Evaluating Gifted Program Identification Procedures for English Language Learners

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Abstract

Under-identification of English language learners (ELLs) in gifted programs is partially a result of identification procedures that do not account for cultural and linguistic differences. This paper explores the literature regarding research into gifted ELL identification and investigates five school districts' identification methods, accommodations for ELLs in identification procedures, and avoidance of biases in procedures. Research was conducted through surveys and interviews with gifted and ELL coordinators as well as analysis of data provided by the state's education department. Districts used formal assessments and teacher and parent rating scales. They did not directly accommodate for ELLs in identification, but did translate some necessary documents or provide interpreters for parents; some also viewed scores through the lens of students' backgrounds.

Introduction

Public school gifted programs challenge students who show evidence of exceptional talents in general intellectual abilities, specific academic areas, or the arts. These students are often motivated and creative and have a wide body of knowledge and interests. Although gifted programs across the country look different in terms of the services they offer, most programs allow gifted students to explore their interests, collaborate with others, and receive more individualized instruction. Since gifted programs are selective, the identification process to place students in them is typically complex and includes a variety of assessments, ratings of the student's abilities by others, and reviews of the student's work.

However, even though these programs include multiple criteria for inclusion, one population of students is consistently under-identified for gifted programs: English Language Learners, or ELLs. ELLs may not be referred to gifted programs or qualify for them because they do not stand out at the top of the class. Some ELLs are not referred to gifted programs until they are fluent in English; others are never identified at all and miss the opportunities that could have benefited them.

This research explored identification procedures in five school districts, including how those districts provided accommodations for ELLs in the identification process and avoided potential biases within those procedures. This research was carried out through interviews of and surveys given to gifted and ELL district coordinators as well as analysis of district data on ELLs and gifted identification.

Literature Review

Defining English Language Learners

English language learners (ELLs) are, in short, students whose first language is not English and who are not fully proficient in reading, writing, listening to, and speaking English. They may have been

born in another country or in the United States. Their families may speak one or more languages at home other than English. They may have a lot of education or none at all. They may be impoverished or not in poverty. Since ELLs are a diverse group of students, it is hard to make generalizations about them, although the statistics available on ELLs are useful in understanding their needs. The phrase ESL (English as a Second Language) has also been used to refer to these students and the programs that serve them; however, this phrase makes the assumption that the student only speaks one other language, when in fact she may already speak two or more! Teachers of ELLs must be sure to be cautious in making assumptions about their students and instead ask questions and be willing to learn about their students' backgrounds in order to serve them well.

School Programs for English Language Learners

ELLs receive services in a variety of contexts within their schools, from bilingual instruction, in which students receive instruction both in their heritage language and also in English, to submersion models, in which students are immersed in fully English-language classrooms (Reyes & Vallone, 2008). Many schools use push-in models, in which an ELL specialist joins the regular classroom teacher in co-teaching or providing support for ELLs; other schools use pull-out models, in which ELLs leave their regular classroom to work with an ELL specialist elsewhere (Reyes & Vallone, 2008). In addition, many school districts, particularly those with a high number of new ELL students with low English proficiency, have newcomer programs. These programs, often located in a central location with students transported from other schools, help students become acculturated to the school system and to American society, learn basic English, and transition into the regular classroom environment (Reyes & Vallone, 2008).

The goal of programs for ELLs is not just for students to learn academic English. Students must learn both basic interpersonal communication skills, also known as BICS, and cognitive academic

language proficiency, or CALP (Herrera, Murry, & Cabral, 2007). A native speaker will learn BICS in his first few years of life and then add CALP when attending school, but an ELL must learn both BICS and CALP as soon as possible to be able to succeed in a school setting. Typically, an ELL will learn BICS in one to two years and CALP in five to seven years, but that time frame depends on the student's age and schooling before coming to the United States (Syrja, 2011). This creates difficulty as the ELL may be able to have playground conversations with her peers after a short time and may seem proficient, but she still cannot participate fully in the classroom for a much longer period of time.

ELL Classroom Instruction and Assessment Accommodations

When students are incorporated into the regular classroom, they often receive accommodations from the classroom teacher and/or the ELL teacher. These accommodations should include whatever accommodations that are provided on standardized tests, so that they are familiar to students. They may also include modified instruction and assessment. One popular model for working with ELLs in the regular classroom is the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol, or SIOP (Center for Applied Linguistics). The SIOP model includes eight parts of lesson planning that provide for the needs of ELLs: "lesson preparation, building background, comprehensible input, strategies, interaction, practice/application, lesson delivery, [and] review & assessment" (Center for Applied Linguistics). This model is intended to influence the way regular classroom teachers teach lessons so that content is understandable for all students.

When creating assessments in the regular classroom, it is important that teachers consider using non-traditional types of assessment in order to better ascertain what their students know and can do. Authentic assessments, in which students apply their learning in real-world tasks and problems, may be a better measure of the abilities of ELLs than formal assessments (Herrera, Murry, & Cabral, 2007). The many types of authentic assessments include performance-based assessments, in which students are

asked to complete a task that shows evidence of their learning, and portfolios, which can include student work, the student's self-ratings, and rubrics for the work (Herrera, Murry, & Cabral, 2007). They may also include self- and peer-assessment, in which students use a rubric to evaluate their own work and the work of their classmates, and interview-based assessment, in which teachers formally or informally meet with students to find out their prior knowledge and interests (Herrera, Murry, & Cabral, 2007). A few lesser-used types of authentic assessment are play-based assessment, in which teachers observe students' creative play and role-play in order to determine students' understanding of subjects and language ability, dialogue journals, in which teachers respond to students' writing and provide encouragement and corrections, and scaffolded essays, in which teachers provide essay questions with sentence-framed answers (Herrera, Murray, & Cabral, 2007).

One culturally responsive type of assessment is cooperative group assessment, in which teachers observe students' work in groups and have students assess each other's work (Herrera, Murry, & Cabral, 2007). In order to gauge students' learning further, teachers may have students write in reflection journals to explain their learning, any gaps in understanding, and group progress (Herrera, Murry, & Cabral, 2007). This technique is particularly useful for culturally diverse students because of the emphasis many cultures place upon cooperation, including Hispanic cultures (Castellano, 2003).

A concern in the use of authentic assessments is the method in which the assessment is scored. The use of rubrics is quite beneficial in scoring work, and students may even be involved in the creation of the rubric (Herrera, Murry, & Cabral, 2007). In creating a rubric, teachers and students should consider the desired learning outcome and characteristics of high-quality performance (Herrera, Murry, & Cabral, 2007). It is important that teachers ensure that the constructs being measured will not be negatively affected by lack of English proficiency (Herrera, Murry, & Cabral, 2007). Checklists and

questionnaires can also be used in assessments by teachers, but also by students as a means of peer and self-evaluations (Herrera, Murry, & Cabral, 2007).

In evaluating authentic assessments, teachers must be careful to score objectively, give adequate feedback to all students, and make an attempt to look at student work through the student's eyes; it could be that the student arrived at a conclusion that is quite different than the one the teacher would have made because of his cultural background and different ways of viewing the world (Herrera, Murry, & Cabral, 2007).

Proficiency Assessment of English Language Learners

ELLs are generally assessed by the school district in order to track their level of English proficiency and decide what kind of services they need. These assessments are typically annual and can be used for placement decisions and also to identify areas of strengths and weaknesses in a particular student's English knowledge. Classroom teachers need to know their students' English levels in order to provide support and accommodations for students who need them so that the students can participate in learning the content (Herrera, Murry, & Cabral, 2007).

WIDA, or World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment, is a consortium of thirty-three states that share the same language development standards and assessments (The Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System). WIDA uses the ACCESS for ELLs test to score students on proficiency in the areas of listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Board of Regents). Students are placed in levels 1 to 6, with level 1 signifying a student entering the program and level 6 signifying a student who has reached proficiency; these levels often determine the services the student will receive (Board of Regents). Each level has accompanying descriptors of what students should be able to do to assist teachers in planning lessons (Syrja, 2011). The Alternate ACCESS for ELLs assessment is administered to ELL students with significant learning disabilities (Board of Regents). Students who are first entering a

school district and are suspected to be ELLs are given the W-APT, or WIDA-ACCESS Placement Test, in order to determine their level of English proficiency (Board of Regents).

Legal Provisions for English Language Learners

In the 2007-2008 school year, nearly 50 million ELLs attended public school in the United States, and each of them must legally be provided with specific instruction to help them gain proficiency in English (Batalova & McHugh, 2010). Several court cases and laws, as well as antidiscrimination legislation, have mandated that these students receive services so that they have the education that is entitled to them in the United States (Abedi, Hofstetter, & Lord, 2004). Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act includes allowances for teaching students who are Limited English Proficient (LEP); these include high-quality language instruction, parental and community participation, and accountability for schools, districts, and states on students' improvement in English language learning (U.S. Department of Education). States evaluate ELLs as a subgroup in their standardized assessments each year, and ELLs are expected to make both Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in English, math, and science skills and Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAOs) in English language learning and proficiency (Sato, Worth, Gallagher, Lagunoff, & McKeag, 2007). AMAOs include the following three objectives for which states are accountable:

> annual increases in the number or percentage of children *making progress* in learning English…, annual increases in the number or percentage of children *attaining English language proficiency* by the end of each school year…, [and] *adequate yearly progress* for the ELL subgroup in meeting grade-level academic achievement standards in English language arts and mathematics (Sato et al., 2007, 5).

Standardized Assessment Accommodations

Under federal guidelines, ELLs may be provided with accommodations for standardized assessments. The exception to this rule includes students who have arrived to the United States within the past year, who are exempt from testing for one year (Sato et al., 2007). Possible accommodations on standardized tests are tests translated into the student's native language, questions and directions read aloud in English, additional time (including time spread over multiple days), bilingual dictionaries, and linguistic simplifications, in which tests are written in simpler English so that they are easier to comprehend (Sato et al., 2007). The process of choosing accommodations must take into account "the amount of appropriate direct linguistic support needed vis-á-vis the student's English language proficiency level, the extent to which the student has been instructed in the content of the test, and the language of that instruction" (Sato et al., 2007, 21). Since the idea of accommodations is to "level the playing field" so that disadvantages are reduced, the ideal accommodation will "improve the performance of English language learners but not the performance of native English speakers" (Abedi et al., 2004, 6). However, this means that accommodations should be chosen carefully in order to provide necessary support to students without giving them unfair advantages (Abedi et al., 2004).

Students may be administered assessments in their heritage language for three to five years, if the state chooses to offer them (Sato et al., 2007). Although this might seem like a good idea at first glance, the danger in translating a test is that it likely will not measure the same content of the English version, especially if equivalent words are not available or are uncommonly used (Abedi et al., 2004). In addition, translations are expensive and time-consuming, and dialectical differences mean that even a translated assessment may not be in the same language as the student's heritage language (Abedi et al., 2004). Typically, if students are instructed in English, it is best to assess them in English as well, since they may not know the vocabulary in their native language (Abedi et al., 2004). For this reason, students should not be assessed in their heritage language unless they have been instructed in it

recently (Abedi et al., 2004). In addition, translated assessments are usually only available in Spanish, raising questions about equity for students whose heritage language is not Spanish (Abedi et al., 2004).

A student's accommodations are often decided upon by some combination of classroom teachers, parents, ELL specialists, a committee, and school district officials working together in accordance with state guidelines, but numerous factors may be taken into account when deciding whether or not a student needs accommodations and what kind of accommodations she should have (Abedi et al., 2004). Often, states decide upon eligibility for accommodations using the results of formal and informal proficiency assessments, the amount of time the student has spent in the United States or in that particular state, and the student's academic performance, but other criteria that may be considered include teacher and parent recommendations, the student's heritage language proficiency, and the amount of time the student has received schooling in the heritage language (Abedi et al., 2004).

States are required to ensure that their assessments are valid (that they measure what they are intended to measure) and reliable (that their results are consistent and dependable) (Sato et al., 2007). The provision of accommodations allows for more reliable test administration, since the intention of accommodations is to eliminate "construct-irrelevant demands" so that students can accurately show what they know and can do (Sato et al., 2007). For example, an ELL might be allowed to have any test question read out loud on a math test, since this accommodation would not supply an unfair advantage, but would assist the student in understanding the question. A student's use of an accommodation does not mean that his or her test results are any less acceptable than any other student's; for all intents and purposes, the student has passed the exam just like any other student. However, states must also be sure that they do not allow accommodations that might change the content being assessed or give an unfair advantage to anyone (Sato et al., 2007).

States must also ensure that, to the best of their ability, their assessments are free from bias. Bias, in this context, is defined as "the presence of information in a test or a condition of the test that unfairly advantages or disadvantages a student (or group of students) such that the student is unable to accurately demonstrate what he or she knows and can do vis-á-vis the tested content" (Sato et al., 2007, 8). Biases can arise from the design, administration, reporting, or interpretation of an assessment, so states must be especially cautious in their creation and interpretation of tests (Sato et al., 2007). In order to ensure fairness for ELLs, states must "ensure that the assessments provide an appropriate variety of linguistic accommodations for students with limited English proficiency" (Sato et al., 2007, 8).

Defining Giftedness

Defining the concept of giftedness is a struggle faced by states, school districts, and educators throughout the country. The No Child Left Behind Act defined giftedness very broadly, saying,

> The term "gifted and talented", when used with respect to student, children, or youth, means students, children, or youth who give evidence of high achievement capability in areas such as intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership capacity, or in specific academic fields, and who need services or activities not ordinarily provided by the school in order to fully develop those capabilities (No Child Left Behind Act, 2002, Section 9101[22]).

Most states have their own definitions of giftedness that determine how students are identified for programming and the types of programs and special services offered (Callahan and Hertberg-Davis, 2013). However, these definitions vary widely. Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and South Dakota do not have state definitions of giftedness, while Virginia's definition is the longest and includes four areas of giftedness:

> “Gifted students” means those students in public elementary, middle, and secondary schools beginning with kindergarten through twelfth grade who demonstrate high levels of accomplishment or who show the potential for higher levels of accomplishment when compared to others of the same age, experience, or environment. Their aptitudes and potential for accomplishment are so outstanding that they require special programs to meet their educational needs. These students will be identified by professionally qualified persons through the use of multiple criteria as having potential or demonstrated aptitudes… (National Association for Gifted Children, 2013).

The definition goes on to define four areas of giftedness, including general intellectual aptitude, specific academic aptitude, career and technical aptitude, and visual or performing arts aptitude (National Association for Gifted Children, 2013). In contrast, Alaska’s definition simply states that “’[G]ifted’ means exhibiting outstanding intellect, ability, or creative talent”, while Connecticut’s definition states,

> “Gifted and talented" means a child identified by the planning and placement team as (1) possessing demonstrated or potential abilities that give evidence of very superior intellectual, creative or specific academic capability and (2) needing differentiated instruction or services beyond those being provided in the regular school program in order to realize their intellectual, creative or specific academic potential. The term shall include children with extraordinary learning ability and children with outstanding talent in the creative arts as defined by these regulations (National Association for Gifted Children, 2013).

The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC), an organization that advocates for and promotes research in gifted education across the United States, defines gifted students as

> those who demonstrate outstanding levels of aptitude (defined as an exceptional ability to reason and learn) or competence (documented performance or achievement in top 10% or

rarer) in one or more domains. Domains include any structured area of activity with its own symbol system (e.g., mathematics, music, language) and/or set of sensorimotor skills (e.g., painting, dance, sports) (NAGC, 2010).

The aforementioned definitions of giftedness cover a range of areas in which a student might be identified as gifted. However, giftedness goes beyond concrete factors; a gifted child, for example, may be advanced in areas including language and reasoning, memory, curiosity, abstract thinking, learning speed, and sensitivity (Pfeiffer, 2012). The field of gifted education continues to evolve; currently, a stronger emphasis is being placed on the concept of talent development (Pfeiffer, 2012). This view sees identification as a way of finding students who have talent in one or more areas and helping them to develop that talent through programs and services, rather than an approach to identification that is constantly concerned with finding those students who meet a concrete definition of giftedness (Brown et al., 2005). With this perspective of giftedness, identification is a “needs assessment” in order to determine placement of students in programs that will fit their needs (Castellano, 2002).

Historically, the beginnings of defining giftedness came through the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale, an intelligence quotient (IQ) test; children who scored at least 135, or in the top 1% of all test-takers, were considered gifted (Brown et al., 2005). Because of this, many people viewed giftedness as an absolute quality; either one was gifted, or one was not, and that factor was decided upon by the person’s IQ test (Brown et al., 2005). Eventually, however, giftedness was seen not only as a high level of intelligence, but, as noted researcher in the field of giftedness, Joseph Renzulli, determined, also included such traits as motivation, task commitment, and creativity (Brown et al., 2005). In addition, Howard Gardner introduced his theory of multiple intelligences, suggesting that there were multiple domains of intelligence (Brown et al., 2005). Gardner’s theory originally included seven intelligences–logical-mathematical, linguistic, musical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal–and

later added an eighth, naturalistic (Gardner & Hatch, 1989; Brown et al., 2005). Although the American educational system relies mainly on logical-mathematical and linguistic intelligence, Gardner noted that different kinds of lessons and assessments could measure the other intelligences that had been largely ignored until his theories began to be promoted (Gardner & Hatch, 1989).

Creativity is another construct that is considered highly important in many educators' conceptions of giftedness, but it is quite difficult to measure or even define! Traits of creative students are not always the ones that are most desired by classroom teachers; creative students are sometimes unconventional or disruptive, and creativity may be confused with disorders such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) because of "activity level, inattention, and impulsivity" (Cramond & Hee Kim, 2008, 208).

As evidenced by these many definitions, views of giftedness and services provided vary across the country, making it difficult to take a broad view of gifted programs nationally. However, a review of the literature has shown similarities in many aspects of gifted programming throughout the country, including the methods of identification used to place students into gifted programs.

Identification Procedures

Among those who set the criteria for identification, the understanding of what giftedness is has had a large influence on the types of procedures used and the cut-off scores by which students are chosen (Johnsen, 2013). As Steven Pfeiffer notes, giftedness itself is a concept that has been socially constructed and therefore cannot be easily quantified by test scores or ratings alone (2012). Currently, many school districts use an approach that combines objective measures, such as ability or achievement assessments, with more subjective measures, such as rating scales by parents and teachers, portfolios, peer and self-nominations, measures of creativity, and documentation of student observation and

performance (Callahan, Renzulli, Delcourt,& Hertberg-Davis, 2013; Johnsen, 2013; Missett & Brunner, 2013).

Many school districts begin the identification process with a measure that screens all students of a certain age in order to filter out the highest-achieving students; others begin with a nomination process that allows teachers, parents, and even the students themselves to describe the student's characteristics and why he should be further examined for gifted identification. Then, a range of other measures, from portfolios to rating scales to aptitude and achievement tests are administered in order to determine whether a student is eligible for gifted services. This process, although varying in specific procedures, is generally similar across states (Matthews & Kirsch, 2011).

Although much work has been done to try to make the identification process as equitable as possible, it continues to be refined and re-examined. However, this is not surprising, considering the very nature of the attempt to define giftedness! In many districts, the very process of identification is based on the types of programs offered to ensure that students who are chosen to participate in the program will be sufficiently served by it (Johnsen, 2013).

Often, school districts choose to use weighted matrices that take into account all of the criteria in the identification process. A matrix is a chart in which a student's scores on various assessments are entered; the student is given point values for performance on each entry in the matrix, and a minimum number of points must be reached for the student to be accepted into the gifted program. Before reaching the matrix stage, however, students must be referred for evaluation; this is typically done either by a parent, teacher, or self-referral, or automatically because of the student's performance on a screening test. The nomination or test is often known as a "gatekeeper," because it limits which students are further assessed for eligibility to the gifted program. The practice of having gatekeepers to

evaluation programs helps school districts streamline the process of evaluation, but it may also exclude students.

Although some parents will choose to nominate their child for evaluation, classroom teachers are often the ones who are tasked with this responsibility. Often, teachers will select students for nomination who fit their personal idea of the meaning of giftedness; teachers are less likely to refer students who are disadvantaged, disabled, or not native English speakers for evaluation for gifted programs than their peers who have higher socio-economic statuses, are not disabled, and are native English speakers, among other attributes (Johnsen, 2013). Ultimately, the concern about referrals as gatekeepers is that if a teacher does not refer a student, even though the student may be gifted, he may never have a chance to be in the gifted program (Frasier, 1995).

Testing is also often used as a gatekeeper; school districts often screen an entire grade level with a group-administered ability test in order to determine which students may qualify for gifted services. The downside to this method is that students who lack the skills needed for the test or do not perform well on tests may not make it to the evaluation with a matrix (Callahan et al., 2013; Robinson, 2008; Ford, 2008). James Borland notes that the use of tests as gatekeepers to programs means that students may be excluded from gifted identification for scoring even one point below the cutoff, even though that point is included in the standard error of the test (2009). For these reasons, this method should still be combined with the possibility of referrals for those students who do not perform well on the test or are not tested because they enter the school after testing has been administered.

Quantitative assessments. Formal quantitative assessments are used in many districts as a baseline of identification; if a student scores in a certain percentile on the test, then she may continue to the next step of the identification process (Callahan et al., 2013). These tests may include individual intelligence tests administered by a clinical psychologist or other trained administrator, such as the

Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scales and the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC), as well as group tests, such as the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) and Otis-Lennon Ability Test (OLSAT) (Missett and Brunner, 2013). Many researchers argue against the use of intelligence tests and other formal assessments, saying that they only measure one facet of giftedness (Missett and Brunner, 2013). In addition, some schools administer above-grade-level assessments to students to determine whether the student could succeed in an advanced or accelerated class (Lohman, 2013).

The issue of validity comes into play when looking at types of assessments administered to students. Some states allow for students to be identified as gifted in specific areas as well as generally intellectually gifted; however, if a program only assesses for general intellectual aptitude using, for instance, a language arts test, and a student is gifted in math, then the student may miss identification for the specific area of math. For this reason, the assessment would be considered to be invalid in this area; that is, it measures the student's giftedness in language arts rather than his or her giftedness in general intellectual ability or in the individual subject of math (Callahan et al., 2013).

David Lohman and Joni Lakin challenge the construct of ability tests by saying that ability tests measure developed abilities rather than innate ones, so, in essence, the tests still measure students' achievement (2008). If ability tests measured innate ability, it would be accurate to compare a student's scores against national norms, but if these tests measure achievement rather than ability, it is more equitable to compare students' scores to students with similar learning opportunities (Lohman & Lakin, 2008). However, Naglieri argues that if achievement tests measure acquired knowledge and skills, and ability tests measure intelligence, then these tests are measuring very different constructs and should not be used interchangeably (2008).

Lohman also points out that tests should be scored along local norms, rather than national norms, since student populations vary widely in regards to ability and opportunities and because the

tests may not have been administered appropriately on a national scale; however, if only nominated students are tested, the local norm should include a cross-section of students in the district, rather than just the nominated students who are tested (2013). Student ability varies widely by school district; in one district, a student who tests at the 70th percentile may need gifted services, while a student who makes the same score in another district may be sufficiently challenged and among peers who have scored similarly (Lohman & Gambrell, 2012). Localized norms should include such characteristics as the number of years a student has attended school in the United States, whether or not she qualifies for free or reduced lunch, and her score on a test of English language proficiency (Lohman & Gambrell, 2012).

Intelligence quotient (IQ) tests are often used as a measure to identify students for gifted programs. Many people believe that IQ is a measure of giftedness; however, IQ is just another way to measure intelligence, and it cannot measure all facets of giftedness, such as creativity and motivation (Borland, 2009; Renzulli, 1982). After all, many students do not show traits of giftedness until later on in life, but the fact that they did not score highly enough on an IQ test does not make them any less gifted (Pfeiffer, 2012). In addition, intelligence scores say nothing of a person's creativity; in fact, Cramond & Hee Kim (2008) note that using intelligence and achievement tests alone can miss 70% to 80% of the top 20% of creative students!

The incorrect belief that a high IQ score equates giftedness is a contributing factor to the under-identification of language and ethnic minority students, as well as students from lower socioeconomic statuses (Borland, 2009, 237; Pfeiffer, 2012, 3). The very construction of an IQ test "can discriminate against students who do not closely identify with the dominant culture. The widely used Stanford-Binet IQ test, for example, was standardized by using children of White English-speaking parents" (Robisheaux, 2002, 164). A heavy reliance on IQ scores and the common belief that intelligence is a

static quality has led to the common practice of schools not requiring students to demonstrate giftedness after they are first positively identified; in contrast, other specialized school programs, such as programs for students with learning disabilities, require students to be re-assessed frequently in order to continue receiving services (Pfeiffer, 2012). Lohman and Lakin suggest that identification should be a continual process, since students may be identified at one time and no longer qualify within a few years (2008).

The administration of a formal assessment can be quite intimidating for some students. Castellano (2003) recommends that the psychologist giving the assessment visit a child's classroom at least twice before the formal assessment in order to observe, work with, and build rapport with the student. He also suggests that the student is given time to rest between pieces of assessments and that each part is carefully explained to the student (Castellano, 2003). Students should also be prepared for the types of assessments they will have to take, since they may not have experienced the same types of assessments, especially if they are from another country (Matthews, 2006).

In an attempt to make formal assessments more accessible to a wide variety of student populations and eliminate verbal testing biases, many districts have begun to administer nonverbal tests, such as the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test (NNAT) and the Nonverbal Battery of the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) (Lohman, 2013). Nonverbal assessments use spatial reasoning exercises and line drawings to gauge students' intelligence, rather than verbally-based questions (Matthews, 2006). Although these tests claim to eliminate cultural and verbal biases, some evidence suggests that these tests may in fact contain more "cultural loading," or a need for familiarity with cultural expectations, and therefore still put students who have not been educated in the United States at a disadvantage (Lohman, 2013). Although nonverbal assessments provide a measure of *g* (an overall determination of general intelligence, such as IQ test results), a factor which is hard to determine through the use of

traditional assessments, they do not provide a way to determine whether students have aptitudes in specific areas, thereby excluding students who are only gifted in a specific area from identification (VanTassel-Baska, 2008). In addition, the knowledge of *g,* while helpful to understand a student's general ability, does not help teachers plan curriculum or determine the needs of the student in terms of acceleration and enrichment (VanTassel-Baska, 2008). These nonverbal tests rely mostly on "figural reasoning abilities", which measure figural-spatial reasoning; other tests use picture-based analogies to measure "verbal or quantitative reasoning in addition to figural-spatial reasoning" (Lohman, 2013, 121).

Nonverbal tests are often accompanied by a brief set of verbal directions. However, sometimes the test itself is far too complicated to be explained in a brief set of directions, especially if the format of the test is very strange to students (Lohman & Gambrell, 2012). The inclusion of only a few practice problems may lead children to use faulty reasoning to answer questions and thereby answer many questions incorrectly; this could be remedied by including many more practice problems or even a separate exercise for students to practice the test format (Lohman & Gambrell, 2012). Parents with the resources and motivation to have their students placed in gifted programs may give their children practice problems (available online) so that their children are prepared; this creates a disadvantage for children whose parents do not do so, since studies have shown that having students practice test items can lead to improvement on test scores (Lohman & Gambrell, 2012).

Although creativity itself cannot be fully assessed, the creators of creativity tests attempt to "measure thinking skills and personal traits that go along with creativity, as well as creative products", and the scores from these tests are indicative of creative output later in a person's life (Cramond & Hee Kim, 2008, 203, 204). The Torrance Test of Creative Thinking was created to measure creativity in test-takers and also to find ways to enhance the creativity of the test-taker (Kim, 2006). The scoring of the figural version of the test includes five areas of creativity: fluency, originality, elaboration, abstractness

of titles (titles given to pictures), and resistance to premature closure (keeping an “open mind”) (Kim, 2006). It is important to note that there are often false negatives on creativity tests, in which a student’s true creativity is not exhibited on the test for some reason; therefore, if a creativity assessment is used, it should be one piece of the many kinds of work that are examined and accompany other opportunities for students to showcase their creativity (Cramond & Hee Kim, 2008).

Qualitative assessments. Even though school districts often use a variety of criteria in the identification process, it is feared that qualitative data may be ignored and test scores given more weight (Granada, 2003). However, the variety of qualitative assessments that are available, including rating scales, portfolios, observations, interviews, and creative tasks, allow for a larger picture of an individual student. These assessments can be specified for a certain domain, rather than testing general aptitude, and can measure creativity, higher-level thinking skills, problem-solving, and metacognition (VanTassel-Baska, 2008). They can also give information about a student’s specific strengths and weaknesses, allowing teachers to differentiate instruction for that particular student (VanTassel-Baska, 2008). Finally, these assessments can allow for a higher ceiling than most standard assessments allow (VanTassel-Baska, 2008); on a traditional test, there is no way for a student to score above 100%, so if a student scores very well, his or her true intelligence may not be fully measured because there is little room at the top. (An exception to this statement is when tests intended for older students are given to assess a student’s growth past the expectations of his or her grade level (VanTassel-Baska, 2008)). In contrast, performance-based assessments allow for a student’s strengths and weaknesses to be explored and analyzed without a limit to the student’s achievement. Realistically, however, performance-based assessments are probably not the most efficient ways to measure a student’s abilities. They often cannot measure the full range of skills that a student has learned, and it is difficult to create a rubric and determine how to score a student’s work (VanTassel-Baska, 2008). Results of these assessments are also difficult to generalize, since they are so specific to individual students.

Rating scales of students' abilities and characteristics are often given to both classroom teachers and parents as part of the identification process. Some researchers are concerned that teachers, especially, may rate a student differently because of their preconceived notions of giftedness or their personal feelings about the student (Bracken, 2008; Frasier et al., 1995). Subjective rating scales are a double-edged sword; on one side, there is a danger that the evaluator may "be open to personal bias, an idiosyncratic view of giftedness, or inconsistent grading standards"; however, on the other side, additional signs of giftedness, such as "motivation, creativity, leadership and executive functions" may be identified through these means that would not otherwise be noted through formal assessments (Callahan et al., 2013, 86). It is important that teachers and parents receive instruction in the use of the rating scale, and that it is easy to understand and fill out; these scales should also be considered in the eligibility process, but should not be given too much weight so that a student could be excluded solely on the basis of a lower rating.

A portfolio assessment for identification allows eligibility committees to look at a student's growth over time in multiple areas and current needs in the classroom, as well as creativity and critical thinking skills (Johnsen, 2008). The informal nature of portfolios allows for a variety of possibilities of items to be included. Some suggestions include student work (both assigned at school and independently done at school or home), activities, observations (written, filmed, and recorded), and teacher and parent-written anecdotes (Johnsen, 2008). Portfolios can be created jointly by teachers and students, allowing for conversations about how students feel about their work and what they feel is strong (Johnsen, 2008). However, this informality also leads to difficulties in creating standards for and consistency in assessing portfolios; additionally, portfolios take a lot of time to create and review, especially when compared to the quick turnaround of standardized test scores (Johnsen, 2008).

Some school districts incorporate an individualized aspect to the process of identification by having each student interviewed or observed by a gifted teacher or school psychologist. An interview might include questions that allow a student to demonstrate her creativity or show evidence of higher-order thinking strategies. An observation, as well, can allow a student's behavior and work to be watched in a low-pressure environment, such as the general classroom setting. This observation can be written as an anecdote and considered in the student's evaluation.

Gifted English Language Learners

Students with limited English proficiency (LEP) are the fastest-growing demographic in the United States, yet it is widely acknowledged among researchers in gifted education that English Language Learners (ELLs) are underrepresented in gifted programs across the country (Bracken, 2008; Aguirre, 2003; Castellano & Díaz, 2002). In 1994, 25 states mentioned the identification of ELLs for gifted program in their state policies (Irby & Lara-Alecio, 2002). However, ELLs are often only placed in gifted programs after they are fluent in English (Barkan & Bernal, 1991). As more attention has been drawn to the underrepresentation of ELLs in gifted programs, the research has identified multiple causes for this continual problem.

The legacy of beliefs about intelligence and giftedness may explain some of the inequality. Bruce Bracken suggests that it was once believed that giftedness required "superior English facility" (2008, 20); the irony of this thought, he adds, is that "many notably gifted contributors to our society came to this country as English Language Learners" (2008, 20). Nilda Aguirre asserts, "It is paradoxical that many educators continue to believe that English language proficiency is essential prior to placement in gifted programs. Giftedness is not a trait inherent to native English speakers" (2003, 17). Regardless of this fact, though, a student's level of English proficiency and usage of a standard or non-standard English dialect can still influence a teacher's rating of the student's intelligence (Frasier et al., 1995). Even

today, ELLs may not be considered to be gifted by some individuals because of personal biases against immigrants or because of a belief that minority students have a deficit or are less intelligent as a result of their cultural background, language status, or other disadvantages (Bracken, 2008; Ford, 2008; Barkan & Bernal, 1991).

Contrary to the beliefs of some educators, ELLs are not incapable of participating in gifted programs, nor is acculturation necessary to their participation (Aguirre, 2003). However, gifted ELLs may view gifted programs and expectations differently from children who are raised in the dominant culture. American culture, and often the American educational system by extension, values "competition, independence, and initiative", but these traits may actually be discouraged by the home cultures of many ELL students (Aguirre, 2003, 19; Granada, 2003). For example, some Hispanic culture values "other-directedness, cooperation, and honor of the family" (Castellano, 2003, 30). A gifted ELL student may feel "caught between the need to demonstrate giftedness and adherence to family patterns and values" (Granada, 2003, 13). For this reason, ELLs who are admitted to gifted programs may have to "work twice as hard to succeed, overcoming obstacles of differing value systems, behavioral patterns, inadequate academic preparation, and differing language" (Castellano & Díaz, 2002, xix). These difficulties do not mean that ELLs should be excluded from mainstream gifted programs, but rather that teachers and administrators should be sensitive to a variety of cultural values and provide students with opportunities to share their culture and values. In fact, these students often show cultural pride and enjoy sharing with others about their countries, languages, and backgrounds (Aguirre, 2003).

One might assume that having to learn English would provide challenge enough for gifted ELLs, but a gifted ELL may only be challenged by learning the language for a short time (Robinson, 2008). Jaime Castellano even argues that "there is no other program best suited to represent diversity in terms of intelligence, language, and ethnicity than gifted educational programs" (2003, 29). A dominant belief

in teaching ELLs today is that language learning is a process that requires active learners who learn and create rules about the language through exposure to content; the philosophy of teaching gifted students, which includes active learning and constructing knowledge through discovery, does not widely differ from this idea (Robisheaux, 2002).

An ELL who is gifted may not show all traits of giftedness in the academic setting when fully immersed in English, because “the long-term acquisition of a second language may mask the academic talent of the student” (Granada, 2003, 4) and because a child who has had irregular schooling, lives in poverty, or has had less experience with English may not exhibit the quick learning ability that a gifted child who has had those opportunities would show (Lohman & Gambrell, 2012). Poverty can cause gifted behaviors to actually be expressed in different ways outside of school, as students employ creativity and intelligence to survive, but those traits may not necessarily be observed in the classroom (Granada, 2003). Additionally, a student’s “cultural traditions and beliefs, heritage, [and] acculturation…may be critical variables impacting how gifted behaviors are demonstrated” (Granada, 2003, 4). Even the acculturation of family members of an ELL can have an impact on the student’s performance in school (Gonzalez, 2003). For these reasons, it is important that educators be aware of the differences in needs and expressions of giftedness in ELLs.

Identification of Gifted English Language Learners

Although gifted ELLs have a right to access to gifted programs, a significant number of gifted ELLs may never be identified as gifted, both for the reasons mentioned above and also in large part because of the measures used to identify gifted students in school districts across the country. The belief in and dependence on using standardized tests, labeling, and other types of “hard evidence” to admit students to gifted programs have excluded some ELLs from gifted programs because their differing strengths and weaknesses cause them to not be identified (Barkan & Bernal, 1991, 144). In

recent years, a large number of school districts have shifted their identification procedures to include more qualitative data, such as teacher and parent checklists, portfolios, and observations, as well as nonverbal and bilingual tests, in an attempt to be more inclusive; however, the results of these measures are mixed.

Quantitative assessments. Understandably, assessing ELLs with standardized assessments in English has the immediate downfall of administering tests that are not in their heritage languages. Research has shown that “students who lack proficiency in the language of the test consistently perform at lower levels” (Abedi et al., 2004, 5).Whether or not it is intended, a test that uses written or spoken English will ultimately be an assessment of English, even if other factors are being assessed as well (Bracken, 2008; Matthews, 2006). Standardized tests, as Castellano and Díaz note, are proven to “underestimate the abilities of [ELLs], especially those who are in the process of developing English as their second language and experiencing acculturation” (2002, xix). Administrators should consider the student’s level of English proficiency, based on yearly English assessments, before determining the type of test to administer. For example, it is not enough to assume that because a student is Hispanic, he needs to be tested in Spanish; he may be fluent only in English, be bilingual and biliterate, or have limited proficiency in one or both languages (Castellano, 2003). After all, only about half of LEP students were born outside of the United States, so it is unwise to make assumptions about a student’s language status based on his or her ethnicity (Castellano & Díaz, 2002).

Requiring that a student score well on an intelligence test in English for admission to a gifted program implies that American culture and the English language are more important than the student’s heritage language and culture (Barkan & Bernal, 1991). Even if a ELL is administered a test in English with a reasonable chance of succeeding at it, nonverbal communication from a test administrator might

suggest that the student's lack of proficiency could cause him or her to miss identification; this is a further cause of test interference (Aguirre, 2003).

A few bilingual assessments have been created (Granada, 2003); however, they are often only available in Spanish, which would still cause difficulty for school districts with highly diverse populations. Granada (2003) suggests that students should be assessed for proficiency in both languages, while Castellano (2003) states that students should be tested on English proficiency while also being assessed in achievement and cognitive ability in their heritage languages. The Kaufman Brief Intelligence Test, a standardized intelligence assessment, notes that students who are not proficient in English should be tested in their heritage languages (Aguirre, 2003). This idea, while certainly appealing in the interest of fairness, means that the school district would have to use more time and money to train a translator and then administer the test using that translator (Aguirre, 2003; Castellano, 2003). Furthermore, many ELLs have never been instructed in their native languages, so they still would be disadvantaged (García, 2002). In any case, evidence suggests that administering standardized tests will not give a whole picture regarding the ability and achievement of an ELL, so it is recommended that multiple kinds of qualitative and quantitative data are combined to get a broader view of the student's abilities (Robisheaux, 2002).

Some schools use a combination of nonverbal and verbal assessments for students who are proficient in English and only administer the nonverbal assessments to ELLs; however, many testing experts argue that figural reasoning scores alone are not sufficient for measuring the range of cognitive abilities in giftedness (Lohman & Gambrell, 2012). One study even found no appreciable difference between the numbers of ELLs identified using nonverbal tests compared to traditional tests (Matthews & Kirsch, 2011).

There is considerable disagreement in the literature regarding the advantages and disadvantages of nonverbal assessments. The issue of test bias is one that comes up often, as test

developers continue to try to create culture-neutral assessments. Some people believe that cultural bias is no longer present in tests, and others say that cultural bias can still be reduced; a third group of scholars believes that it is impossible to create a test without cultural bias, since tests always reflect the culture of the test creator (Ford, 2008). Eliminating language from an assessment does not necessarily control for cultural differences, as well, and many self-proclaimed "culture-neutral" tests still have cultural biases, since perceptual reasoning is also a cultural construct (Lohman & Gambrell, 2012). In addition, test bias may come not from the design of the test itself, but from a student's disadvantaged background with less exposure to English and communicative behaviors in general, as well as poverty and cultural differences (Frasier et al., 1995).

Nonverbal assessments are largely used by schools for identification because of the belief that they will identify more underrepresented populations of students (VanTassel-Baska, 2008). Nonverbal assessments can provide a better measure of *g*, or general intelligence, since they are not based on mathematical or linguistic ability (VanTassel-Baska, 2008). One study found that the test scores of LEP and non-LEP Hispanic students on the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test were close enough to use in making decisions about identification (Naglieri, 2008). The use of nonverbal tests, including the Ravens Progressive Matrices, the Standard Progressive Matrices, and the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test, has greatly increased the number of underrepresented students placed into gifted programs (Castellano, 2002). Using tests with minimal impacts of language and culture, such as nonverbal tests, assists in the identification of ELLs, and therefore these tools are quite valuable (Lohman, 2013).

However, although nonverbal tests may reduce differences between native speakers of English and English language learners, they probably do not eliminate those differences (Lohman & Lakin, 2008). There is evidence to suggest that students from underrepresented groups, such as ELLs, minority students, and students from lower socioeconomic statuses, might actually do better on "picture-verbal

and picture-quantitative tests than on figural reasoning tests" (Lohman, 2013, 121). The visual-spatial factor of these tests is a concern, as they favor certain "cognitive styles" over others (García, 2002, 285). Therefore, if nonverbal tests are used as an alternative to verbally-based tests, they may actually be measuring different constructs and are therefore less valid unless scores are more fairly normed through statistical analysis (Lohman & Gambrell, 2012).

In addition, nonverbal tests are often accompanied by verbal directions, and those directions are typically given in English (Bracken, 2008). Although English verbal ability is a predictor of success in school (Lohman & Lakin, 2008), Bruce A. Bracken bluntly observes, "a nonverbal intelligence test with verbal directions administered to a person with limited English proficiency is as much a test of verbal ability as a group-administered test with written directions is a test of reading ability when administered to students with limited literacy skills" (2008, 21). Tests with verbally-administered directions still assess language abilities to some extent, possibly defeating some of the purpose of a nonverbal test (Bracken, 2008). For this reason, the Universal Nonverbal Intelligence Test (UNIT) is given without any language from teacher or student, using pantomime instead, and the Wechsler Nonverbal Scale of Ability uses pictorial directions (Bracken, 2008; Naglieri, 2008).

More disagreement is found in the literature on the validity of these tests. A student's ability to perform well on figural reasoning assessments has been found to be a "less direct predictor of success in academic learning for all ethnic groups – White, Black, Hispanic, and Asian American" (Lohman & Lakin, 2008, 52), and students who score higher on figural reasoning tests than on verbal and quantitative tests often experience less success in school than their peers who are weaker in figural reasoning (Lohman & Lakin, 2008). In contrast, others suggest that nonverbal tests measure general ability, not nonverbal abilities specifically, and that general intelligence tests containing verbal and nonverbal pieces measure the same thing as completely nonverbal tests (Naglieri, 2008). They further argue that excluding

students who score well on nonverbal tests but do not show the same high scores in other areas of the classroom continues the problem of underrepresentation of minority students in gifted programs (Naglieri, 2008).

Nonverbal assessments should not be a replacement for verbal and quantitative assessments, although they provide useful data as a supplement to other forms of assessment (Lohman & Lakin, 2008). David F. Lohman and Joni Lakin note that critics speak strongly against omitting language from intelligence assessments:

> Language is a particularly powerful vehicle for representing abstract and nuanced relationships that cannot be captured in the well-structured geometric shapes used on figural reasoning tests. The bottom line for the critics, then, is that eliminating language also eliminated much of what we mean by intelligent thinking (2008, 42).

They go on to argue that reasoning is rooted in language, so taking language, numbers, and symbols out of tests only assesses part of a person's thinking ability (2008). Furthermore, students who are identified by high nonverbal visual-spatial scores without having high verbal and quantitative abilities actually "tend not to be very successful" in "rigorous educational programs" (Robinson, 2008). However, this is not too surprising, considering that the American educational system puts value on verbal and linear thinking (Robinson, 2008). If schools are going to use nonverbal assessments as part of their identification measures for gifted programs, they should be sure that their program serves these students appropriately with similar types of enrichment (Matthews, 2006).

This data may seem to argue that nonverbal reasoning tests are not useful and in fact hurt students, but they should not be cast off by any means. Although ELLs may still be at a slight disadvantage on these tests, more underrepresented groups are identified by their use, and for this reason, nonverbal tests are popularly used in school districts as part of gifted identification (Lohman &

Lakin, 2008). In conjunction with a student's verbal and quantitative reasoning abilities, as well as evidence of the student's overall ability in the classroom compared to peers who have had similar opportunities, nonverbal scores are informative in making decisions about identification (Lohman & Lakin, 2008).

As noted earlier, the use of localized norms is advocated to provide a more fair and reliable standard of comparison for students. David Lohman suggests that ELL scores should have a separate norm so that students who have had the same kinds of opportunities to learn the language and material on the tests are compared to one another (2013; Lohman & Lakin, 2008); he asserts, "If particular groups of students differ markedly in opportunity to develop the abilities measured by the test, then ranks should be computed separately within these groups" (2013, 117). For example, a six-year-old student who has lived in the United States for six years will score differently than a six-year-old who has lived in the United States for six months (Lohman & Lakin, 2008). Although the creation of localized norms takes more time and analysis, it may increase the equitability of the testing process and ultimately lead to the identification of more students.

Qualitative assessments. A nomination process may pose unique difficulties in identification of ELLs, as they may not display behaviors that are traditionally associated with giftedness. Although Caucasian middle-class children may exhibit "an advanced degree of learned or acquired knowledge or information," minority students may not (Gonzalez, 2003, 80). ELLs may not exhibit the same vocabulary ability, knowledge structures, and thinking patterns as students from mainstream American culture (Miller, 2009). Even a trait like boredom, which is often exhibited by gifted students in regular classrooms that do not challenge them, may not be shown by students from cultures in which it would be inappropriate for them to do so (Miller, 2009). For this reason, teachers may not recognize giftedness in ELLs and therefore not refer them for screening, which, in some gifted programs, means

that the students would never have a chance of entering the program. The danger in this position is that only students who fit a teacher's idea of giftedness are assessed further, excluding students who may "break the mold" (Lohman & Gambrell, 2012; Matthews, 2006). If teachers only refer students who are model students and do not take into account the cultural and environmental influences on giftedness, many students may never be referred for further assessment (Frasier et al., 1995). Unfortunately, research has found that teachers expect students who are Caucasian and/or members of the middle class to perform better than students who are African-American and Mexican-American and/or members of the lower class; furthermore, if those teachers do not expect their students to produce high-quality work, they will not give them opportunities to demonstrate their ability to do so (Frasier et al., 1995).

A lack of understanding on the part of teachers and administrators, as well as false beliefs, low expectations, and negative attitudes towards ELLs, may contribute to a lack of identification (Castellano & Díaz, 2002). LEP students are often seen as being less intelligent or underachievers and they usually get lower scores on standardized tests in math and reading as well as lower grades in those classes (Castellano & Díaz, 2002). Furthermore, LEP students typically take fewer classes, are behind in several content areas, and have higher dropout rates than students who are proficient in English (Castellano & Díaz, 2002).

Parents may also nominate their students, but differences in language and culture pose several difficulties. In some cultures, it may be considered rude to publicly praise one's child's abilities. Furthermore, the concept of giftedness varies across cultures, so that the way American culture defines giftedness may not be the same as the way the ELL's family's culture would define it (Granada, 2003). The barrier of language is another difficulty of families of ELLs, many of whom do not speak English; even if translated forms and information are available, the student's family may not be literate,

rendering the documents useless. School districts should consider these concerns when designing a nomination process and make accommodations, if necessary, so that all families will be included.

Because of the difficulties in nomination processes, it may be more effective to assess all students and use feedback as a tool to not only identify gifted students, but also find areas of growth for all students (Lohman & Gambrell, 2012). In addition, teachers should be specifically trained about characteristics of giftedness and the diverse manifestations that these may have in children of different language and socioeconomic backgrounds (Frasier et al., 1995). For example, teachers may be able to spot a gifted ELL child by observing the speed at which she learns English, since it may be outstanding compared to other ELL students, as well as the student's rate of acculturating and adapting (Robinson, 2008; Castellano & Díaz, 2002).

Teachers who specialize in working with ELLs may view those students' abilities quite differently from general classroom teachers who do not have training in working with ELLs; for example, a student who switches between languages may be viewed positively as developing in English proficiency and code-switching, but viewed more negatively as non-proficient in English and dependent on his heritage language by a general classroom teacher (Robisheaux, 2002). In addition, some students may even be bilingually gifted, meaning they show exceptional achievement in the area of language, including language acquisition and translation (Granada, 2003). For this reason, teachers of ELLs should be educated about the qualities for which they should look in a gifted student and be willing to nominate students (Robisheaux, 2002).

Just as the nomination process poses special concerns for the identification of ELLs, the use of rating scales may be, as well. Teachers must have training in the use of rating scales, or the scales will be ineffective (Granada, 2003). Traditional rating scales incorporate traits of giftedness seen in mainstream society, which may not be displayed in an ELL (García, 2002). Plata and Masten (1998) found

that teachers are less likely to recommend ELLs on rating scales than native English speakers. However, a rating scale with multiple similar questions phrased differently, such as the Clinical Assessment of Behavior (CAB), may reduce some of these differences because it can check for consistency in the answers given by the rater (Matthews, 2006). A different rating scale might be created with cultural adaptations to aspects of giftedness; for example, a student's leadership skills might be displayed by the way she facilitates a collaborative group rather than in how she takes charge of that group (Castellano, 2003). For examples of characteristics specific to gifted ELLs, see Robisheaux, 2002, Appendix A and Aguirre & Hernández, 2002, Appendix B.

The difficulties with administering rating scales for parents are similar to the difficulties in the nomination process. Districts must be sure to account for difficulties in culture, literacy, and language in their expectations when asking parents to fill out a rating scale. In addition, it is important to note that the parents may not be able to answer all of the questions if they do not often see their child acting in ways that would indicate giftedness; families in poverty, especially, may not be able to spend as much time together and would therefore have less information to contribute on a rating scale.

Observations and interviews can provide a clearer picture of a student's personality and abilities. Observers should receive training in the characteristics of gifted ELLs so that they are familiar with them; it might be helpful to provide them with a list of specific characteristics of gifted ELLs. Portfolios also may provide a fuller picture of the student by showing changes over time in the student's work and abilities. Portfolios can include culturally specific information and data showing the student's language learning growth (Johnsen, 2008). They may also include evidence of the student's creativity and anecdotes giving evidence of his motivation and task commitment.

The Search for Equity

It may seem as though a perfect method for identifying gifted students is impossible, and it most likely is. However, even though many of these measures provide incomplete pictures of students by themselves, the combination of multiple methods, including both qualitative and quantitative data, provides the best overall view of students' abilities (Lohman & Lakin, 2008; Aguirre, 2003; Castellano, 2003; Robisheaux, 2002). A portfolio or case study process might be used to get a full picture of individual students (García, 2002; Robisheaux, 2002). It is important to note that different assessments will identify different students as gifted and that, although students rarely have "false positive" scores that are higher than should represent their actual ability, they may have scores that are erroneously too low (Bracken, 2008; Robinson, 2008). For example, the cognitive style of the student, possibly influenced by the student's culture, may differ from the assessment instrument (Granada, 2003). In addition, assessments cannot show great amounts of growth for children from disadvantaged backgrounds (Robinson, 2008). For this reason, having an accurate picture of the whole child and his circumstances is also vitally important; for example, a child whose home does not contain books or supportive family members, but who reads at least on grade level, may be more likely to be gifted than a child who has the same home life and is reading below grade level (Robinson, 2008). In some instances, a multidisciplinary team can assess an individual student's areas of strengths, including her most proficient language, and assess the child in her home, school, and community environments (Castellano, 2003).

A survey of educators found general agreement in the idea that identification should be flexible and include multiple factors and an expanded view of giftedness, rather than a sole emphasis on IQ scores (Brown et al., 2005). However, the same survey showed that while many educators held these beliefs, their school districts continued to rely heavily on more formal and structured assessments, such as intelligence and ability tests, and less on more subjective measures that looked at students' individual abilities and attributes (Brown et al., 2005). The use of such subjective measures is more time-

consuming, but it is hoped that the process of identification will become more equitable through the use of these measures (Brown et al., 2005).

The many difficulties in the identification of gifted ELLs may seem daunting and even discouraging to educators. However, the research that is continually coming available gives proof that gifted ELLs can be identified through multiple measures and, ultimately, through the teachers and administrators who make it a priority to provide appropriate services for students who need them. Aguirre encourages educators to “search deeper and allow students’ passions to flourish. Learning English should not be the focus of any child’s education” (2003, 26). Providing appropriate enrichment to students to allow them to grow is an important goal for all educators to meet, regardless of their students’ language proficiency, socioeconomic status, or any other characteristic that might hold them back in the pursuit of their dreams.

Method

Participants

Five school districts in a southern state were chosen and the gifted and ELL coordinators of each district were interviewed, for a total of eleven interviews. (One district had two coordinators for the gifted program: one for elementary and one for secondary.) Participants were informed that information that could identify them or the school district would be kept confidential and would not be used in the study.

Apparatus

Participants were asked to complete a written survey (Appendices C & D) about their district's gifted or ELL program for a standard of comparison among the districts' programs. They were also asked a series of questions about their program (Appendices E & F) in a recorded interview. One participant declined to be recorded, so notes on the interview were written by hand. Gifted coordinators were interviewed about their district's gifted program, identification procedures for accepting students into the program, and allowances or differentiation made for ELLs. ELL coordinators were asked about their district's ELL program, their knowledge of and participation in the gifted program and identification procedures, and any difficulties that ELL students might face with testing.

Procedure

Participants were chosen by directly contacting the district coordinators for ELL and gifted programs by phone and/or email using contact information publicly available on school district websites. After agreeing to participate, the participants were sent information by email about the study, including Institutional Research Board information (Appendices G & H), as well as the survey and proposed interview questions.

Before each interview, the participant was again informed that the interview would be recorded and asked for verbal consent before proceeding; if consent for recording was withheld, notes were taken on paper instead. The interview was conducted using the question list sent in advance to the participants; however, follow-up questions to clarify anything that seemed unclear were also asked. In the gifted interviews, these additional questions included asking about the reasoning behind the choice of a nonverbal test for screening and questions about how the gifted program is going to change, for those districts that are planning to alter their programs in the upcoming months and years. In the ELL interviews, additional questions were about how much information is translated into other languages before being sent home and into how many languages the district will translate.

Participants were told that no questions would be asked about specific students or any other confidential information. Participants were also given the opportunity to choose a pseudonym or have one assigned to them. Each school district was also assigned a pseudonym and only general demographic information on the districts was recorded, including whether its percentage of ELL students is below, at, or above the statewide average and whether its percentage of gifted students is below, at, or above the statewide average. If information such as a matrix was collected, it was only used as coded information rather than being published in its entirety. Additional data was solicited by email and collected from the state's educational data office.

Recordings were partially transcribed using pseudonyms for the researcher's use of facts and quotes. Transcription was carried out using headphones or in a private room so that the recordings would not be overheard.

Results

Eleven participants (Table 1) representing five school districts (Table 2) in a southern state were interviewed regarding their respective positions as coordinators of either gifted programs or programs for English Language Learners.

Table 1

ELL and Gifted Coordinators Interviewed from Each District

District	ELL Coordinator	Gifted Coordinator
Beverly	Fulton	Sidney
Hamilton	Williams	Harrison (elementary); Carroll (secondary)
Mallory	Bozena	Johnson
Robinson	Jackson	Alexander
Sterling	White	Mugsy

Table 2

School Districts, Settings, and Demographics of ELL and Gifted Populations

District name	Rural, suburban, or urban setting	% of ELLs below, at, or above statewide average (7.1% in 2010-2011)	% of identified gifted students below, at, or above statewide percentage in 2012-2013[a]	% of identified gifted students who were ELLs (currently receive or have received ELL services in the past 2 years) (2012-2013)

Beverly	Urban	At average	Below	1.7%
Hamilton	Rural	Below	Above	0.6%
Mallory	Urban	Above	Below	10.0%
Robinson	Rural	Below	Above	0.8%
Sterling	Suburban	Below	Below	1.7%

[a] Last available data: statewide percentage was 16.5% in 2011-2012 school year

Note. Data figured from *LEP Enrollment 1997-2012,* Virginia Department of Education; *School division report cards,* Virginia Department of Education; *Table A: General state information,* National Association for Gifted Children; *Table 47: Number and percentage of public school students participating in programs for English language learners, by state: Selected years, 2002-03 through 2010-11,* National Center for Education Statistics; other data collected upon request from Virginia Department of Education or provided in interviews with gifted coordinators

Definitions of Giftedness

According to its official definition of giftedness, the state in which these districts operate recognizes giftedness in the areas of general intellectual aptitude, specific academic aptitude, career and technical aptitude, and visual and performing arts aptitude. Each district is required to recognize either general intellectual aptitude or specific academic aptitude; however, it is at the discretion of each district as to whether the other two areas are identified and services offered. Beverly identifies general intellectual aptitude and specific academic aptitude. Hamilton and Mallory recognize general intellectual aptitude. Robinson identifies students for specific academic aptitudes (English, math, and science), as well as visual and performing arts (vocal music, instrumental music, theatre, and visual arts). Sterling recognizes general intellectual aptitude and visual arts aptitude.

ELL Populations

Each of the five districts has experienced growth in their ELL populations over the last ten to twenty years. As the ELL populations have changed, some gifted programs have adapted, and some have remained static. Alexander stated that the Robinson district began to use the NNAT to identify students from underrepresented groups "who would never have been recommended, much less identified" under the previous system, adding that this change was "not just for ESL kids but for all kids who might be recommended". Beverly is preparing for changes in the gifted program as their ELL population continues to grow, and although Mallory has not changed the gifted program at all in recent years, the program, including its identification measures, is currently under revision.

This state uses WIDA testing and levels of proficiency to assess ELLs. As a WIDA state, all five school districts administer WIDA screening tests and yearly proficiency assessments to all students who are currently receiving ELL services. Robinson and Mallory also use the IPT (IDEA Proficiency Test), which is given orally; Mallory collects writing samples, as well, to gauge ELLs' progress. The districts have a variety of types of programs for ELLs (Table 3).

Table 3

Types of ELL Programming by District

District	Pull-out programming	Push-in programming	Newcomer programs	Bilingual/ dual-language programs	Resource classes (e.g., study hall for ELLs)	Other
Beverly	Yes	Yes	Certain blocks in	No	Certain blocks in	None

			MS/HS		MS/HS	
Hamilton	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Intensive English program (MS & HS only)
Mallory	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Content literacy courses
Robinson	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	none
Sterling	-	-	-	-	-	-

- data not collected

Gifted Referrals

Beverly, Mallory, Robinson, and Sterling use the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test (NNAT) as a universal screening test for all students in either first or second grade in order to create a talent pool from which to choose students. Hamilton uses the NNAT as an identification assessment once a child has already been referred to the program, instead of as a screening device for all students. In addition, Sterling also administers the Otis-Lennon School Ability Test (OLSAT) to all fifth-grade students to find students who may qualify for gifted services.

All five districts also use referrals from teachers and parents; the Hamilton, Mallory, and Robinson district coordinators also mentioned student self-referrals. These referrals are used to place students into a pool for further testing.

Beverly uses a specific process to identify first grade students for inclusion into a talent pool. A gifted teacher goes to each first grade classroom for four weeks of the year to deliver a whole-group lesson that includes enrichment and creativity lessons to find which students particularly flourish in that environment and may benefit from further gifted services. The classroom teacher and gifted teacher observe students' abilities and work and decide whether to include specific students into the talent pool for differentiated instruction through grade 2 and further evaluation for gifted services later on.

Identification Processes

Once a student has been referred for further screening, either by a referral or a high score on the NNAT, the student is evaluated in a number of ways. The state's policy requires that multiple criteria are used for identification, including a "nationally norm-referenced aptitude and/or achievement test" determined by the local school district (NAGC, n.d. b). The five districts cited various ways of evaluating students (Tables 4 and 5), as well as a variety of types of gifted programming (Table 6).

Table 4

Assessments Used in Identification of Gifted Students

District	Group-administered intelligence/ ability tests	Individually-administered intelligence/ ability tests	Group-administered achievement tests	Individually-administered achievement tests	Nonverbal tests	Creativity tests
Beverly	OLSAT, Stanford 10	None	None	None	NNAT2	None
Hamilton	OLSAT	None	None	None	NNAT2	None

Mallory	CogAT	TONI (in special circumstances)	Metropolitan (moving to ITBS soon)	None	NNAT2	None
Robinson	CogAT	None	ITBS	None	NNAT2	None
Sterling	OLSAT	KBIT, WRIT, RIAS	None	None	NNAT2	Non-formal assessment

Table 5

Other Measures Used in Identification of Gifted Students

District	Parent rating scale/survey	Teacher rating scale/survey	Portfolio of student work	Matrix	Other measures of identification
Beverly	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes[a]	First grade unit
Hamilton	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Student interview
Mallory	Yes	Yes (phasing out)	Yes	No	Other evidence[b]
Robinson	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes[a]	Student self-ratings
Sterling	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	n/a

[a]The matrices used in Beverly and Robinson total up point values for each of the assessments available and students must score within a certain range to qualify for the program. However, in Beverly, students from underrepresented groups may qualify with a lower score, and in Robinson, students with IEPs may qualify with a lower score.

[b]The Mallory district may consider students' scores in the context of their socioeconomic status, as well.

Table 6

Types of Gifted Programming by District

District	Pull-out program-ming	Push-in program-ming	Extra-curricular programs (after school, days off, summer)	Internships, mentorships, job shadowing	Advanced classes (AP, IB, Dual Enrollment)	Other programming
Beverly	No	No	Summer enrichment offered to all students; gifted students notified of outside summer programs	In development	Yes	Full-time gifted centers, grades 3-5; honors program in middle school open to all students
Hamilton	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	n/a
Mallory	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	n/a
Robinson	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Fine arts

Sterling	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	n/a

Gifted Program Assessments and ELLs

None of the five districts uses different assessments for ELLs than for English-proficient students, although each coordinator specified that the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test was chosen with ELLs and other underrepresented groups in mind. Carroll stated, “The Naglieri is a nonverbal test so there’s no language bias to it.” The testing coordinator for Sterling also confirmed that the choice of a nonverbal assessment was due in part because of its perceived lack of bias. White, Bozena, and Williams also stated that the use of nonverbal tests could assist in identifying students without giving them verbally-based assessments. Johnson mentioned having seen research stating that the NNAT had “a little bit of an edge in finding African Americans [and] Latinos” over the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT), and observed that the CogAT also had both verbal and nonverbal portions, which would hopefully provide equality for students.

Although ELLs aren’t assessed differently in Sterling, Mugsy noted that nonverbal test scores might be substituted for the combined verbal and non-verbal test scores on the matrix on the occasion that the eligibility committee felt that the nonverbal scores were a more accurate representation of a student’s abilities. Mugsy added, “It’s not something that we do lightly or we do frequently, but it is something that we can consider.” Similarly, one of the coordinators of the Hamilton district, Carroll, stated that the NNAT2 and the CogAT are both administered to students and the higher score of the two is placed in the matrix, giving them a chance to perform on both a verbal and a nonverbal assessment.

Each gifted program uses the same assessments for both ELLs and English-proficient students in their districts, but may use different accommodations if deemed appropriate. Mugsy, Alexander, and

Harrison noted that they could use translators if a student were unable to comprehend tests given in English. In addition, Alexander mentioned that there are Spanish versions of some ability tests that could be used. Although all five districts use the NNAT, each coordinator confirmed that the directions were given verbally in English. Johnson also said that giving a translated assessment “might actually be a detriment to [ELLs] if they’ve had schooling in English” since ELL students might be verbally proficient in their heritage language but not proficient in reading or writing. Several district coordinators noted that the student’s classroom teacher would know whether he would have a level of English proficiency to be able to take a test in English or not. Mugsy stated that “as a classroom teacher…you’re able to see whether or not the language is an issue for that child because you work with them on a daily basis and you have many opportunities to see the child in situations that could demonstrate that ability.”

From the perspective of the ELL coordinators, concerns about assessing ELLs in intelligence assessments included the difficulties of testing a student in English, cultural conceptions of intelligence, and background knowledge. Fulton indicated that “you don’t always want to assess reading ability” but the state standards “have increased rigor and have increasingly expected students to have a certain English proficiency in reading and comprehension….Even evaluations where you’re trying to determine if a student has a particular need, it’s sometimes difficult to assess whether it’s a language barrier or an actual cognitive need.” Jackson also mentioned a concern about testing students in English. Furthermore, Bozena saw cultural definitions of intelligence as being a possible difficulty in giving ELLs intelligence assessments: “if you’re going to give an intelligence test to language learners, either it has to be an appropriate intelligence test that’s universal in nature, or it has to be analyzed through the lens of recognizing that we’re using our own cultural assumptions to assume a certain level of intelligence.” Bozena later added, “There isn’t ever going to be anything where you can take the observer out of it,” so every type of assessment will contain some sort of bias. Concerning students’ background knowledge,

Johnson mentioned that when gifted teachers in Mallory saw samples of the CogAT with a picture of a baseball, they were concerned that some students may not know what a baseball is.

However, achievement tests administered in English are not considered to be detrimental in every regard. Johnson made the point that English may be a measure of achievement when discussing the district's achievement tests: "Now granted the achievement [test] is language-rich, if you're doing it in English, but I could argue that that is a determination of your achievement, is being able to read the English when you're going into your coursework."

Along with formalized assessments, some school districts use a big-picture approach with portfolios and interviews. Johnson mentioned that an ELL student's ACCESS scores might be included in her portfolio to "[demonstrate] rapidity of language learning." Carroll also noted that the students include a writing sample in their portfolio, and the district eligibility committee takes the student's first language into consideration. Hamilton's use of an interview adds another dimension to the identification process. Although unsure whether a translator was present for the interview process, Carroll did mention that the interviewer takes the student's cultural background into consideration in the interview, which includes a brainstorming creative task. These measures help evaluators see the broader picture of a student's abilities and may especially assist in the appropriate representation of ELLs in gifted programs.

Training of Gifted Coordinators and Teachers

Even though only one district had a large percentage of ELLs in the district, each of the six gifted coordinators interviewed expressed an interest in learning more about the identification of gifted ELLs. None of the gifted coordinators has had any training in identifying gifted ELLs, although one mentioned actively studying the topic this year by reading about the topic. Johnson, whose district has the highest percentage of ELLs, has read many books and articles, attended conferences, and has also visited

another district in the state with a large ELL population, with plans to visit two additional districts next year. Johnson also mentioned speaking with a gifted coordinator in another southern state with a very large ELL population to get advice and ideas. Harrison also mentioned having read information that was distributed from the state and other information about possible biases in procedures.

Some of the gifted coordinators also mentioned their gifted resource teachers' training in working with gifted ELLs. One of the gifted teachers in Hamilton took a class in identifying ELLs and students with disabilities during her work to earn her master's degree in gifted education, and another teacher did research in "different types of assessments and advantages [and] disadvantages" In addition, Mugsy noted that although none of the gifted teachers in Sterling has had formal training in the identification of gifted ELLs, one of the school psychologists was "familiar with testing students who are ELL students and so…we rely on her to assist us in that area in case that is a factor."

Training of ELL Coordinators and Teachers

Of the five ELL coordinators interviewed, only one had received any formal training in working with gifted ELL students; Bozena has gone through webinars and workshops on the subject, but noted that there is little available in terms of professional development. Bozena also mentioned that professional organizations occasionally included information about gifted students in their journals, such as TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages and NABE (National Association for Bilingual Education). In addition, Williams, while not having been specifically trained in working with gifted ELLs, had a background in teaching gifted students before coordinating the ELL program.

None of the districts provide specific training to ELL teachers about identifying or providing accommodations to gifted ELLs. Three ELL coordinators said that if an ELL teacher did have training in that area, it would have come from his or her preparation in college. However, Bozena stated that in Mallory, differentiation specialists work in individual school buildings and could assist ELL teachers in

providing appropriate accommodations. Williams also said that since the ELL teachers work closely with the regular classroom teachers, "if [giftedness is] going to be spotted, it will take a combination of the two of them to spot."

Collaboration Between Gifted and ELL Programs

None of the five school districts has formal collaboration between the gifted and ELL programs, although most gifted coordinators noted that they felt the lines of communication were open between the gifted and ELL coordinators. Mugsy said, "There's not a formal meeting, but there's always the possibility for an informal meeting." Carroll also mentioned collaboration in the office:

> It's very easy to talk back and forth, but I don't believe there's a specific sit-down time when we were planning our local plan or talking about the program for the county that there was something of a pow-wow or something to work together, but we all do very closely work together here at Central Office and it's really hard to separate us all out because we are so interconnected.

Other coordinators are connected to each other through their other responsibilities. White, in addition to coordinating Sterling's ELL program, is also in charge of the English program, and the gifted coordinator, Mugsy, is also in charge of elementary instruction, so they interact quite often in those roles. White stated that their interaction was "more in my capacity as the English coordinator [and] less in my capacity as the ELL coordinator."

Jackson spoke with the gifted coordinator before the interview to get a list of gifted students receiving services to determine whether any names of students receiving gifted services seemed familiar because of their current or past classification as ELLs. Generally, Jackson's concern is whether the students are getting ELL services; "I don't necessarily know whether they have other services…I may not

always know if they have gifted services. These are probably the kids I don't hear about as much because they're doing well, obviously." Jackson may be aware of whether ELLs receive special education services, but that is because it usually ties in with their language learning abilities.

Harrison noted that Hamilton's gifted program is currently being revised. Harrison has been "communicating about direction and why we might do the things we're going to do" with Williams, the ELL coordinator. Johnson also mentioned having asked Bozena to serve on the district's eligibility committee and also to "look at the ACCESS scores…and send some names to me" of students who should be screened further for gifted because of their rapid English growth. Bozena stated that ACCESS scores could show students who "grew 2 or more levels in a test that the idea is for them to grow one [level]" and that those students could be screened for further gifted evaluation. Fulton also spoke about discussing particular students with Sidney to determine the best ways to serve students.

Each of the ELL coordinators was somewhat familiar with the gifted program in his or her district, although two coordinators mentioned that their knowledge of the gifted program had to do in large part with having had their own children participate in the program. Most of the ELL coordinators knew of the basic processes to refer and identify students, but would probably direct further questions to the gifted coordinator.

Although the state recently dropped its requirement that all districts have a local gifted advisory board, three of the districts have gifted advisory boards, while Mallory is currently in the process of forming one after not having had one for a few years. (Robinson no longer has a board, but a committee of parents and school gifted coordinators does meet with the district coordinator.) None of the boards has representation from an ELL parent or teacher, although Hamilton does have a Spanish teacher on the board who, according to Harrison, "does work with some ELL children…who is an advocate for those issues from the high school perspective." In addition, Harrison stated that "some

very involved parents" from schools with more significant ELL populations are advocates for those students. Sidney mentioned that having representation from an ELL parent or teacher would be "a good idea," and another coordinator echoed that sentiment.

Johnson mentioned that although ideally the gifted students in the district would be representative of the overall demographics of the district, they were not representative in Mallory. For that reason, there might not be ELL parents who could serve on the board because there were fewer ELLs in the gifted program. However, a community member from a neighboring state university who had done research on the inclusion of Latino parents into the school community might become involved on the board in the future.

Role of Classroom Teachers in Gifted Identification

All five districts provide surveys or checklists for classroom teachers to fill out concerning students who are being screened for the gifted program. However, Mallory is shifting from a checklist model to just giving teachers suggestions of characteristics for which they should be looking to refer a student. Johnson noted that one concern about using a checklist was that cultural differences could exclude children; for example, a checklist might ask whether the child exhibits a sense of humor, but "sense of humor can be very cultural. There can be a culture that for their children to be funny in a classroom is very inappropriate." The characteristic of being highly verbal is similar consideration; Johnson mentioned, "maybe some [children] are taught you don't speak until spoken to." For these reasons, Mallory has chosen not to use the checklist model any longer because of concerns about only identifying students who fit the traditional model of giftedness.

The five districts studied also provide guidance for classroom teachers about characteristics of giftedness for which they should be looking. This guidance is either provided informally by the gifted resource teachers or formally in the form of professional development sessions with faculty. Alexander

verbalized a concern that teachers might only refer “high-achieving, hard-working” students who are bright but not necessarily gifted, adding that this concern was a reason that so many indicators are used to identify students, because “just a test, just a teacher recommendation” may not provide a full picture of a student’s abilities. Districts go about the training for their teachers in different ways; in Beverly, the teachers are educated each year in regards to identification, while in Sterling, only new teachers are instructed in filling out the Renzulli scale. In Robinson, the gifted coordinators attempt to “build on from year to year” in the professional development they provide to teachers, but Alexander has found that “sometimes, potentially if we get an influx of new teachers, we have to go back to the basics” of giftedness.

Although teachers may be prepared for looking for giftedness in their classrooms, they may not be instructed on how giftedness may be expressed in ELLs. In Beverly and Mallory, teachers are instructed in how giftedness might appear different in an ELL, but in Harrison, Robinson, and Sterling, teachers are not prepared in that way. However, Mugsy pointed out, “if you have the classroom teacher filling out the Renzulli and they considered [the student’s status as an ELL] an issue or a barrier, they would definitely address it in their comments.” Johnson also explained that sometimes teachers become focused on one area of a child’s needs, such as English language learning, and neglect considering whether the child might also be gifted, thus missing identification of the child.

Bozena also voiced the concern that classroom teachers might miss identifying gifted ELLs:

> If a kid is achieving at a super-fast rate, ok, there’s that, but what are some other indicators for a kid who is academically underachieving because they don’t have the language skill set to achieve – to overachieve? And maybe the cultural experience they have, you don’t actually know if they’re misbehaving to let you know that they’re bored.

Bozena later mentioned the variables of students' proficiency levels and backgrounds, adding that "a kid who went through extreme trauma is not the kid who came here happily with his parents." Districts with large numbers of refugee children might especially face this difficulty.

Other school district staff members may be included in information about gifted identification. Johnson mentioned having spoken with a home-school liaison and asking her to make referrals of any students who she thinks might be gifted, either through the liaison's interactions with the student or her interactions with the parents.

Role of Parents in Gifted Identification

To assist parents and guardians of ELLs who may not be proficient in English, the districts also offer a variety of services to assist with language barriers (Table 7).

Table 7

ELL Parent/Guardian Resources

District	Home-School Liaison	Translators for Conferences	Translation of Notes Sent To/From Home	Translators for School Events (e.g., Back-to-School Night)	Other
Beverly	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Nights for LEP parents; Spanish parent handbook and code of conduct
Hamilton	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	After-school and evening programs for

					parents; parent resource guide created by ELL teachers
Mallory	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Parents as Educational Partners (PEP) classes
Robinson	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Translators/phone calls provided for medical, legal, social services
Sterling	-	-	-	-	-

- Data not collected

Parent rating scales or checklists are used in each of the five school districts, although the one used in Mallory is going to be changed soon because of its difficulty for parents to fill out. (Johnson noted that the rating scale asked parents to compare their child to "their age peers," but many parents would probably have no idea how their child compared to other children of the same age.)

Parents in most districts are given information about the gifted program along with the checklist or rating scale. Sterling created a parent handbook to send to parents of students who qualify for the program that includes information on how students are identified. Beverly also sends a monthly newsletter to parents of all first and second grade students with information about the four-week creative lessons and identification information; information about the program for middle and high school students is available online. In Hamilton, a letter is sent home with the checklist that explains the program, but Harrison noted that communicating about the program better with parents was an area in which Hamilton could improve in the future.

However, in Mallory, parents are not given a lot of information about the program. Johnson said that for elementary school-aged students, parents "understand there's somebody in the school who's going to work with their child." In general, though, Johnson stated, "I'm not sure they all understand it, no. That's just our communication; we need to do a better job of that. That needs to be one of our goals, is how can parents know?" Johnson also mentioned communicating with home-school liaisons in the past about the identification process and referral letters, since they have a lot of communication with parents of ELLs, who "will call them if they don't understand something that comes home."

Although parents are sent information on the program with the checklist or rating scale, those papers are not always translated into their home language. Sterling, Beverly, Hamilton, and Robinson do not typically have translated forms ready to send home. Mallory, because of its high population of ELLs, always translates its forms into the four major languages other than English that are spoken in the district. If a need arose for a translation into another language aside from the major four, the district would seek out translators for them. However, Mugsy mentioned that in Sterling, many ELL parents are proficient in English or will seek out translators on their own; in addition, the district could use Google Translate or a similar tool, if necessary. Several coordinators mentioned that their districts had budgets for translation and would pay for documents to be translated whenever necessary. Harrison also stated that in Hamilton, if a family could not read information about the program, "I would think that we would go out of our way to possibly invite the family in and have an interpreter and go through the form." Harrison feels strongly that the district must not give out information that could be hard to understand.

Some of the ELL coordinators could see potential barriers in asking parents of ELLs to give consent for their children to participate in a gifted program. Jackson said that in Robinson, "whenever we ask parents for permission to do things, they're…worried, especially if they're not

documented citizens. They worry about what's this for? Why are we going to test their child? How is that going to put their student's name out there in a way that they worry about?" To remedy this problem, the home-school liaison in Robinson, as well as the ELL teachers in the district, works hard to communicate with parents about any concerns that may come up. Bozena echoed this sentiment, stating that parents might not understand what will happen if their child is identified as gifted: "Is this a bad thing? Is this a good thing? Do I have to pay for this? Is this something that my kid's going to be taken out of their class?" Bozena related that many families would not have background knowledge of the concept of giftedness, so it would not be easily explained. "What we need to do," Bozena continued, "is empower more culturally and linguistically diverse parents to get out there and talk about their kid's experience in the gifted program or in special education or in ESL support services, so that they are talking honestly…" If parents' concerns are addressed by others in similar situations, they can feel more comfortable with their students' participation in special programs.

Asking parents to fill out rating scales could also lead to difficulties in the opinions of some ELL coordinators. White noted that Sterling has a few students whose families speak a language for which there is no writing system, so it would be impossible to translate a rating scale. However, White stated that the district tries to use translators who understand the nuances of the language and can have a conversation with the parents to explain the program and the process. Bozena stated that probably half of the parents of ELLs in Mallory did not finish the fourth grade, so even a translated survey might be beyond comprehension; Williams also noted the difficulty of illiteracy and the helpfulness of using an interpreter in that situation.

A further cultural barrier that Bozena mentioned is that some families do not view their students in the ways that a rating scale might expect them to: "If it's my way to never actually have my kid talk to me except to have them respond to things that I ask them, then how am I ever going to see

those things?" Other cultural subtleties, such as certain ways of "face-saving," as Bozena said, or a culture frowning upon people bragging about their children, might further cause problems. Jackson added the idea that every culture has different expectations and beliefs for members of that culture, so the use of a translator or liaison would help in explaining expectations.

However, Williams and Fulton did not know of any cultural barriers that could keep ELLs from participating in gifted programs. Fulton stated that the parents in Beverly district "tend to want their students to be pushed to their highest limits academically, so I don't see much opposition to that." Williams said that the use of translated materials and interpreters helped with communication with all parents in Hamilton so that all parents could understand and feel comfortable with school programs.

Participation of ELLs in Gifted Programming

Currently, each of the five districts studied does, in fact, have ELLs in its gifted program, although none of the gifted coordinators was sure of the specific numbers or had them easily accessible at the time of the interviews. Johnson mentioned that it was possible to look at ethnicity in gifted records, but that factor could be misleading in judging the language proficiency of students. In both Hamilton and Mallory, the gifted coordinators acknowledged that the number of gifted ELLs currently identified was not representative of the diversity in their district. Bozena voiced her concern about incorporating diversity into school programs:

> We need to be making sure that just because the institution is white and middle class that we're not denying access to people who are not white and middle class into programs that maximize potential in ways that [are] more enriching. But I think everybody's paying attention to that and trying to make sure that we're opening doors rather than closing them. That's my hope, anyway.

Bozena also commented that the growth and constant change in the ELL population of Mallory's schools and surrounding city force consideration of ELLs by everyone in the district and especially the Mallory District administrators.

White stated that Sterling schools hold LEP committee meetings that are similar to IEP meetings, in that they include the "regular classroom teacher, ESL teacher, guidance counselor, building administrator, student, parent" and also a translator. These meetings are usually where a gifted referral would originate, when a translator is there "who explains and might have a cultural understanding of what giftedness would mean in their home country." Bozena mentioned that it might be helpful to "make sure that there's always somebody who might throw that question out: 'Have we ever thought about giftedness?'" in meetings about individual students and their needs.

ELL students in the gifted program receive the same gifted services that English-proficient students do in all five districts, as well. Sidney noted that since Beverly's program model is designed to meet individual students' needs and differentiate for those needs, provisions would be made for ELL students on an individualized basis, just as they would be for English-proficient students.

Of the five districts, Beverly faces a unique problem in determining how to best serve students. Since Beverly transports gifted upper elementary students to a few sites, and also transports ELL students to different sites, there are many factors to consider in determining how to provide services for those students. In regards to these concerns, Fulton observed, "There's never one right answer; you have to take each situation [and] make sure you have the stakeholders involved, the parents in particular, [to] find out what's best for that student." However, Sidney asserted that regardless of the school that a gifted student attends, the student will receive differentiated instruction, although it is not in the same format as the designated gifted classes offered at two elementary schools for identified third through fifth grade students.

While some ELL coordinators thought that their districts do enough to identify gifted ELLs, others believed that it was possible that their identification procedures might miss identifying otherwise qualified ELLs because of their status as language learners. Williams felt that the district would not miss identification of gifted ELLs because of their consideration of ELLs' ACCESS scores, which are "a very good indicator of how the students are progressing" and also because of the diligence of the ELL teachers. In Robinson, however, Jackson remarked that not identifying qualified students could be a result of the language barrier or possibly because of the referral process. Bozena compared identifying gifted ELLs to the difficulties in identifying disabilities in ELLs, since it is difficult to distinguish between the language barrier and other problems that might be occurring in those students. Bozena also noted that cultural biases in assessments and a lack of experience from newer teachers might also contribute to under-identification.

Jackson voiced the opinion that the loss of whole-grade level screenings in Robinson, which came as a result of budget cuts, was a loss for the district in terms of student identification for giftedness. Noting that administering those assessments could help identify gifted students and provide beneficial feedback for all students, Jackson also mentioned the difficulty in trying to assess all students in a certain grade level when others might move into the district at a later time and miss the testing window.

While discussing the possibility that gifted ELLs are not identified, Bozena acknowledged, "…I think there's tons of LEP kids who probably have giftedness in areas that we don't identify." Bozena claimed that some ELLs might be gifted "in terms of their language learning abilities", but are not considered by others to be gifted because they struggle in the classroom as a result of the language barrier. Bozena also noted that gifted ELLs may see questions differently and give answers that may appear to be incorrect, at first glance, but are actually just a different and creative way of viewing the

problem through the student's cultural lens. Fulton stated, "I'm sure we could do a better job of…just looking deeper into…finding other ways to assess a student's strengths."

Differentiating for Gifted ELLs

Some techniques already used by ELL teachers could benefit gifted ELLs. Bozena mentioned attending a training session for working with gifted students and noted that the strategies taught there were "definitely a valuable tool for language learners" as well. White also stated his belief that ELL teachers "are some of the best teachers at differentiation because they can have a class with a huge range of students". White believes that if ELL teachers feel that an ELL is gifted, they can alter the curriculum to meet the student's needs:

> While they may not have training to approach it from a gifted learner's perspective, they can at least accelerate the language acquisition. We're a WIDA state, so we teach English through the academic language and so that academic language would be more rich, bigger words faster, bigger concepts faster, pushing back into content area classes faster. And then of course if they're identified as gifted, they have the resources of the gifted resource teachers, who can help them with their gifted learner side of things. [Differentiation] probably happens; it's just not purposeful from our perspective.

Bozena explained that in Mallory's elementary ELL services, students receive more individualized instruction: "and so kids who do have something in the way of acceleration are provided with ways to continue accelerating. Nobody's slowing them down." However, Bozena believes that in the secondary program, less individualization probably occurs.

Jackson noted that often, students who immigrate to the United States have already learned the material that is being taught in their classes, but they are learning it in English instead of their heritage

language. Bozena echoed this sentiment: “our pacing is probably too slow for those kids who come with literacy in their first language and have gone through high-quality educational experiences.” For this reason, the use of bilingual classes or a dual-language program to help students improve their heritage languages while improving their English could be very beneficial.

Discussion

The research questions for this study were threefold. First, what are the procedures for identifying students for gifted programs? Second, what accommodations are made for English language learners in the identification process? Third, how do identification procedures avoid issues of bias due to the language and cultural barriers that ELLs may face?

Referrals and Identification Procedures

Each school district uses fairly similar procedures for identification. Students may be placed in a testing pool for further assessment either by a referral from a teacher or parent or by a high score on a universal screening assessment, which is used in four of the five districts. Beverly also uses a whole-group lesson format for identifying first grade students to be placed into a talent pool. Once a student is referred to the program, she will then progress further to the next steps, consisting of further screening through formal and informal assessments. Eventually, all of the student's data is presented to an eligibility committee, who decides if the student meets the qualifications of the district's gifted program. Often, assessment and rating scores are placed into a matrix, and the student must earn a minimum number of points to be allowed into the program. However, there is some flexibility with the minimum number of points required, depending on the school district and what other factors are taken into consideration.

The assessments used in these school districts vary widely, with one exception: each district uses the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test in an attempt to avoid language biases for ELLs, as well as other students who may struggle with verbally-based assessments, such as students with certain disabilities. In terms of group-administered ability tests, three districts use the Otis-Lennon School Ability Test (OLSAT), while two use the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT). In addition to the OLSAT, Beverly also tests with the Stanford 10. Of the five districts, Sterling is the sole district that administers individual ability tests in

using the Kaufman Brief Intelligence Test (KBIT), Wide-Range Intelligence Test (WRIT), and the Reynolds Intellectual Assessment Scales (RIAS). All of these ability tests are verbally based, although some (like the CogAT) may have nonverbal sections, as well. Since the NNAT is timed, in circumstances in which a student might not perform well on a timed assessment due to a disability or other special consideration, Mallory may use the Test of Nonverbal Intelligence (TONI), which is also individually administered and does not have time constraints. Mallory and Robinson are the only two districts that administer group achievement tests; Robinson uses the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS), and Mallory uses the Metropolitan Readiness Test, but will soon be moving to the ITBS.

Qualitative forms of assessment are also used in each district. Sterling is the only district of the five studied that gives a non-formal creativity assessment. However, Hamilton's interview for gifted admission includes a creative brainstorming task. Each district also uses parent and teacher rating scales, although Mallory has lessened its use of teacher rating scales and is moving to a more general referral model. In Robinson, students are asked to rate themselves, as well. Beverly, Hamilton, Mallory, and Robinson use portfolios to compile a student's work and show what he can do and the progress he has made. These portfolios may include a variety of pieces, but may especially show ELLs' progress through writing samples over time or yearly ACCESS scores.

Identification Accommodations for ELLs

None of the five districts provides explicit accommodations for ELLs when administering formal assessments, but each district may view components of the identification process differently for ELLs than for English-proficient students. The districts chose to use the NNAT for its usefulness in identifying underrepresented populations. In Sterling and Hamilton, those nonverbal test scores may be given more weight or replace verbal test scores on the matrix altogether if the eligibility committee believes that the nonverbal scores are more representative of the student's abilities. Other considerations, such

as a student's socioeconomic status, may be taken into account in the referral process, as well; this is also important for ELLs, who are often have lower socioeconomic statuses.

Even though many accommodations, such as verbally interpreted or translated tests, could be accessed by the districts, they are rarely, if ever, utilized. The districts do not provide translated assessments or directions, even though the NNAT's directions are given verbally in English; however, several district coordinators believed they could gain translated versions of tests or directions if a classroom teacher indicated that an ELL would not be able to comprehend a test given in English. However, as Johnson mentioned, the concern that an ELL would actually be placed at a disadvantage in taking a test in his heritage language, since she may not have ever received instruction in that language, is a consideration in the use of such accommodations.

A few districts use non-formal assessments, such as portfolios, interviews, and creative tasks, to assess students. This provides a broader view of the student's abilities and can also help with identification of ELLs. ACCESS scores and work samples can serve as evidence of the speed at which the student has learned English, which is considered one indicator of giftedness in ELLs. The interviewer and eligibility committee can take into consideration the student's language and cultural background in evaluating these informal assessments.

Further considerations in identifying gifted ELLs include communication and collaboration with parents. School districts must receive parental permission to assess a child for gifted programming, as well as to place her in it, so it is important that schools communicate with families in a way that is comprehensible to them. In these school districts, translated documents, interpreters, and home-school liaisons are the tools used to explain gifted programs and procedures to parents. All five school districts are willing and able to translate documents if needed and also secure an interpreter for conferences and phone calls, especially in instances where the family speaks a language with no written form. In the

three districts in which they are used, home-school liaisons are especially important because of the bonds they form with families. For this reason, Johnson mentioned explaining the process of gifted identification to a meeting of home-school liaisons and encouraging them to refer students to the gifted program, as well.

Avoiding Biases in Identification

One way that districts can attempt to avoid biases in identification procedures is to provide training to classroom teachers, a major source of gifted referrals for many students. Beverly and Mallory, in their instruction for classroom teachers, provide explicit explanations of some of the characteristics of gifted ELLs. None of the districts provides training to ELL teachers in identifying or working with gifted ELLs, although, as White noted, ELL teachers typically already differentiate for students. Williams also mentioned having occasionally spoken with the ELL teachers about making sure that they refer ELLs to the gifted program.

Districts can encourage collaboration between the gifted and ELL departments so that the two areas can share expertise. The gifted coordinator can help the ELL coordinator in providing resources to ELL teachers and families about the gifted program, while the ELL coordinator can point out particular strengths of gifted ELLs and provide insight into the unique cultural and linguistic needs of ELLs and their families for consideration in gifted programming and identification procedures. For example, Bozena has shared names of ELLs who have advanced two or more WIDA levels in a year with the gifted coordinator in order to determine if those students should be evaluated further.

Currently, none of the districts has a formal method of collaboration, but the coordinators feel comfortable working together and felt that the lines of communication are always open in case needs arise. In addition, the gifted and ELL coordinators in Hamilton are in communication about revisions to the gifted program, and Bozena has been invited to be part of Mallory's gifted advisory council. Mallory

is also considering adding to the council a community member who has done research in working with parents of Latinos; that person would also be an asset in helping the council make decisions that would not negatively affect the identification of ELLs. Hamilton's gifted advisory council also has a Spanish teacher who works with ELLs and, in the opinion of Harrison, advocates for ELLs. These districts are continuing to host informal discussions on how to incorporate more students from underrepresented groups into their programs.

The districts also incorporate a variety of criteria within the screening process in order to get a broader picture of students in the hopes of identifying them more fully. As Johnson stated, "the more criteria we have, the more body of evidence, the more equitable" the identification process will be. For this reason, four of the districts use portfolios, which can contain information about ELLs' progress in language learning, along with a variety of other criteria, from interviews to rating scales to anecdotes. These criteria can help show a full picture of the student and help evaluators see each student's strengths in a variety of areas.

Implications for Further Study and Research

In the course of the eleven interviews, gifted and ELL coordinators often remarked that they had not previously considered some accommodations that were suggested to them in interview questions. Sidney remarked that including ELL parents and teachers on the gifted advisory council was a good idea. Mugsy and Carroll both reflected on the idea of making sure that schools provided translated versions of parent rating scales into each student's home language when necessary, since neither was sure if it was currently done in their respective districts. Carroll also mentioned the idea that an interpreter could sit with an individual student during the screening interview if that accommodation were needed, as well.

Some of the coordinators also were not sure where they could find training in working with gifted ELLs. When Alexander was questioned regarding training in identifying gifted ELLs, the gifted

coordinator said, "I have not…can you give me some training?" Jackson also indicated a strong interest in receiving training, specific books, and resources that would help individuals working with gifted ELLs (Appendix I). Further formal training would be very useful to these coordinators.

Likewise, several coordinators noted that their schools provided no or little training for classroom teachers about gifted ELLs. Harrison and Fulton noted that their districts could improve on teaching classroom teachers about the characteristics of gifted ELLs as compared to English-proficient students. None of the ELL teachers had any formal training in identifying or providing accommodations for ELLs, but it could be useful for the districts to provide that information to teachers in order to possibly refer more students. Bozena was especially interested in the idea of providing training for the ELL teachers, feeling it was "probably a good idea to look into." Bozena thought that teachers with more experiences with gifted ELLs would be able to identify more of them as they gained familiarity with them. Jackson Bozena mentioned the difficulties in identifying gifted ELLs who do not show gifted characteristics on the surface. Providing formal training for classroom teachers, especially those who teach a high population of ELLs, and pointing out characteristics of gifted ELLs would also be helpful for school districts.

Johnson felt that classroom teachers "would let us know this child really is not going to understand the English" in a formal assessment, but so far, teachers have not made that comment about any students in Mallory, so it is difficult to know which students would benefit from a translated assessment. Further research is needed on the validity of translated assessments for students who have received education in English in the United States compared to students who have received most of their education in other countries. In addition, it would be useful to know if having translated verbal directions on nonverbal assessments such as the NNAT would have an effect on ELLs' achievement on those assessments.

None of the gifted or ELL coordinators was sure of statistics about how many ELLs were participating in the district's gifted program at the time of the interview, although those statistics were available from the state's department of education upon request. It might be helpful for district coordinators to access that information in order to determine whether the district seems to be identifying a proportional number of ELLs for gifted programs and to set goals for ways to approach a proportionate number of identified gifted ELLs.

Conclusion

Each of the coordinators in these five school districts is aware of the difficulties in identification of gifted ELLs. Each district has put in place certain measures, specifically the use of nonverbal testing, in an attempt to have more equitable identification processes, but most of the coordinators admit that more could still be done to create a process that identifies students from all cultural and linguistic backgrounds. However, as research continues in the area of gifted ELL identification and as districts continue to evolve their identification processes, it is hoped that a more equitable process will be achieved for all students, because every child deserves a challenging, enriching, and growing education.

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Appendix

Appendix A

Sample Checklist for Identifying Language-Minority Students with High Potential

- Learns English quickly
- Takes risks in trying to communicate in English
- Practices English skills by him- or herself
- Initiates conversations with native English speakers
- Does not frustrate easily
- Is curious about new words or phrases and practices them
- Questions word meanings; for example, “How can a bat be an animal and also something you use to hit a ball?”
- Looks for similarities between words in their native language and English
- Is able to modify his or her language for less capable English speakers
- Uses English to demonstrate leadership skills; for example, uses English to resolve disagreements and to facilitate cooperative learning groups
- Prefers to work independently or with students whose level of English proficiency is higher than his or hers
- Is able to express abstract verbal concepts with a limited English vocabulary
- Is curious about American culture
- Is able to use English in a creative way; for example, can make puns, poems, jokes, or original stories in English
- Becomes easily bored with routine tasks or drill work
- Has a great deal of curiosity

___ Is persistent; sticks to a task

___ Has good physical coordination

___ Is independent and self-sufficient

___ Has a long attention span

___ Becomes absorbed with self-selected problems, topics, and issues

___ Retains, easily recalls, and uses new information

___ Demonstrates social maturity, especially in the home or community

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Appendix B

The Aguirre-Hernandez Gifted LEP Checklist: Characteristics of the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Gifted and Talented Child

— Eagerly shares his or her native culture

— Shows a strong desire to teach peers words from his or her native language

— Has a strong sense of pride in his or her cultural heritage and ethnic background

— Eagerly translates for peers and adults

— Balances appropriate behaviors expected of the native culture and the new culture

— Possesses advanced knowledge of idioms and native dialects with the ability to translate and explain meanings in English

— Understands jokes and puns related to cultural differences

— Reads in the native language two grades above his or her grade level

— Functions at language proficiency levels above that of his or her non-gifted LEP peers

— Is able to code switch

— Possesses cross-cultural flexibility

— Has a sense of global community and an awareness of other cultures and languages

— Learns a second or third language at an accelerated pace (formal or informal)

— Excels in math achievement tests

— Possesses strengths in the creative areas of fluency, elaboration, originality, and/or flexibility

— Demonstrates leadership abilities in nontraditional settings: playground, home, church, clubs, etc.

Source: Characteristics based on study of students participating in Project GOTCHA, Galaxies of Thinking and Creative Heights of Achievements, Title VII, Academic Excellence Program (1987-1996).

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Appendix C

Gifted Teacher/Gifted District Coordinator Survey

Please answer this survey as thoroughly as possible to the best of your knowledge. Documents explaining or pertaining to answers to the questions may be attached to the survey (e.g., program brochures).

1) What is the title given for the gifted program in your district? (e.g., Challenge)
2) What definition of gifted/talented is used in your district?
3) Which of the following programs does this district use for gifted programming? Please indicate all that apply.
   a) Pull-out programs (e.g., gifted resource teacher pulls out students during the school day)
   b) Push-in programs (e.g., gifted resource teacher moves into general classrooms during the school day)
   c) After school programs, summer programs, or other programs outside of school (e.g., enrichment, field trips, other special opportunities for gifted students)
   d) Internship/mentorship/job shadowing programs
   e) Advanced classes (e.g., AP, IB, dual enrollment, specialty schools)
   f) Other types of programming:
4) Which of the following are considered as part of the process to identify students for gifted programs? Please circle all that apply and list the name of the test (if applicable).
   a) Group-administered intelligence tests (e.g., CogAT)
   b) Individually-administered intelligence tests (e.g., Stanford-Binet)
   c) Group-administered achievement tests
   d) Individually-administered achievement tests (e.g., Woodcock-Johnson)

e) Creativity tests (e.g., Torrance Test of Creative Thinking)

f) Nonverbal tests (e.g., Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test)

g) Surveys/rating scales completed by parents

h) Surveys/rating scales completed by teachers

i) Portfolio of student work

j) A matrix compiling several of the above

k) Other measures of identification:

5) At what age is a student first considered for the gifted program?

   a. K-2

   b. 3-5

   c. 6-8

   d. 9-12

   e. Other:

6) Are students regularly re-screened?

7) Can a parent or teacher request that a student is re-screened?

Appendix D

ELL Teacher/District Coordinator Survey

Please answer this survey as thoroughly as possible to the best of your knowledge. Documents explaining or pertaining to answers to the questions may be attached to the survey (e.g., program brochures).

1) What is the makeup of this district's program for English Language Learners (ELLs)? Please indicate all that apply.
    a. Pull-out programming (e.g., ELL resource teacher pulls out ELLs during the school day)
    b. Push-in programming (e.g., ELL resource teacher works with ELLs in the general classroom context during the school day)
    c. Newcomer programs (e.g., ELLs who have just arrived in the United States attend a separate program for a certain period of time)
    d. Bilingual classes (e.g., classes taught in Spanish and English)
    e. ELL resource classes (e.g., a study hall for ELL students only to receive additional support)
    f. Other:
2) What measures of assessment are given to ELLs to assess their English proficiency?
3) What resources does this district use in working with parents/guardians who do not speak English? Please circle all that apply.
    a. Designated home-school liaison who works in schools with high ELL populations
    b. Translators who assist with conferences as needed
    c. Translation of notes sent home and from home
    d. Translators available for events such as Back-to-School Night and other school events
    e. Additional resources:

4) Are ELLs regularly evaluated for gifted programming?

5) Does this district have ELL students participating in the gifted program?

Appendix E

Gifted District Coordinator Interview

This interview will be recorded on a voice recorder so that I can later access our conversation. After the completion of my study, the recording and any transcriptions of it will be permanently deleted. I will use a pseudonym for you and the name of the school district in the written study. General demographic information on the district and state will be used.

1. What is the process to identify a student for a gifted program?
    a. Is a matrix used? May I have a copy of it?
    b. If a student is an English language learner, what kinds of assessments are used?
    c. Are translated assessments or directions available?
        i. When assessments are scored, are English language learners' scores evaluated differently than native English speaking students' scores?
    d. What other factors are considered for ELLs?
2. What kind of training do you have in identifying gifted ELLs?
3. Have you collaborated with the ELL coordinator or teachers in developing the gifted program?
4. Does your Gifted Advisory Council have representation from an ELL teacher or parent?
5. Does your district provide surveys to teachers as part of the identification process?
    a. (If yes to #5) What kind of preparation do general classroom teachers have in the identification of gifted learners?
    b. (If yes to #5) Are teachers informed of what characteristics to look for in a gifted student?
    c. (if yes to #5) are teachers informed of what characteristics to look for in a gifted English language learner?
    d. (if yes to #5) are teachers informed of different measures used for identification of gifted ELLs?

6. Does your district provide surveys to parents as part of the identification process?
    a. (if yes to #6) What kind of education is provided to parents about the function and purpose of gifted programs?
    b. (if yes to #6) does the school provide translated versions of the survey into the student's home language for the parents to complete?
7. Does your gifted program have English language learners who participate in it?
    a. (if yes to #7) Does their gifted enrichment work differ from that of native English speaking gifted students in the program?
    b. (if yes to #7) do you have access to any statistics on how many ELLs are in your gifted program?
        i. (If yes to #7b) Could I have a copy of them?
8. How has the district's population of ELLs changed in the last ten years? How has the gifted program been adapted to fit their needs?
9. Is your Local Plan for the Gifted available anywhere for access?
10. Do you have any written documents outlining the gifted program and specifically the identification process?

Appendix F

ELL District Coordinator Interview

This interview will be recorded on a voice recorder so that I can later access our conversation. After the completion of my study, the recording and any transcriptions of it will be permanently deleted. I will use a pseudonym for you and the name of the school district in the written study. General demographic information on the district and state will be used.

1. How has the ELL population in this district changed in the last ten years? How has the program been adapted to fit their needs?
2. In general, what are some difficulties that ELLs face in being given intelligence or ability assessments?
3. What do you know about the gifted program in this school district?
4. Do you work with the gifted education coordinator or gifted advisory council? In what way(s)?
5. Are ELL teachers trained in identifying or providing accommodations for gifted ELL students?
6. Do you have any training in working with gifted ELLs?
7. What do you know about the procedures for identifying students for the gifted program?
8. Do you believe that any of these identification procedures may miss otherwise qualified ELL students because of their status as English language learners?
    a. (if yes to #9) How might this happen?
    b. (if yes to #9) in your opinion, what could the school district do to ensure that all gifted ELLs are correctly identified for the gifted program?
9. What special needs might gifted ELLs have that would not be addressed by a general program for ELLs?
10. What cultural barriers might there be that would prevent parents of ELLs to give consent for their child to be in a gifted program?

11. What cultural barriers might there be in asking a parent of an ELL to fill out a rating scale of the student's performance?

Appendix G

Dear participant,

I am a senior Liberal Studies major at Bridgewater College in the Teacher Education Program pursuing certification in elementary education and ESL education. For my senior honors project, I am researching the reason why English Language Learners (ELLs) are under-identified in gifted programs around the country. This semester, I am interviewing both gifted program coordinators and ELL district coordinators in five school districts. I would like to interview you about your district's gifted program, including identification procedures and programs available to gifted students, and any specific measures your district takes in the identification of ELL gifted students. The interview consists of two parts: a written two-page survey about the gifted program in your district and an in-person recorded interview in your office. There are no perceived risks to your participation in this research study. At the conclusion of my project, I plan to share the results of my research with all of my survey participants. If you have any questions or concerns, you can contact my adviser, Dr. Mark Hogan, at [email] or [phone number], or the Institutional Research Board chair, Dr. Jill Lassiter, at [email] or [phone number].

If you would be willing to assist with this study, please contact me at [personal email] or [personal phone number] at your earliest convenience. If you feel that another person in your district would be better suited to answer the interview questions, please send me his or her name so that I can contact him or her.

Thank you for your consideration,

Rachael Sloan

Appendix H

Dear participant,

I am a senior Liberal Studies major at Bridgewater College in the Teacher Education Program pursuing certification in elementary education and ESL education. For my senior honors project, I am researching the reason why English Language Learners (ELLs) are under-identified in gifted programs around the country. This semester, I am interviewing both gifted program coordinators or teachers and ELL district coordinators or teachers in five school districts. I would like to interview you about your district's programs for ELLs, including assessments, abilities of ELL students, and gifted ELL students in your district. The interview consists of two parts: a written two-page survey about the gifted program in your district and an in-person recorded interview in your office. There are no perceived risks to your participation in this research study. At the conclusion of my project, I plan to share the results of my research with all of my survey participants. If you have any questions or concerns, you can contact my adviser, Dr. Mark Hogan, at [email] or [phone number], or the Institutional Research Board chair, Dr. Jill Lassiter, at [email] or [phone number].

If you would be willing to assist with this study, please contact me at [personal email] or [personal phone number] at your earliest convenience. If you feel that another person in your district would be better suited to answer the interview questions, please send me his or her name so that I can contact him or her.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Rachael Sloan

Appendix I

Useful Resources in Learning about Gifted ELLs

Castellano, J. A. & Díaz, E. I. (Eds.). (2002). *Reaching new horizons: Gifted and talented education for culturally and linguistically diverse students*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Specifically exploring the topic of students from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds in gifted education, this book includes the topics of identification, assessments, and programming. It contains several chapters on identifying and working with gifted ELLs.

Castellano, J. A. (Ed.). (2003). *Special populations in gifted education: working with diverse gifted learners*. Boston: Pearson.

Jaime Castellano, an expert in the domain of underrepresented populations in gifted education, edited this book, which includes considerations not only for ELLs, but also for students from various ethnic and cultural groups.

Herrera, S. G., Murry, K. G., & Cabral, R. M. (2007). *Assessment accommodations for classroom teachers of culturally and linguistically diverse students.* Boston: Pearson.

This book contains a variety of suggestions for assessing all ELL students, but could also be applied to the assessment of gifted learners and specifically gifted ELLs in that it gives suggestions for assessment styles, such as portfolios, performance-based assessments, interview-based assessments, and cooperative group assessments, which may be more culturally responsive for certain groups.

Matthews, M. S. (2006). Working with gifted English language learners. Waco, TX: Prufrock Press.

Michael Matthews provides a short overview of identification, accommodations, and needs of gifted ELLs, as well as considerations for teachers and coordinators.

VanTassel-Baska, J. L. (Ed.). (2008). *Alternative assessments with gifted and talented students*. Waco: Prufrock Press.

Edited by Joyce VanTassel-Baska and containing contributions from multiple scholars in the field of gifted assessment, this book provides overviews of a variety of formal and informal assessments that may be used in gifted identification, but may not be considered by school districts because they are outside of the scope of traditional assessments. It includes such topics as portfolios, creativity assessments, and off-grade-level testing, as well as the ways that scores are viewed and measured.

Author Note

This paper, written as a senior honors project, would not have been possible without the assistance of many. First, many thanks go to Dr. Mark Hogan, my academic and project advisor, who provided assistance in every step of the process, from the beginning ideas to the final product. Dr. Hogan, thank you for providing much-needed encouragement and assurance along the way. Thanks also go to Dr. Erin Miller for providing resources and allowing me to accompany her to the 2012 National Association for Gifted Children Conference, where I first began to collect information on this topic. Also, Dr. Miller helped me formulate this idea and encouraged me to own my own giftedness; thank you for believing in me and not letting me settle for less than my best. Ms. Cori Strickler, Information Literacy Librarian in the Alexander Mack Library, also contributed by researching data on gifted and ELL populations online and saving me a lot of time. Thanks also to Dr. Karen Rogers, who provided support and encouragement throughout this project. Special thanks go to Jesse Winter, Sarah Evans, and Lynna Sloan for editing portions of this paper. Of course, my research could not have been carried out without the eleven gifted and ELL coordinators who were interviewed; thanks go to each of them for them time, willingness, and wisdom.

Finally, thank you to my parents, Roger and Lynna Sloan, for your love and support throughout my journey in life, and especially at Bridgewater College. While never forcing me, you have always encouraged me to do my best, and I am so blessed to be your daughter.

Soli Deo Gloria.