

## Equitable Supports for Gifted and Talented and Advanced Potential in Multilingual Learners (ML)

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The State of Maryland recognizes Multilingualism as an asset. Identifying giftedness and potential for success in advanced academics, among students whose native language is not English, is a priority and considers that a student may have exceptional abilities and skills without English proficiency being a barrier to recognizing, nurturing, and developing their gifts and potential.

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) defines language acquisition for multilingual learners as the study of language that aims to develop and expand proficiency in English, in addition to the heritage/native language.

### AREAS OF IDENTIFICATION

Most gifted children share certain characteristics, although culturally and linguistically diverse populations may demonstrate giftedness in ways that differ from the dominant culture. Lack of educator awareness and skill may lead to barriers that contribute to multilingual learner underrepresentation and/or exclusion from Gifted and Talented Programs and services.

The following is a non-exhaustive list of characteristics and identifying behaviors that can be used to recognize giftedness and/or advanced potential among multilingual learners.

Students may:

- demonstrate excellence in a variety of communication modes especially language production, language comprehension, and response
- acquire the new language at a faster than typical rate, as demonstrated by assessments, work samples, and other observable behavior
- produce and comprehend humor in multiple languages
- demonstrate an ability to code switch or translate at an advanced level
- balance behavior between cultures
- exhibit cultural knowledge and pride and respects cultural differences
- display inventive leadership and/or imaginative qualities
- read significantly (at least 2 years) beyond grade level in the heritage language
- demonstrate advanced ability in mathematics and other non-linguistic disciplines
- demonstrate advanced ability in arts / visual-spatial awareness, creativity and leadership

Additional evidence should include some of the following artifacts and evidence:

- [A portfolio](#)
- Student work samples, especially those that creatively and skillfully articulate a sense of identity, culture, and/or personal interests

- Student passion project and/or Interview
- Nominations from families and/or teachers
- Anecdotal data, including classroom observations
- Rapid achievement / growth WIDA ACCESS

#### WIDA ACCESS scores

The WIDA ACCESS is the assessment that is used in the State of Maryland to measure English language proficiency in multilingual learners. According to the Colorado Department of Education, the “WIDA ACCESS overall (and literacy) composite score is the most comprehensive indicator of performance in language acquisition...”

WIDA ACCESS scores may be used as qualifying evidence through:

- Accelerated Achievement (Proficiency Score): If a student increases his or her Literacy or Overall composite score by 2.0 or more from one year to the next (e.g., 1.0 to 3.0 or higher).
- Accelerated Trajectory through an English language development profile: If a student exits the EL program at an accelerated pace (e.g., 3 years vs. 6 years from newcomer to monitor status).

Current methods of identification employed by LEAs have missed or overlooked nearly 96% of eligible multilingual learners for Gifted & Talented / Advanced Academic programs and services.

In November 2023, the MSDE Office of Research, Planning, and Program Evaluation investigated the impact of Gifted and Talented identification measures for multilingual learners. The study targeted the progress and growth of third and fourth grade students receiving ML services. Based on the WIDA ACCESS, students who increased their score by 2.0 levels, scored within the top three percent of all test takers. The research findings show that of 420 students across the state who scored within the top 3%, only 18 were identified as eligible for Gifted & Talented/Advanced services and programming.

According to the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), a working definition of a gifted multilingual learner is a student whose heritage language is not English and:

- who demonstrates evidence of high achievement or potential high achievement in intellectual, creative, artistic, leadership, and/or specific academic fields who require additional services and opportunities to fully develop high achievement capabilities.
- who require services and additional support to develop the language skills necessary to meet the rigor and fully participate in classrooms where the language of instruction and assessments is English.

When identifying and considering students for gifted or advanced learning opportunities, students must be compared to children of similar age, experience, and environment, not the general norm. Failing to recognize those factors and their increased social and emotional needs are possible causes for underrepresentation.

Suggested instructional practices for gifted and potentially gifted ML students include:

- Teaching for Depth and Complexity and within Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP model)

- Asset-based approach to access students Funds of Knowledge
- Building strong relationships with students and mentoring
- Enrichment programs
- [All About Learning](#)
- [Play-Well TEKnologies](#)
- [SIG Online Learning Program](#)
- [Free math enrichment placement class](#)
- <https://www.elementsofmathematics.com/>
- [Center for Talented Youth \(CTY\) Discovery Series – Johns Hopkins \(Baltimore, MD\)](#)
- Project based learning opportunities
  - PBL promotes increased learning retention and student achievement (Ibreiseth, 2022)
  - Language-Based Approach to Content Instruction (LACI)
- Presenting ideas, enacting a relationship with the reader/listener, constructing a cohesive message, and making meaning form language
- Peer Mentorship (*Cultivating Language-Inclusive Classrooms through Peer Mentoring for Emergent Multilinguals - ProQuest*)
- Work buddy
- Goal setting and decision making
- Extracurricular activities
- [Video guide of General Supports of Gifted Multilingual Learners](#)

Sources:

<https://www.cde.state.co.us/gt/accessforells#:~:text=The%20ACCESS%20Overall%20composite%20score,also%20serve%20as%20qualifying%20evidence.>

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Recommended Research:

Upside Down Brilliance, Silverman

Special Populations in Gifted Education, Castellano

[Identifying and Supporting Gifted and Talented Multilingual Learners with Marcy Voss](#)

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<https://ellevationeducation.com/blog/7-steps-language-rich-classroom-conversation-john-seidlitz>

<https://www.idra.org/resource-center/insights-into-gifted-and-talented-english-language-learners/>