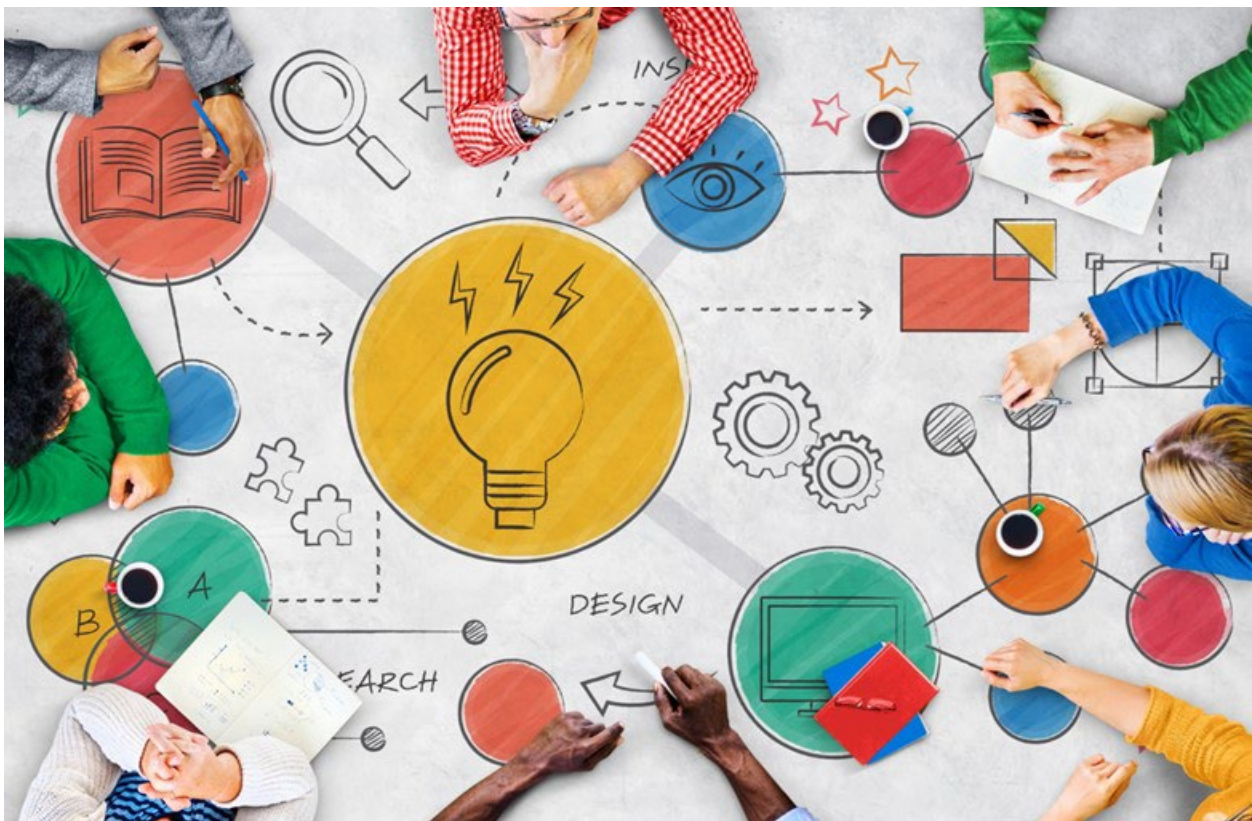




# Strengthening Gifted and Talented Multilingual Learner Identification



2025

# New Jersey State Board of Education

---

Kathy Goldenberg, President

Nedd James Johnson, Ed.D., Vice President

Arcelio Aponte

Mary G. Bennett

Mary Beth Berry

Elaine Bobrove

Ronald K. Butcher, Ph.D.

Jack Fornaro

Claudine Keenan, Ed.D.

Jeanette Peña

Joseph Ricca, Jr., Ed.D.

Ahmed Shehata

# Acknowledgement

---

The Strengthening Gifted and Talented Multilingual Learner Identification document was developed by the Strengthening Gifted and Talented Education Advisory Committee and gifted multilingual learner experts in partnership with the New Jersey Department of Education (Department). With sincere gratitude, the Department thanks the authors and committee members for devoting their time to creating this document to support local education agencies in the identification process.

## Authors

**Lenore Cortina, Ed.D.**

*Strengthening Gifted and Talented Education  
Advisory Committee  
Identification Subcommittee Co-Chair*

**Elaine Chesebro**

*Strengthening Gifted and Talented Education  
Advisory Committee  
Identification Subcommittee Co-Chair*

**Courtney Carrelha**

*District Supervisor  
Mahwah Township Public Schools*

**Lori Ramella**

*Bilingual/ESL/Migrant Coordinator  
New Jersey Department of Education*

**Crystal Siniari**

*Gifted and Talented Education Coordinator/  
Literacy Specialist  
New Jersey Department of Education*

## Review Committee

**JoAnne Negrin, Ed.D.**

*Retired District Supervisor of ESL and  
Bilingual Education. Past Chair, NJPSA ML  
Leadership Committee, Past President,  
NJTESOL/NJBE*

**Lynne Henwood**

*Head of School  
FlexSchool*

**Julie A. Ochoa**

*Retired District Supervisor of ESL and  
Bilingual Education*

# Table of Contents

---

New Jersey State Board of Education .....	2
Acknowledgement.....	3
Preface.....	6
Introduction .....	6
Why Are Multilingual Learners Underrepresented in Gifted Programs?.....	7
Characteristics of Gifted Multilingual Learners .....	9
How Can We Ensure That Identification of MLs for Gifted and Talented Programs Is Equitable? .....	13
Equitable Identification of Gifted MLs: Referral Process.....	14
Equitable Identification of Gifted MLs: Collecting Data with Multiple Measures ..	16
Equitable Identification of Gifted MLs: Matching Students to Services.....	18
Equitable Identification of Gifted MLs: Evaluate the Identification Process Annually .....	20
What Professional Learning and Collaboration Among Teachers is Needed?.....	21
Conclusion .....	23
References .....	27
Appendix A: Glossary of Terms Used in this Document.....	29
Appendix B: Implementation Resources for Collecting Data with Multiple Measures .....	31
Parent Rating Scales.....	32
Additional Resources .....	33
Performance Tasks.....	33
Other Kindergarten through Grade 8 Measures .....	33

Appendix C: Implementation Resources for Matching Students to Services .....	34
Identification Matrix Sample.....	34
Identification Profile Sample .....	35

## Preface

---

The Strengthening Gifted and Talented Multilingual Learner Identification document provides guidelines developed to assist districts in implementing an ongoing identification process for gifted and talented multilingual learners in kindergarten through grade 12. Although this document focuses on multilingual learners, many of the research-based practices discussed may apply to all learners who are identified as gifted and talented (G&T). New Jersey regulations define gifted and talented students as “students who possess or demonstrate high levels of ability in one or more content areas when compared to their chronological peers in the local school district and who require modifications of their educational program if they are to achieve in accordance with their capabilities.” This definition includes students in kindergarten through grade 12 (N.J.A.C.6A:8-1.1).

## Introduction

---

The population across the United States has grown to become more diverse over the decades. The increase in population diversity is particularly evident in K–12 public schools across the country. Data show that multilingual learners (MLs) are the fastest-growing population in today’s public school system (National Center for Education Statistics, 2024). This trend is clearly demonstrated in New Jersey’s public school system. Statistics show that the percentage of students identified as MLs is steadily increasing (NJDOE 2022-2023 School Performance Report).

New Jersey’s diversified student population has prompted the need to ensure equitable learning opportunities for all K–12 students, including gifted and talented (G&T) MLs. On June 20, 2017, the State of New Jersey’s 217<sup>th</sup> Legislature passed legislation that requires the Commissioner of Education to develop guidance on identifying English Language Learners for G&T programs. The language used to describe these students has shifted since that time, so throughout the remainder of this document, English Language Learners will be referred to as MLs. This legislation was introduced to ensure that MLs are appropriately identified and have access to participate in G&T programs.

Additionally, the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights in its January 7, 2015 [Dear Colleague Letter](#) clearly states that MLs cannot be excluded from G&T programs due to their lack of English proficiency (see page 21). Further guidance in [Ensuring Meaningful Participation in Advanced Coursework and Specialized Programs for Students Who Are English Language Learners](#) is available through the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights.

New Jersey's diversified student population is also addressed in the [Strengthening Gifted and Talented Education Act](#). On January 13, 2020, the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey passed legislation that requires a board of education to "make provisions for an ongoing kindergarten through grade 12 identification process for gifted students that...shall include consideration of all students, including those who are [multilingual learners]". The Strengthening Gifted and Talented Education Act codifies school district responsibilities in educating G&T students as referenced in [N.J.A.C.6A:8-3.1](#). The law went into effect for the 2020-2021 school year.

## **Why Are Multilingual Learners Underrepresented in Gifted Programs?**

---

The National Association for Gifted Children posted this comprehensive introduction to their [Tips for Improving the Identification of Gifted ELs](#) article:

"There is clear and mounting evidence that gifted education must address the serious challenges associated with the underidentification and underserving of diverse populations of gifted students (Peters, 2022; Siegle et al., 2016). For example, English learners...are the fastest growing population of learners in the US, yet they are among the most underrepresented groups in gifted education (Gubbins et al., 2020; Hodges et al., 2018; Mun et al., 2020). Each year, tens of thousands of talented young people are overlooked for gifted services simply because they learned a language other than English as a child."

Districts may face varying challenges identifying G&T MLs. Some of these challenges may include:

- MLs are often not recognized for behaviors that are historically characteristic of G&T students in the United States. Many MLs have special talents valued within their own cultures, but these talents are not recognized as gifted in American schools.
- Identification measures can limit access for MLs due to these factors:
  - Standardized tests for identification are often administered in English, which may create a disconnect between the student's English verbal skills and their native language.
  - An overreliance on [achievement measures](#) for identification rather than assessing [aptitude](#) can lead to fewer opportunities for MLs.
  - Many assessments used to identify giftedness are not normed on MLs.
  - [Cultural and linguistic competencies](#) are not considered when selecting identification instruments or procedures.
- Lack of fluency in English is often mistakenly equated with a lack of higher-order and critical thinking skills.
- Criteria for selecting gifted students may over-rely on [objective](#) versus [subjective](#) measures.
- Intelligence quotient (IQ) and standardized tests performance are often the sole factors in determining giftedness.
- MLs may be required to meet the minimal scores on multiple subject area assessments. For example, if a student scores at the highest ranges on the non-verbal or quantitative subtest of an aptitude assessment, the student is required to also score at advanced levels in all other subtests to qualify for services. MLs, as well as all gifted learners, may not be advanced in all subject areas.



- Reliance on referrals from parents, guardians, and/or teachers for gifted services may place MLs at a disadvantage. Caregivers may not be aware of the referral window timeline due to language barriers. Teachers may not recognize the potential and ability of MLs.
- Teachers who are untrained on the characteristics of advanced learners, and specifically advanced MLs, often fail to recognize the potential in learners who may not be “good students.” Additionally, ingrained cultural biases and adherence to deficit thinking may limit teachers’ ability to recognize advanced abilities in MLs.

The list above demonstrates that challenges to identification of MLs may include a lack of district assessments in the native language of students, biases in standardized testing, limited access to advanced programs, and a lack of professional learning for educators to recognize and nurture giftedness in diverse students. Addressing these issues is crucial for ensuring equitable educational opportunities.

## **Characteristics of Gifted Multilingual Learners**

---

The challenges outlined in the previous section shed light on why MLs may have been historically excluded from consideration for G&T programs and services. It is essential that educators understand the need for consistency between *who* is identified, *how* they are identified, and *what* programs and/or services the district offers. Table 1 identifies some general characteristic behaviors that advanced MLs may exhibit.

**Table 1: Characteristics of Gifted Multilingual Learners**

(These are generalized behavioral characteristics. Learners may not always exhibit all or even most of these behaviors.)

Characteristic Behaviors of Gifted Learners	How Characteristic Behaviors May Present in Gifted MLs	Educator Identification & Support Strategies for MLs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn easily and rapidly.</li> <li>• Master new concepts and skills quickly and easily.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May learn easily and/or quickly in native language, but struggle with content-specific language or tasks that are heavily dependent on English Fluency.</li> <li>• Can code-switch and read at levels above peers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess the rate of growth (speed of English language acquisition) to identify ability.</li> <li>• Consider non-verbal aptitude measures for <a href="#">universal screening</a>.</li> <li>• <a href="#">Frontload</a> vocabulary in new content studies.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Motivated and committed to task completion.</li> <li>• Tasks are completed on time and to a high level when interested.</li> <li>• Strive for excellence.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generally eager and enthusiastic to learn.</li> <li>• When tasks are not culturally relevant, MLs may appear to lack interest.</li> <li>• Eagerly share culture with peers and translate for others.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide talent development opportunities in culturally relevant tasks.</li> <li>• MLs may need extended work time.</li> <li>• Chunk tasks into manageable pieces.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highly curious and ask meaningful questions.</li> <li>• Engage in activities with big ideas.</li> </ul>	<p>May have meaningful questions and ideas but feel intimidated about asking questions in front of peers.</p>	<p>Cultivate a culture of safe risk-taking such as providing opportunities for MLs to practice responses with a partner or a smaller group.</p>

Characteristic Behaviors of Gifted Learners	How Characteristic Behaviors May Present in Gifted MLs	Educator Identification & Support Strategies for MLs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work independently when given adequate guidance and direction.</li> <li>• Go beyond tasks to create high quality work.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With appropriate language and support/guidance for task completion, MLs are independent workers producing high quality products.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frontload vocabulary and instructions.</li> <li>• Offer skill and language support while slowly releasing responsibility to the student as the student's confidence grows.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heightened sense of justice or fairness.</li> <li>• Values fairness, empathy, and morality.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May not be comfortable expressing feelings of discomfort due to cultural norms.</li> <li>• MLs may try to balance American and native cultural norms.</li> </ul>	<p>Provide “safe” vehicles for expressing feelings (e.g., journals, personal responses, and discussions of characters in texts).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multipotentiality (have many interests and talents).</li> <li>• Take risks and get excited about new ideas and opportunities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May have many interests and talents that are valued within their own culture.</li> <li>• May have limited exposure to typical interests of American peers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expose students to varied topics, activities, and careers.</li> <li>• Develop a continuum of services that includes exposure and opportunity for <a href="#">talent development</a>.</li> </ul>

Characteristic Behaviors of Gifted Learners	How Characteristic Behaviors May Present in Gifted MLs	Educator Identification & Support Strategies for MLs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individualistic and strong-willed.</li> <li>• Often demonstrate leadership skills.</li> <li>• Confident in abilities, values, and beliefs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural values and beliefs may differ.</li> <li>• Students may demonstrate “quiet” confidence.</li> <li>• May be a leader in settings outside of school (i.e., clubs, playground).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accept and embrace cultural and personality differences.</li> <li>• Develop opportunities for students to learn leadership skills and practice collegiality.</li> <li>• Consider leadership outside of school in identification decisions.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to retain large amounts of information and advanced memory.</li> <li>• Readily recall information.</li> <li>• Learn at a faster pace.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Might have advanced stores of knowledge, but task completion and speed may be limited by language challenges.</li> <li>• May require alternate modes of expression beyond written or verbal.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus curriculum on concepts.</li> <li>• Modify tasks to focus on critical thinking rather than fact recall.</li> <li>• Use universal screeners (administer aptitude as opposed to achievement tests) for identification.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highly creative in thought and performance.</li> <li>• Produce creative and divergent responses and products.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Show high creativity and critical thinking abilities when expressing understanding verbally.</li> <li>• May struggle to express ideas in writing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow for varied modes of expression, including visual representations such as maps, pictures, diagrams, concept maps, and media productions along with oral and mixed media presentations.</li> </ul>

# How Can We Ensure That Identification of MLs for Gifted and Talented Programs Is Equitable?

---

Equitable identification processes are not only best practice in gifted education, but [New Jersey law](#) requires districts to include procedures for identifying gifted learners in grades K–12 including traditionally underrepresented populations. Historically, MLs, indigenous students, students of color, students from low socioeconomic status communities, students with an individualized education program (IEP) and 504 plans (programs that aim to provide students with special needs equal access to public education), migrant and homeless students, and students with interrupted education have been underrepresented in advanced education programs and services.

The goal of identification is to identify the students who would benefit from the G&T programs and services that the district offers. The process should reflect an attitude of inclusion rather than exclusion. There should be multiple pathways for students to be referred for consideration for services and programming. Multiple measures that include both aptitude and achievement assessments and a mix of qualitative and quantitative measures provide a broader picture of students' performance and their potential to benefit from gifted programs and services.

The Strengthening Gifted and Talented Education Act dictates the following requirements for districts when identifying gifted students for programs and services:

- The gifted identification process must include consideration of all students, including MLs, and those with IEPs or 504 plans.
- Multiple measures must be used to assess student strengths in intellectual ability, creativity, or a specific academic area.
- Local norms should be used to compare students to chronological peers.
- Districts must identify students beginning in kindergarten through grade 12.
- Identification is an ongoing process. Opportunities for referral and consideration for services should be provided when students enter the district

and at multiple points in their school career with best practice suggesting annual opportunities.

- The district website must include information about the gifted identification process, including the criteria used and the timeline for identification. Referral procedures should be clearly articulated for caregivers.

The identification process is a systematic approach that varies across New Jersey. Typically, the identification process consists of key phases including referrals, screenings, and placement. To ensure equitable identification of MLs for G&T programs and services, this section provides recommendations to support districts in developing more inclusive identification practices in the following phases: the referral process, the data collection with multiple measures process, and the match students to services process. This section concludes with recommendations for evaluating the identification process annually.

## **Equitable Identification of Gifted MLs: Referral Process**

The identification process typically begins with a nomination or referral procedure. The following are best practices for implementing inclusive referral procedures.

### **Recommended Practices for the Equitable Identification of Gifted Learners**

- Use multiple referral sources including teachers, caregivers, universal screening test scores, and student and/or peer referrals.
- No one referral source should ever be the only referral source.
- Use universal screening (ability and achievement measures) to allow students to demonstrate performance and potential as well as enabling districts to consider students who otherwise are not referred by teachers or caregivers.
- Train teachers who are asked to refer students in recognizing the behaviors, characteristics, and traits of gifted learners.

## Identification Practices That Specifically Support Inclusion of MLs

- Along with considering multiple referral sources as suggested above, invite ESL teachers and other special area teachers to refer students for gifted services.
- Avoid relying solely on caregiver or teacher referrals because these referrals can be influenced by biases and subjective opinions.
- Non-verbal aptitude measures used as universal screeners demonstrate potential and allow MLs who are not referred by caregivers or teachers the opportunity to be considered for gifted services.
- Teachers must be trained to understand that MLs might demonstrate giftedness in different ways from peers, and to recognize behaviors that might indicate advanced abilities beyond language proficiency.
- Identification information and referral procedures should be published in multiple languages on the district's website for caregivers.

## Resources for Implementation

The resources provided are for informational purposes only. Neither the Department nor its officers, employees or agents specifically endorse, recommend or favor these resources or the organizations that created them.

- [Effective Practices for Identifying and Serving ELs in Gifted Education: A Systematic Review of the Literature](#)
- [ELLs in Gifted/Talented Programs](#)
- [Identifying and Supporting Gifted and Talented MLs](#)
- [Identifying and Supporting Gifted ELLs](#)
- [Identifying English Language Learners for G&T Programs](#)

## Equitable Identification of Gifted MLs: Collecting Data with Multiple Measures

As students progress through the referral process, districts must determine students' needs. Characteristics of giftedness can display differently from one student to the next. For this reason, valid and reliable measures must be used to identify students who would benefit from the services offered by the district. The following are best practices for assessing and collecting data to identify gifted learners by using multiple measures.

### Recommended Practices for the Equitable Identification of Gifted Learners

- Using both aptitude and achievement measures ensures identifying students who have the potential to benefit from services (aptitude) and those that are demonstrating advanced learning abilities (achievement).
- Use a combination of objective and subjective measures to collect information that shows a student's potential and demonstrated ability.
- Maintain the integrity of standardized commercial teacher or parent rating scales which have been found to be valid and reliable as published. Resist the urge to adapt, abbreviate or personalize existing scales.
- No single measure should be used as a "[gatekeeper](#)."
- Identification measures that have no ceiling are ideal for gifted service identification as they indicate students' highest performance levels. [Adaptive assessments](#), and [authentic assessments](#), which are preferable, offer this type of window into a student's potential.



## Identification Practices That Support Inclusion of MLs

- Administer assessments in students' native language whenever possible.
- Aptitude assessments for universal screening/identification purposes (specifically non-verbal aptitude assessments) can provide an opportunity for MLs to demonstrate potential through critical thinking tasks.
- Use culturally and linguistically responsive assessments in the absence of non-verbal measures. These tools can help ensure a more accurate and equitable evaluation of student abilities by minimizing language barriers.
- Consider accelerated English language proficiency growth over time as an additional indicator for identification; ACCESS scores may be used as an additional or qualifying evidence through analysis of accelerated growth over time as demonstrated in this assessment.
- Any accommodation for standardized testing that is typically implemented for MLs should be applied to testing for gifted service identification.
- Train teachers in the administration and interpretation of items in rating scales they have been asked to complete.
- Limitations of language should never be used in referral or identification processes to exclude MLs from services or programs.

## Resources for Implementation

See [Appendix B](#).

## Equitable Identification of Gifted MLs: Matching Students to Services

The frame in which districts interpret the collected data influences the fairness and defensibility of the identification process. Most districts organize their data into a matrix or a profile. A matrix combines scores from multiple measures into a single total score with a cutoff for identification for services. A combined single score may not accurately reflect student strengths.

A profile organizes the data as individual indicators. Each measure *and* each subtest are considered individually, accounting for differences in performance on objective and subjective measures and clearly demonstrating student strengths and need for services.

Each approach to organizing data will impact MLs differently. Districts that organize data into a matrix should consider the limitations when identifying MLs. When considering a matrix approach, one assessment or rating score can lower a student's overall qualifying score below the district threshold. In contrast, a profile approach provides a clearer picture of student strengths in specific academic or creative areas, allowing students to qualify based on specific abilities as required in New Jersey.

Once a determination has been made, the district should communicate the identification decision with the caregiver, student, and teacher. In addition, districts should share the service and program benefits with the student. The following provides recommendations for best practices for appropriately matching students to gifted services.

## Recommended Practices for the Equitable Identification of Gifted Learners

- Use the information in subtest scores, not the overall, composite score. An eligible score on one subtest of an assessment should be considered as eligible on that measure.

- Mathematics and English Language Arts scores should not be averaged, since many students are gifted in one content, not all content areas.
- Use caution when weighing measures to avoid excluding students based on one assessment score or one teacher rating. Avoid counting one score as twice the weight of another.
- Decisions about placement in services are determined by a committee of educators, administrators, and counseling staff.

## Identification Practices That Support Inclusion of MLs

- Composite scores should not be used as they require students to be advanced across academic areas, often limiting access to MLs. Subtests of assessments should be considered individually to cast the widest net.
- Local norms can be district norms or building norms, depending on the district's demographics. Building norms can be more equitable in districts with diverse populations.
- Include an ESL or bilingual teacher when the selection committee is discussing a multilingual learner's eligibility. They are often the teachers who can most accurately report and assess the ML's strengths.
- District selection committees should communicate their decisions to families, teachers, and students in the student's native language, when possible.

## Resources for Implementation

See [Appendix C](#).

## **Equitable Identification of Gifted MLs: Evaluate the Identification Process Annually**

New Jersey law requires all districts to implement an ongoing identification process in kindergarten through grade 12. To ensure all students are considered for G&T programs and services, it is imperative that districts evaluate their policies and procedures with an equitable lens. The following provides recommendations for annually evaluating the district's identification process.

### **Recommended Practices for the Equitable Identification of Gifted Learners**

Annually review the district G&T student population with the following questions in mind:

- Does the student population of your G&T program reflect the general population of your district?
- Did your district appropriately match student needs to services? For example: Students who demonstrate advanced math abilities should receive advanced math instruction.
- Did students benefit from the programming and services they received? How do you know?
- If the district is missing populations of students, how can the district revise its identification processes to create more opportunity.

### **Identification Practices That Support Inclusion of MLs**

- Talent development programs and classes can be implemented in districts to support students from historically underrepresented populations, such as MLs, to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to be successful in gifted programs.

- Talent development opportunities might include critical and creative thinking instruction, exposure to assessment items that are unfamiliar to students, and problem-based learning experiences to develop the problem solving and communication tools students may not yet have had the opportunity to develop.

## What Professional Learning and Collaboration Among Teachers is Needed?

---

The education of gifted MLs presents unique challenges and opportunities that require specialized professional learning for educators. These students possess a diverse array of linguistic and cultural backgrounds, which can significantly impact their educational experiences and outcomes. Effective teaching strategies that cater to their distinct needs are essential to unlocking their full potential. It is recommended that all teachers of gifted MLs be trained in the development of cultural competence, language acquisition strategies, differentiated instruction, accurate assessment and identification, enhanced collaboration and communication, and commitment to continuous improvement. Professional learning ensures that gifted MLs receive the comprehensive and nuanced support they require to thrive academically and personally by equipping educators with these essential skills and knowledge.

**All teachers and administrators should receive professional learning in second language acquisition, characteristics of gifted MLs, and identification of gifted MLs, regardless of first language or second language ability. School administrators are critical in accessing this training for their staff.**

**All staff (including guidance counselors and school support personnel) should be trained in working with MLs.**

The following list contains recommended professional learning topics that strengthen gifted ML identification district may consider:

- ❖ **Cultural Competence Training:** Educators should receive training to understand and appreciate the diverse cultural backgrounds of MLs.
- ❖ **Language Acquisition Strategies:** Teachers need to be equipped with strategies to support language development while recognizing and nurturing giftedness.
- ❖ **Differentiated Instruction Techniques:** Train educators in differentiating instruction to meet the unique needs of gifted MLs.
- ❖ **Collaborative Planning:** Regular collaboration between general education teachers, gifted education specialists, and ML teachers can help create a cohesive approach to supporting these students.
- ❖ **Assessment Literacy:** Educators should be trained to use and interpret language-sensitive and culturally responsive assessments effectively.
- ❖ **Ongoing Professional Learning:** Provide continuous learning opportunities to stay updated on best practices and new research in the field of gifted education and multilingual learning.

Listed below are professional learning resources and opportunities districts may consider:

- ❖ [Effective Practices for Identifying and Serving English Learners in Gifted Education: A Systematic Review of the Literature](#)
- ❖ [Exploratory Study on the Identification of English Learners for G&T Programs](#)
- ❖ [15 Tips for Identifying Gifted EL Students](#)
- ❖ [Improving the Identification of English Learner Students for Talented and Gifted Programs](#)
- ❖ [National Association for Gifted Children Professional Learning](#)

- ❖ [WIDA Self-Paced Workshops](#): WIDA provides professional learning to support teachers and districts in effectively educating MLs. Their training programs focus on enhancing educators' skills in language instruction, culturally responsive teaching, and differentiating instruction to meet the diverse needs of MLs. Through workshops, online courses, and resource materials, WIDA aims to improve educational outcomes and promote equity for all students.

## Conclusion

---

The Strengthening Gifted and Talented Education Act requires local education agencies to provide educational services to all identified G&T students in kindergarten through grade 12. Though identifying practices will vary across the State, the process and procedures must consider all students, including traditionally underrepresented student populations. The identification process goal is to identify students who would benefit from gifted programs and services the district offers. Using multiple pathways for referrals and various measures to determine a student's need will ensure identified students will benefit from services. Below are examples of two school districts that implemented best practices in their gifted ML identification process.

## Districts' Perspective on Implementing Best Practices

### Example 1: District X

A District's Pathway Towards an Equitable Multilingual Assessment Protocol

**Grades Offered:** PK–12

**Total Student Population:** 2,759

**Multilingual Learners:** 2.6%

**Students with Disabilities:** 18.3%

**Economically Disadvantaged:** 10.9%

For years, District X implemented an identification process using English-only measures. Because of the enactment of the Strengthening Gifted and Talented Education Act, District X decided to conduct a review of its G&T program. District X wanted to ensure its program and services were aligned with the law. The review and data analysis revealed that when English-only assessments had been used, MLs had been under-served and/or excluded from G&T services. To correct this inequity, the G&T Coordinator and Bilingual/ESL/World Language Supervisor collaborated to determine methods to appropriately assess the abilities of possible candidates.

District X reviewed the current best practices in the identification of MLs with gifted learning needs and ultimately established multiple criteria screening procedures. They began by conducting an item analysis of current assessment tools to determine biased items. When reviewing the test scores of the multilingual candidates, District X removed the items that they found to be biased and as such did not factor them into the total battery. They then compared the scores to the district standard for eligibility.

Next, District X consulted with the bilingual specialist to research and field-test valid cognitive measures for MLs. They tested students in both languages, verbally and non-verbally. Based on these results, District X developed a checklist of student behaviors that are associated with giftedness, which they distributed to all teachers to complete (including bilingual and ESL teachers). District X used the checklist as well as the scores on the adapted assessments to establish a local standard for identifying G&T ML candidates. As a result, District X was able to develop an equitable, multilingual assessment protocol that will effectively identify gifted MLs in their community.

## **Example 2: District Z**

The Journey of One District Towards an Advanced Bilingual Education Preparedness Program

**Grades Offered:** PK–12

**Total Student Population:** 10,373

**Multilingual Learners:** 11.5%



**Students with Disabilities: 19.6%**

**Economically Disadvantaged: 70%**

Since 2017, District Z administered the Otis-Lennon to all second graders to determine eligibility for G&T services. This assessment was only offered in English. As a result, very few ESL students and no bilingual students were receiving G&T education services. District Z exhibited a culture that generalized deficit orientation among staff toward the bilingual program and the students in the program. Because of that viewpoint, no one questioned the lack of representation. However, based on data from native language formative and summative assessments, and conversations with bilingual teachers, the ESL/Bilingual Supervisor knew that there were many talented young minds in the bilingual program that would benefit from the enrichment opportunities afforded by the G&T program.

To promote equity, the district G&T Supervisor connected with the ESL/Bilingual Supervisor and collaborated to develop some alternative criteria that would better separate language and content knowledge. The result of this collaboration led District Z to identify and pilot a nonverbal assessment for MLs in 2020. Based on feedback from the pilot, the ESL/Bilingual Supervisor purchased the assessment and trained teachers to administer it in 2022. The ESL/Bilingual Supervisor also solicited recommendations to assess students who exhibited giftedness in the classroom from the ESL and Bilingual teachers.

Results from the nonverbal testing and teacher recommendations were remarkably different from the English-only assessment results. In 2023, the representation of the MLs receiving G&T services was slightly more than proportional. This change was met with joy and deep satisfaction by the bilingual teachers, but it also led to criticism that the test was not as difficult, that it had been administered improperly, and there was no way that many bilingual students should qualify. However, time not only vindicated this change in admissions criteria, but it has also precipitated the development of accelerated tracks, including career and technical education and dual enrollment opportunities, within the secondary level bilingual education program. These changes allowed students who arrived at the secondary education age-level, but have yet to

learn English, to pursue their secondary studies at an advanced level. As staff became accustomed to seeing current and former bilingual students excelling at high-level, rigorous coursework, it had the effect of changing the lens with which bilingual students were viewed, and by extension the entire culture and climate of the school district became much more asset based.

## References

---

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (2017). Issues in ethics: Cultural and linguistic competence. Retrieved November 18, 2024, from <https://www.asha.org/practice/ethics/cultural-and-linguistic-competence/#:~:text=Cultural%20and%20linguistic%20competence%20is,work%20in%20cross%2Dcultural%20situations>.

Campbell, M. (2021). *Identifying and supporting gifted English language learners*. Prufrock Press.

Gubbins, E.J., Siegle, D., Hamilton, R., Peters, P., Carpenter, A.Y., O'Rourke, P., ...Estepar-Garcia, W. (2018, June). *Exploratory study on the identification of English learners for gifted and talented programs*. Storrs: University of Connecticut, National Center for Research on Gifted Education.

Haller-Gryc, I. (2022). [When teachers are the gatekeepers of gifted and talented programs: Potential Factors for English learners' underrepresentation and possible solution](#). *Journal of English Learner Education*. 14(1). Retrieved from <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/jele/vol14/iss1/4/>.

Harris, B., Plucker, J.A., Rapp, K.E., & Martinez, R.S. (2009). [Identifying gifted and talented English language learners: A case study](#). *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 37(3), 368-393. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ835865.pdf>.

Lohman, D.F., Korb, K., Lakin, J. (2008). Identifying academically gifted English language learners using nonverbal tests. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 52(4), 275-296.

National Center for Education Statistics. (2024). [English learners in public schools](#). *Condition of Education*. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. Retrieved June 18, 2024, from <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/cgf>.

New Jersey Department of Education. (2024). NJ school performance report. *School Year 2022-2023 State Report*. Retrieved June 18, 2024, from <https://rc.doe.state.nj.us/>

Plucker, J.A. (2021). [Addressing excellence gaps: Frontloading](#). *American Consortium for Equity in Education*, (15 Aug. Sept), 64-65. Retrieved from <https://www.ace-ed.org/august-2021-2/>

United States Department of Education. (2015). [Dear Colleague letter on January 7, 2015](#). Retrieved from <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-el-201501.pdf>

## Appendix A: Glossary of Terms Used in this Document

---

**Achievement Tests:** Assessments designed to measure what students have already learned, mostly in specific content areas. An example of an achievement test is the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS).

**Adaptive Assessments:** Assessments designed to take a personalized approach to evaluate a student's abilities, knowledge, or skills by adjusting the level of difficulty of tasks based on the student's responses.

**Aptitude (Ability) Test:** A test predicting a student's future performance in a particular domain. An example of an aptitude test is CogAt.

**Authentic Assessment:** Evaluating student learning through student portfolios, performance tasks, or observations in place of or in conjunction with more traditional measures of performance such as tests and written assignments. The process allows students to be evaluated using assessments that more closely resemble real-world tasks.

**Cultural and Linguistic Competency:** Culture and linguistics are terms that refer to integrated patterns of behavior that include language, thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values, and institutions of racial, ethnic, religious, or other groups. Cultural and linguistic competency is a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that combine in a system, agency, or among professionals that enables effective work in cross-cultural situations (ASHA, 2017).

**Differentiation:** Modifying curriculum and instruction according to content, pacing, and/or product to meet unique student needs in the classroom.

**Frontloading:** Providing accessible programming (rigorous learning opportunities) – either to all students or to those from historically underrepresented groups – starting in prekindergarten or kindergarten; accessible opportunities may also be offered after school, weekends, and/or through summer enrichment opportunities.

**Gatekeeper:** A gatekeeper is any assessment or requirement, such as grade point average (GPA) or teacher referral, that excludes students from consideration, or services based on a single score.

**Objective (Quantitative) Measurements:** Assessments that are fact-based and measurable. If two individuals complete the same assessment, the resulting student score should be the same. Quantitative measures are a subset of objective measures and assign a numerical score to the performance. Examples of objective (quantitative) measures include standardized achievement and aptitude measures, district benchmark assessments, and performance task assessments.

**Subjective (Qualitative) Measures:** These are measures that rely on an individual's perception of a student's performance, whether it results in a score or not. Examples of subjective (qualitative) measures include rating scales, informal observations of student performance, and academic grades.

**Talent Development:** Programs, curricula, and services for gifted and talented students that can best meet their needs, promote their achievements in life, and contribute to the enhancement of our society when schools identify students' specific talent strengths and focus educational services on these talents.

**Universal Screening:** The systematic assessment of all students at a grade level for the purpose of identifying exceptional ability or potential, especially in underrepresented populations. Universal screening is a practice that promotes more equitable identification of all student groups.

## Appendix B: Implementation Resources for Collecting Data with Multiple Measures

---

The resources provided are for informational purposes only. All resources must meet the New Jersey Department of Education's (Department) accessibility guidelines. Currently, the Department aims to conform to Level AA of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.1). However, the Department does not guarantee that linked external sites conform to Level AA of the WCAG 2.1. Neither the Department nor its officers, employees or agents specifically endorse, recommend or favor these resources or the organizations that created them. Please note that the Department has not reviewed or approved the materials related to the programs.

### Objective Achievement Measures

- Measures of Academic Progress (MAP)
- i-Ready
- New Jersey Student Learning Assessments (NJSLA)
- Test of Mathematical Abilities for Gifted Students (TOMAGS)

### Objective Aptitude (Cognitive Ability including IQ) Measures

- Nagliari General Ability Tests
- CogAT
- Weschler Intelligence Scales

## Objective Creative Measures

- Torrance Test of Creative Thinking
- Profile of Creative Ability (PCA)

## Subjective Measures: Teaching Rating Scales

- Renzulli Hartman Scales for Rating the Behavior Characteristics of Superior Students
- Scales for Identifying Gifted Students (SIGS)
- Gifted and Talented Evaluation Scales (GATES)
- HOPE Teacher Rating Scale

## Observation Tools

Kingore Observation Scale

## Parent Rating Scales

- Input from parents or guardians who can provide a different perspective on their child's abilities and behaviors.
- When a student's caregivers are not fluent in English, it is important to provide an interpreter. Having a team member who can communicate with the student's caregivers will increase the chance that the selection process is sensitive to the student's cultural and language learning context. It will also help caregivers participate in the important discussion of their child's educational future.
- Some researchers advocate that a good predictor of Hispanic/Latino students' ability to reason in English is their ability to reason in Spanish.
- For the Spanish-speaking multilingual learner population, educators have a choice of several published tests of ability and academic achievement:



- *Apr enda™ La prueba de los logros en español segunda edición* was designed to mirror the educational objectives measured in the Stanford Achievement Test Series, Eighth Edition.
- *Logramos*, a group administered achievement test battery in Spanish, was designed with content objectives that are parallel to those of the Iowa tests.

## Additional Resources

Additional resources can be found at:

- [Colorado Matrix of Commonly Used Assessments for Gifted Identification](#)
- [National Association for Gifted Children](#)

## Performance Tasks

- Tasks that require students to demonstrate their skills through structured activities with clear criteria.
- [Performance-Based Assessment: The Road to Authentic Learning for the Gifted](#)

## Other Kindergarten through Grade 8 Measures

- Woodcock-Johnson Test of Cognitive Ability — Revised, Spanish Form
- Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children — Spanish Translation

## Appendix C: Implementation Resources for Matching Students to Services

---

The samples provided are included to illustrate the organization of the matrix and profile frameworks to interpret data collected for identification. Neither the Department nor its officers, employees or agents specifically endorse, recommend or favor these resources or the organizations that created them.

### Identification Matrix Sample

Measure	Actual Scores	1	2	3	4	5	Matrix Score
MAT (Achievement Measure)	-	100–114	115–119	120–124	125–129	130+	-
CogAT (Cognitive/Aptitude Measure)	-	103– 105	106–108	109–112	113–116	117+	-
Teacher Rating Scale	-	3–15	16–28	29–41	42–44	45+	-

**Total Matrix Points:**

---

14 points required

## Identification Profile Sample <sup>i</sup>

Name:

Grade:

Date of Birth:

Teacher:

Parents:

Complete **two or more** tables as needed **and** the selection committee recommendations section. Based on available data, you may elect to complete the Achievement or Cognitive Ability (Aptitude) Assessment Table. Based on available data, you may elect to complete the Teacher Rating or Parent Rating Scale Table. Based on available data, you may elect to complete the Product/Work Sample/Performance Task Table for additional information.

### Achievement Assessments

Assessment (Grade level local norms)	Minimum Score Local Norms	Student Score	Comments	Criteria Met
ELA				
Mathematics				

### Cognitive Ability (Aptitude) Assessment

Assessment	Minimum Score Local Norms	Student Score	Comments	Criteria Met
Verbal Reasoning				
Non-verbal Reasoning				
Quantitative				

### Teacher Rating

Teacher Rating Scale (Local Norms)	Minimum Score Local Norms	Student Score	Comments	Criteria Met
Leadership				
Learning				
Motivation				
Creativity				

**Parent Rating**

<b>Parent Rating Scale</b>	<b>Minimum Score Local Norms</b>	<b>Student Score</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Criteria Met</b>
Leadership				
Learning				
Motivation				
Creativity				

**Product, Work Sample, or Performance Task  
(Rubric or District-Created Criteria)**

<b>Minimum Score Local Norms</b>	<b>Student Score</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Criteria Met</b>

## **Selection Committee Recommendations**

(Committee reviews profile and matches student to services.)

---

<sup>i</sup> The Identification Profile Sample is attributed to Lenore Cortina, Ed.D., Gifted Curriculum & Consulting, 2023.