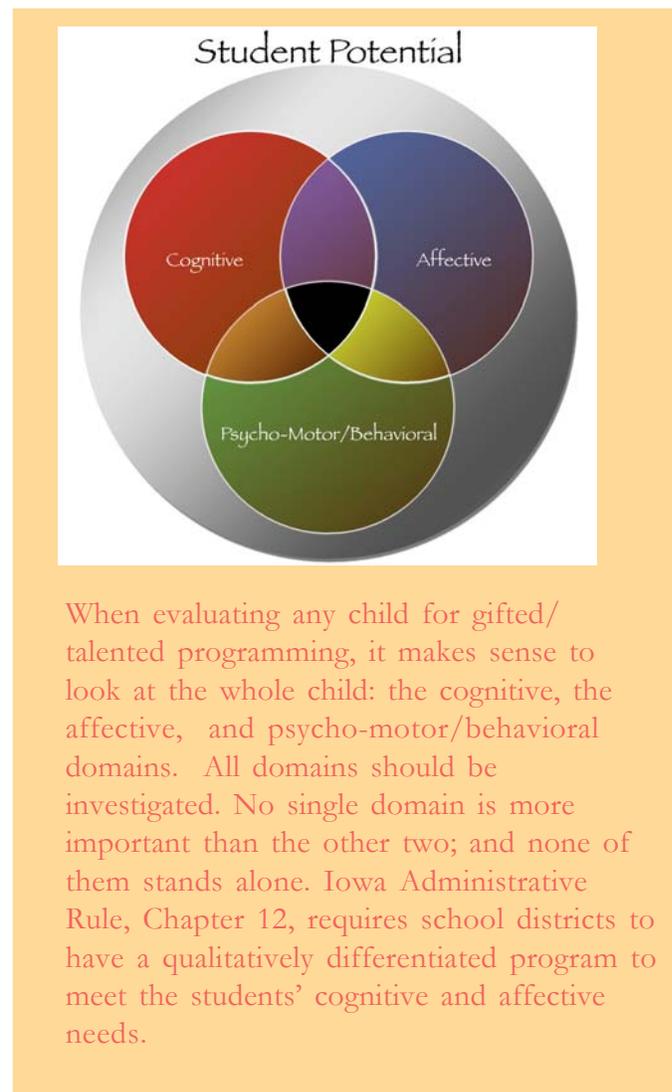
Next it is appropriate to administer and review proficiency testing data about the student. Understanding the student's ease in acquiring native language and academic abilities in their home school system is an indication of their potential. Information gathered in this section supports the Iowa Administrative Rule, Chapter 12, requirement for multiple selection criteria in identifying students for gifted programming from the total K-12 student population.

### Start Spreading the News

So far in this process, the student and parent interviews have been reviewed and teachers have gathered student proficiency data and samples of the student's previous academic experience. This is the time to inform the educators who currently have the student in class. Sharing the student's information with the classroom teacher(s), as well as specials and elective teacher(s), expands the scope of observing and sharing the student's social, emotional, physical, and academic needs. Include school counselors, curriculum directors, and building principals as appropriate. Creating a team of educators who are aware of English Language Learner abilities and potential provides a support system for student success. If the student's course schedule changes, or there are changes in classroom assignments at quarter and semester breaks, remember to inform the receiving teachers about the needs and potential of the English Language Learner.

### Observe Through New Lenses

Do not underestimate the power of acceptance through the arts or the student's recognized abilities as part of a team effort. Music, art, and physical education teachers will observe the students expressing and demonstrating their abilities and interacting with peers and adults in various settings. These alternative classroom settings may be the primary experience where ELLs feel accepted by their peers. Demonstrated work and/or performance assessments in specials and elective classes that support the student's needs or potential also support the Iowa Administrative Rule, Chapter 12, requirement for multiple selection criteria for identifying students for gifted



programming from the total students population. Add this information to the student's Personal Educational Plan (PEP) file.

### The Cognitive Domain

The standardized tests commonly used in the state of Iowa to assess cognitive ability and specific academic achievement are the *Cognitive Abilities Test* and the *ITBS/ITED*. Additional assessments that a district may choose to administer include nonverbal ability assessments such as the *Ravens Standard Progressive Matrices*, the *Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test*, or results from tests administered in the student's heritage language. Educators are encouraged to use "common sense" when assessing English Language Learners with standardized tests. While it is important to test students in the cognitive domain, it is recommended to pay greater attention to reasoning ability than to academic achievement scores.

## The Affective Domain

Evidence of the beliefs, values, attitudes, and opinions that may be expected to influence the assessment of gifted/talented English Language Learners are to be listed in the Affective Assessment Indicator section of the profile (see CD-ROM).

While these data are more difficult to obtain and evaluate, their inclusion will give merit to the factors that influence the expression of cognitive and psycho-motor/behavior potential. It is recommended these indicators be collected from those who are in a position to frequently observe the student in class, at home, and in the community when determining whether the student demonstrates the affective domain characteristics of gifted/talented English Language Learners. It is also recommended that measures of creativity and leadership be included to determine if the student should be earmarked for inclusion in gifted/talented programs that develop these skills.

## Assessing Creativity

Creativity is different than academic achievement. Creativity tests are often less reliable than academic tests, because having smaller group differences makes identification of gifted/talented students more challenging when such instruments are used exclusively.

These tests are nonlanguage-dependent and scores obtained are based on norm-referenced criteria. Some districts have included the use of creativity tests such as the *Torrence Tests of Creative Thinking* in their multiple-method assessment approaches.

## Psycho-Motor/Behavioral Domain

When inquiring about the student's previous schooling experiences, request hard copies of school records, grade reports, projects, and homework samples. Keep in mind that

although the family may not have them in their immediate possession, they may be able to obtain information given time and assistance.

If there is not an indication of need at this time, determine a future date to review the information for reconsideration.

If student and parent responses indicate potential for high academic needs, we need to continue gathering information to determine the student's needs. When considering English Language Learners for gifted/talented programming, it is not only important to gather current grades (average at year end) and work samples, but it is also crucial that previous grades, test scores, and work samples be obtained for students who attended school in their heritage country.

The interview information, copies of records, and samples of work support the Iowa Administrative Rule, Chapter 12, requirement for multiple selection criteria for identifying students for gifted programming from the total student population (see CD-ROM). Many school districts follow the best practice of creating Personal Educational Plans (PEP) for gifted programming documentation. Remember to include this information on your PEP forms.

### Personal Education Plans

A quality PEP includes, but is not limited to:

- Relevant background information and data.
- Assessment of present needs.
- Projection for future needs.
- A chronology of all gifted and talented services rendered.
- Nature and extent of present services.
- Other supportive assistance provided to the classroom teacher on behalf of adapting the regular school program to better address the student's needs.

## Compare English Language Learners to English Language Learners

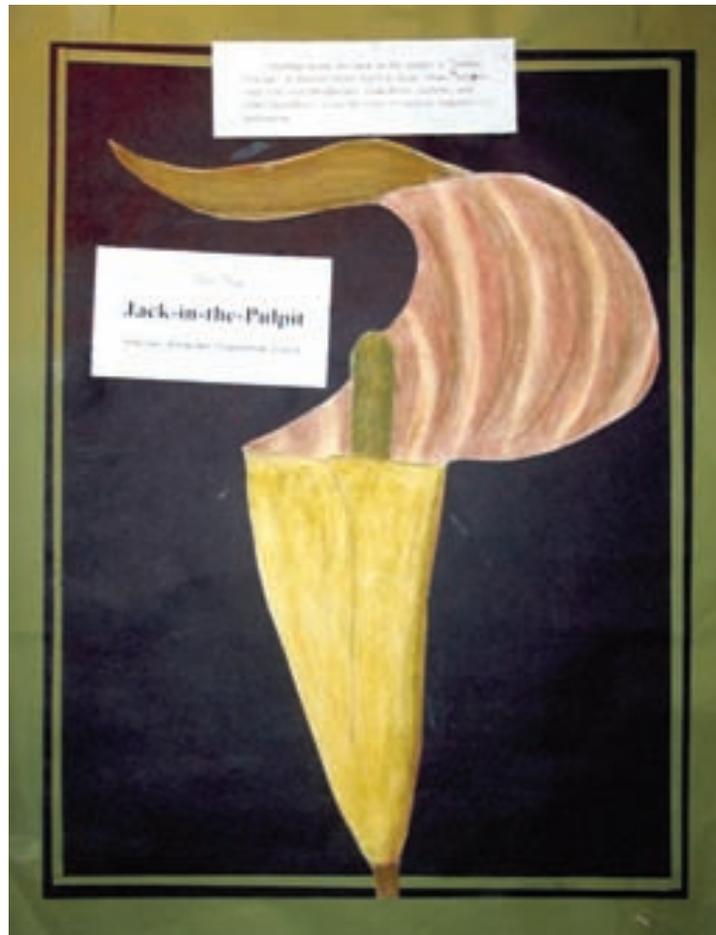
Instead of using cut scores by native English language speakers to determine whether a score is high enough to warrant admission into a gifted/ talented program, each English Language Learner's score should be considered in light of information gathered within the affective and psycho-motor/behavioral potential domains from other English Language Learners at the same English proficiency level within the district. This allows English Language Learners' potential to be estimated using multiple measures and within an appropriate norm group.



## A Self-Audit

1. What is your current method for identifying students for gifted programming?
2. What is your current method for identifying English Language Learners for gifted programming?
3. Who is involved in establishing the criteria for identification?
4. Who is involved in the selection process?
5. Have you made any modifications to the curriculum for these students?
6. Are the parents of English Language Learners knowledgeable about your gifted programming?

Interview questions were adapted from those of Bermudez & Rakow (1993).





# After Identification, Advocating For The Gifted/Talented ELL Then What?

In previous sections, we discussed the importance of identifying talented and gifted English Language Learners and looked at multiple methods for doing so. Once these students are identified, we are mandated by law to provide them with an equitable education that meets their individual needs.

How do we provide gifted/talented educational services to students whose proficiency of English is not complete? How can administrators and teachers successfully advocate for gifted English Language Learners? How do we build trust and involve parents in school events when we don't speak the same language?

This section provides some ideas for districts to consider. These are only a few of a wide variety of potential answers to the questions raised here. For additional information and ideas, consider attending the Iowa Culture and Language Conference held annually, or contacting the AEA that serves your school district.

## Room for All

To meet all identified student needs, is to provide multiple program options that serve a wide range of students, while staying within the district's budget constraints. Some possible options for gifted/talented programming that welcome English Language Learners include the following:

- A curriculum that is inclusive of the students' interests and allows them to make choices in what they want to learn, including a focus on cultural themes;
- Expansion beyond addressing intellectual talent, by including leadership, creativity, and art;

- Hands-on units that address the needs of gifted/talented English Language Learners once they are admitted into programming;
- Classes in Spanish (or other heritage) culture and rhetoric, as well as AP language classes in the English Language Learner's heritage language;
- Translation of written class assignment instructions into the heritage language and more time to complete the assignments;
- Collaboration of ESL teachers to help English Language Learners express their ideas verbally and in writing in their heritage language; and
- Bilingual activities that involve English Language Learners and native-English speakers.

## Taken to Task

Information gathered from a review of the literature, coupled with suggestions offered by Iowa's educators, points to the need for a special task force of administrators and teachers to serve as advocates for gifted English Language Learners and their families. Creating a task force before problems arise can help ensure bright English Language Learners will receive the gifted/talented programming they are entitled to.

## No Water Added

As gifted and talented classrooms become more culturally and linguistically diverse, educators should take all possible steps to maximize a student's ability to express their knowledge of content while minimizing the child's need to rely on English to express those ideas.

Content in gifted/talented programs should not be watered down to address the needs of students who are showing academic potential rather than academic achievement. Instead, teachers may need to modify the way that material is delivered in the classroom in order to make the content more accessible for all students in the program for both English Language Learner and non-English Language Learner.

This can be accomplished in several ways including:

- Pursue topics in depth and at a pace that matches the students' abilities and interests.
- Allow creative exploration beyond rigid curriculum guidelines and structured formats.
- Encourage students to question.
- Explore areas of emotional interest to each student, for example, by offering independent projects of their choosing.

## Mentor Programs

When multiple English Language Learners are identified for the gifted and talented program, an older student can serve as a mentor for a younger student. The benefits are greatest when the students share the same cultural background. The older student generally serves as a role-model of success for the younger student.

When using a mentor program, be sure to identify the scope of the mentor relationship to both students and to the parents of the mentored child. Doing so will help make this a positive experience for all involved.

## Joint Professional Development

Formal communication between the English Language Learner/English as a Second Language and gifted/talented teachers is central to the success of identifying and serving English Language Learners in gifted and talented programs. Such communication provides a more holistic student profile and facilitates identification of all potentially gifted ELLs. Collaboration among these educators will be especially important as the students in Iowa's schools become more diverse.

One way to reach this goal is to hold ongoing professional development workshops with the gifted/talented and English Language Learner staff. The dialogue in the workshops might focus on issues such as:

- Preventing/dealing with discrimination within the district;
- Understanding giftedness within the boundaries of students' various cultures, which may or may not vary from the American concept of giftedness; and
- Resolving the individualistic nature of identification of talent within the context of cultures that value group solidarity.

Both English Language Learner and gifted and talented staff should regularly explore whether the district is meeting the goal of identifying a truly representative percentage of English Language Learners as gifted/talented.



## Getting Parents Involved

Educators widely agree that it is beneficial to involve parents in their children's education and most parents are eager to be involved. However, for the parents of English Language Learners, it's not always easy.

Educators need to be aware of several unique issues that affect these parents' participation and engagement. When asking parents of an English Language Learner to take an active role in their child's schooling, keep in mind the following questions:

- How long have they resided in the United States?
- Would you need an interpreter to communicate with the parents?
- How supportive are the school and community toward the parents and their children?
- What are the parents' prior experiences with schools in their heritage country and in the United States?
- What is the parent work schedule and are there transportation complications?

## Workshops for Parents

One way to encourage parents of gifted/talented English Language Learners to participate in their children's education is to provide workshops about topics that will be helpful. Focus the content on helping parents learn how to support their children's gifts at school:

- Inform parents of the identification process so that they can be actively involved as their child is being considered for gifted/talented programming.
- Help parents become knowledgeable about the significance of their child being identified as gifted/talented.

- Discuss ways in which they can support and nurture their children's particular gifts or talents.
- Teach them how to advocate for their children's right to an equitable and appropriate education.
- When possible, communicate with the parents in their heritage language. Validating their culture and language will increase their willingness to participate in school-related activities.

### Check It Out

If your district has English Language Learners of Hispanic/Latino heritage, the parent involvement model described by Gallagher (2002) provides a useful resource worth exploring.

## In the Comfort Zone

One reason parents of English Language Learners may not attend their children's school activities is because they feel uncomfortable and isolated by the language and cultural differences. We can overcome that, at least to some extent, by being flexible, accommodating, and welcoming.

Consider these ideas about how to provide a comfortable environment for the parents of gifted/talented English Language Learners:

- Do not assume that parents of English Language Learners know the purpose and importance of parent/teacher conferences. Send information about conferences to parents in their heritage language.
- Have interpreters available during parent/teacher conferences.

- Provide school social activities that have diverse cultural themes.
- Offer a variety of ways for parents to volunteer in the classroom.
- Provide opportunities for parents to attend workshops about gifted/talented characteristics they can look for in their own children and about educational opportunities to meet their children's unique needs. These workshops can also help teach parents how to advocate for their children's participation in gifted/talented programs.
- Help parents develop enriching learning experiences for their children at home or in the community.
- Introduce them to community services that can assist them and their families. Providing this information can help position the school team as advocates for the student and their family. Offer parents of English Language Learners positions on school councils or committees.



## Read on

For examples of effective programs being used with English Language Learners across the United States, see the CD-ROM.

As you develop or learn about other ideas, we invite you to share them by sending the evaluation form located on the CD-ROM to:

ESL/Gifted/Talented Consultant  
 400 E. 14th Street  
 Grimes State Office Building  
 Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0146



**About the**

**Recognizing The Artists**

**A**rt

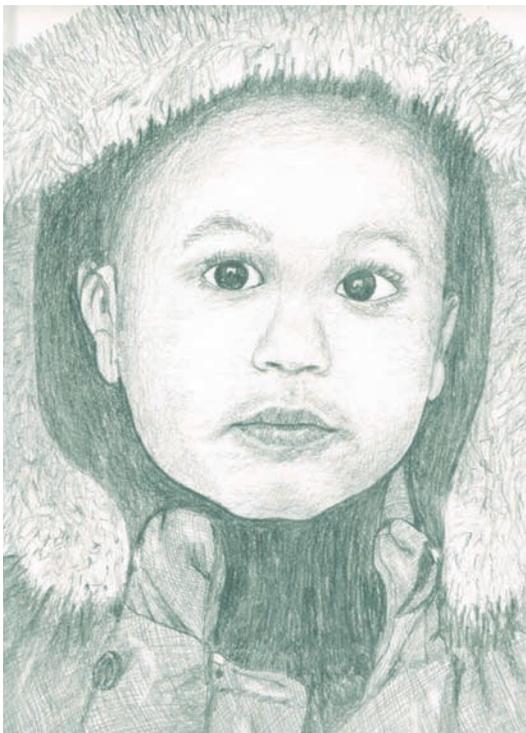
**Grades K-12**



Kitzya Soto-Arra  
"Alligator"  
Age 6            Grade K  
Perry Elementary School  
Perry, Iowa



Alonzo Zarate  
Age 8            Grade 3  
Perry Elementary School  
Perry, Iowa



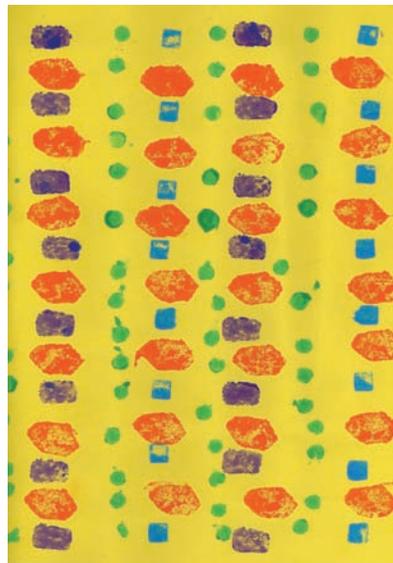
William Toj  
Grade 9  
Postville Community School  
Postville, Iowa



Miguel Gonzalez  
Age 7      Grade 1  
Perry Elementary School  
Perry, Iowa



Hanh Tran  
Age 13      Grade 7  
Williams Intermediate School  
Davenport, Iowa



Lesley Mendoza  
Age 8      Grade 2  
Perry Elementary School  
Perry, Iowa



Edvin Perez  
"Las Rosas"  
Grade 10  
Postville Community School  
Postville, Iowa

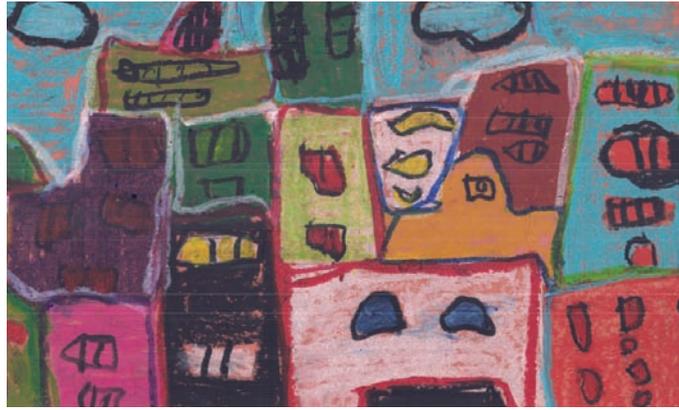


Bryan Villa  
"The Dinosaur Birds"  
Age 9            Grade 4  
Perry Elementary School  
Perry, Iowa

Ricardo Morales  
Age 6            Grade 1  
Perry Elementary School  
Perry, Iowa



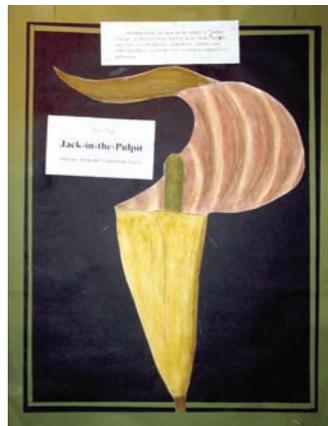
Manasses Martinez  
Age 7            Grade 1  
Perry Elementary School  
Perry, Iowa



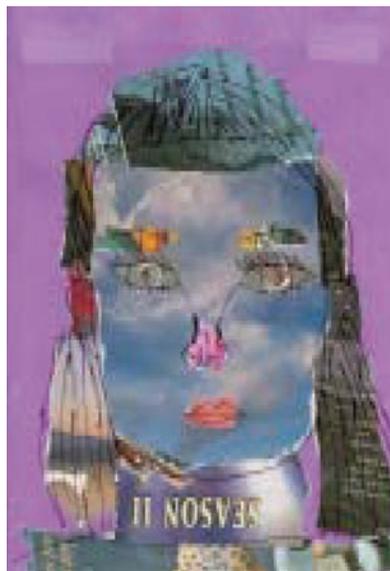
Alexis Macias  
Age 8            Grade 2  
Perry Elementary School  
Perry, Iowa



Kely Toj  
"Soloman's Seal" chalk pastel  
Grade 6  
Postville Community School  
Postville, Iowa



Jairo Chuy  
"Jack-in-the-Pulpit"  
chalk pastel  
Grade 6  
Postville Community School  
Postville, Iowa



Luisa Aquino  
"The Robot Femanda"  
Age 11            Grade 4  
Perry Elementary School  
Perry, Iowa



Jario Murillo  
Age 8            Grade 2  
Perry Elementary School  
Perry, Iowa



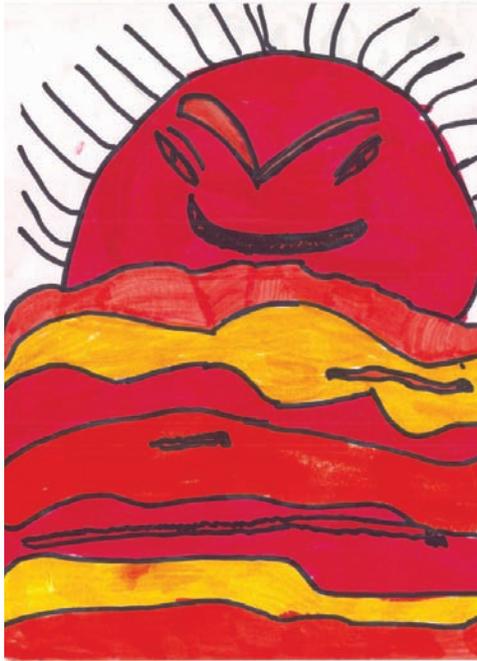
Eliza Lopez  
“Colombine”  
chalk pastel  
Grade 6  
Postville Community School  
Postville, Iowa



Eduardo Medina  
Age 8            Grade 2  
Perry Elementary School  
Perry, Iowa



Xavier Montoya  
“Self-Portrait”  
Age 13            Grade 7  
Jefferson Middle School  
Dubuque, Iowa



Miguel Gonzalez  
Age 7      Grade 1  
Perry Elementary School  
Perry, Iowa



Maritza Galdamez  
"My Beautiful Land"  
Age 8      Grade 3  
Perry Elementary School  
Perry, Iowa



Mary Le  
Age 14      Grade 8  
Williams Intermediate School  
Davenport, Iowa



Fatima Calderon  
"Red Volcano"  
Age 9      Grade 3  
Perry Elementary School  
Perry, Iowa

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## Additional Art Submissions:

Perla Sanchez  
Perry CSD

Emilio Gonzalez  
Perry CSD

Bryan Catalan  
Perry CSD

Wilmer Aldehir  
Postville CSD

Edvin Perez  
Postville CSD

Cesar Espinosa  
Red Oak CSD

Artyom Adadjonov  
Postville CSD

Jonter Gomez  
Postville CSD

Wendy Razam  
Postville CSD

Omar Ortiz  
Postville CSD

Jenya Semenova  
Postville CSD

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