



**OKLAHOMA**  
**Education**

**OKLAHOMA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

Office of English Language Proficiency

Office of Curriculum and Instruction

# **APPROPRIATE PROGRAMMING PRACTICES AND SUPPORT FOR GIFTED AND TALENTED ENGLISH LEARNERS**

Updated July 2023

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## Purpose

In 1993, the *U.S. Department of Education* stated that “Outstanding talents are present in children and youth from all cultural groups, across all economic strata, and in all areas of human endeavor”. In addition, research has indicated that bilingualism and biliteracy expand students’ cognitive abilities (Thomas & Collier, 1997). Inclusive approaches are required to equitably and effectively identify potential GT students so

that schools can actively recruit and encompass the academic, cultural, and linguistic assets of Gifted and Talented English Learners (GTELS).

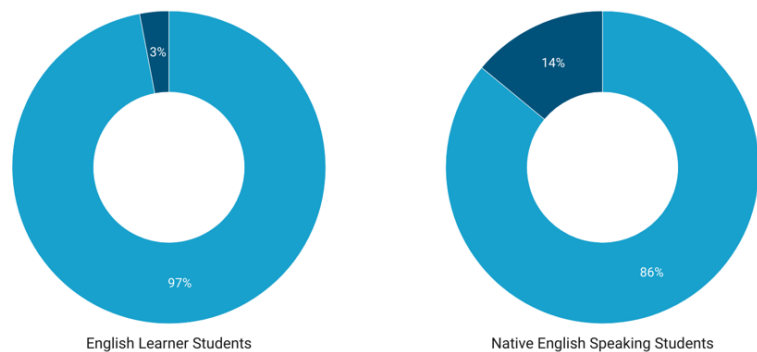
Additionally, inclusive approaches are necessary to comply with federal requirements. It is a legal obligation that public schools ensure that ELs can participate meaningfully and equally in educational programs, including GT programs. These legal obligations are outlined in [Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 \(Title VI\)](#) and the [Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974 \(EEOA\)](#) and in [Oklahoma State Statute 70 § 1210.301](#).

English learners continue to be underrepresented in Gifted and Talented programs. In 2014, the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights reported that 2% of English Learners were enrolled in GT programs compared to 7% of non-English learners. As of the 2020-2021 school year, English Learners accounted for nearly 9% of all Oklahoma PK-12 public school students but constituted only 3% of those students identified to receive supplemental Gifted and Talented (GT) services. Compared with a state identification rate of 14% for their native English-speaking peers, an English Learner in Oklahoma is significantly less likely to be identified as GT. These state-level percentages align closely with observed national trends. Across the United States, roughly 10% of students are identified English Learners and a similar 3% are served in GT programs.

Interestingly, while state-level data show a significant disparity in GT identification rates between EL and native English-speaking students, there also exists a nearly equal disparity between native English-speaking students and Former English Learners (FELs). FELs are those students who have demonstrated English language proficiency through the state-mandated English language proficiency assessment (WIDA ACCESS for ELLs) and who no longer receive supplemental EL services and supports. As a group, FELs have consistently been identified as Gifted and Talented at significantly higher rates than those seen among their native English-speaking peers.

**Native English Speaking and English Learner Student Gifted and Talented Identification Rates: School Years 2017-2021 (Aggregated)**

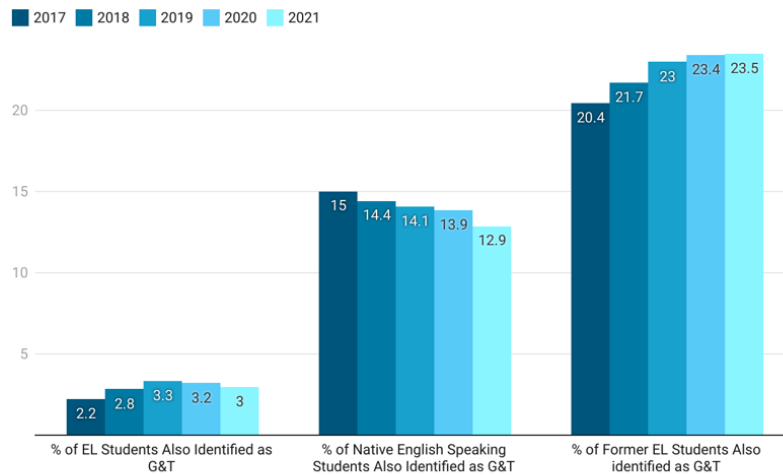
■ Percentage of Students Not Identified as G&T ■ Percentage of Students Identified as G&T



*Percentages derived from student identification data submitted to the Wave across the indicated reporting years.*

Acknowledging that significant variability exists among state LEAs in the provision of EL services and in local GT identification processes, the data highlight two important points:

### Percentage of Student Group Also Identified as Gifted and Talented: School Years 2017 to 2021



Percentages derived from aggregated state student group counts reported to the Wave in a given reporting year.

1. Compared to their native English-speaking peers, EL students are identified as GT at a significantly lower rate before reaching English language proficiency and at a significantly higher rate after reaching English language proficiency. This suggests that a significant variable in the disparity between GT identification rates is a student's level of English language proficiency at the time of GT screening. Further, it suggests that many LEAs have historically

relied on screening processes and/or assessments that require a student to possess a minimum level of English language proficiency in order to be identified as GT.

2. There exists a massive disparity in G&T identification rates between ELs and FELs. This disparity suggests that:

- A significant number of current EL students will qualify for GT status after reaching English language proficiency.
- A significant number of current EL students would be identified as GT if screened through a process less dependent on their current level of English language proficiency.
- Many of the local screening processes currently in use across the state appear to struggle in accurately identifying GT students among diverse student groups.

Based on the above data, disparities are apparent both nationally and locally. The traditional ways of identifying GT students were developed for a narrow band of students and are not sufficient for identifying students from a wider variety of backgrounds. The data further validates the need for new approaches in the identification of potential GT students to ensure access to our gifted and talented Oklahoma students. Recognizing that student populations are varied, GT programs should reflect upon identification practices to ensure a comprehensive identification protocol is utilized. The objective of this guidance document is to provide school districts with evidence-based recommendations to broaden approaches for nominating, identifying, screening, selecting, placing, and serving Oklahoma's ELs in GT programming.

## What Are Programming Options for Gifted and Talented English Learners?

Nilda Maria Aguirre states that “Gifted and talented children are kindred minds, regardless of their native language, socioeconomic status, or national origin” (Castellano & Frazier, 2011, p. 273). Thus, gifted and talented programming should include educational opportunities and services for EL students. The *National Association for Gifted Children* (NAGC) states that GT/EL students should have “early and continuous access to GT services” (2011). Although EL students may have limited English proficiency, GT programming should not be prohibited or verbally laden. Keeping these ideas in mind, [GT Programming Options](#) could include any of the following,

- Cluster grouping
- Pull out enrichment services
- Flexible grouping
- Independent study
- Correspondence courses
- Resource room
- Acceleration
- Proficiency-based promotion (grade level and/or English language proficiency class level if applicable)
- Concurrent/Dual enrollment
- Cross-grade grouping
- Instructional grouping
- Curriculum compacting
- Advanced Placement

As districts provide continuous access to GT programming for EL students, it is inherent that they should continue to incorporate culturally responsive and sustaining teaching, authenticity, differentiation strategies for content, product, and process, and other evidence-based approaches within all services.

### Talent Development Programs

A talent development program is another possible method for identifying underserved GT populations, in particular ELs. It is designed as a watch program for potential GT students. Preparation programs focus on “frontloading” or nurturing emergent talent by enhancing the knowledge and academic skills necessary to be recognized as gifted, such as critical thinking, problem solving, and advanced academic rigor before assessments are conducted. They provide a foundation and cultural context, so English learners can understand what is being assessed and why (Langley, 2016 & *National Center for Research on Gifted Education*, 2018).

# What Are Best Practices for Serving and Supporting Gifted and Talented English Learners?

## Understanding English Language Proficiency

It is essential for GT teachers to understand their ELs' English language proficiency (ELP) levels and what ELs can do at those various levels in order to serve and support them effectively. GT educators should be provided a copy of their ELs' [English Language Academic Plans \(ELAPs\)](#). An ELAP details an EL's proficiency level as determined by a WIDA screener or WIDA ACCESS summative assessment. Once GT teachers note ELP levels, they can utilize WIDA's [Can Do Descriptors](#) or the [Proficiency Level Descriptors](#) to determine what students can do at their current ELP levels and what they will need to be able to do to reach the next ELP level. The ELAP also presents English language development goals and instructional accommodations to be used in the classroom.

## Integrating Content and English Language Development

The [WIDA ELD Standards](#) can help GT educators who have ELs to effectively adapt instruction and concurrently teach content and English language development (ELD). The standards include the language for social and instruction purposes, language arts, math, history, and science. Each standard includes *Key Language Uses* (Narrate, Argue, Inform, and/or Explain) and *Language Expectations* (goals for content-driven language instruction) with *Language Features* that aid teachers in understanding specific language English Learners will need to know and use to accomplish objectives.

### Strategies for Adapting Content Instruction for Gifted and Talented English Learners

- Create [Language Objectives](#)
- Include themes and/or big ideas and essential questions
- Access prior knowledge and build background knowledge
- Administer explicit vocabulary and language features instruction and reinforcement
- Integrate comprehensible input, scaffold lessons and materials for accessibility
- Offer supplemental materials
- Incorporate visual, auditory, tactile, and kinesthetic learning
- Provide project-based learning, student choice, and opportunities for self-directed learning
- Translate assignments
- Utilize bilingual materials; offer bilingual activities (for ELs and non-ELs)
- Develop cross curricular assignments
- Establish a collaborative environment with interaction and flexible seating

- Incorporate all language domains (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) in lessons
- Create tiered activities with increasing levels of cognitive difficulty; institute high level centers/stations with learning tasks
- Capitalize on student interests and individuality
- Emphasize critical thinking, problem solving, divergent thinking, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation
- Conduct frequent formative assessments to monitor progress
- Modify assessments to allow ELs to demonstrate understanding in diverse formats; reduce language demands (implement exhibits or projects, visual displays, organized lists, tables or graphs, or short answers)
- Offer extended time
- Collaborate with EL teachers to learn additional EL strategies
- Maintain and develop home language (e.g., AP Spanish)
- Implement culturally responsive and sustaining curriculum; embed cultural connections and enrich with community engagement or service learning
- Raise awareness to aspects of American culture
- Engage families of ELs
- Develop a support system to help GTELs adjust to a new environment, e.g. mentor programs (pairing older GTELs with younger GTELs)

## Incorporating Culturally Competent Practices

[Culture competency](#) plays a fundamental role in learning and achievement. It not only shapes how students communicate, but it also influences their thinking processes as well. Therefore, it is critical for GT teachers with EL students to implement [cultural competence in the classroom](#). Integrating culturally competent practices can foster accessible and equitable instruction for students of all cultural groups.

<b>Practices and Key Actions for Teachers of English Learners</b>	
<b>Practices</b>	<b>Key Actions</b>
<b>Cultivate Relationships</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide families letters/emails/texts translated into students' native languages, if possible.</li> <li>• Understand students' backgrounds (country, education, language and if immigrant, reason for immigration, hobbies, etc.) by conducting student inventories.</li> <li>• Share your life, language, culture and interests with students.</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn to pronounce students' names correctly.</li> </ul>
<b>Celebrate Culture</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Celebrate students' traditions in the classroom (music, food, holidays, etc.).</li> <li>• Know and value students' languages, cultures, histories, and interests.</li> <li>• Incorporate multicultural literature and materials and world news and events into lessons.</li> <li>• Use cultural context to help make content relevant.</li> <li>• Display student-created flags of their native countries in the classroom.</li> </ul>
<b>Create a Positive Environment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a welcoming environment and a safe space where risk-taking is encouraged, and mistakes are seen as learning opportunities.</li> <li>• Compel your students and yourself to learn a few words in students' native languages.</li> <li>• Focus on what students can do (asset-based approach) versus what they cannot do (deficient-based approach).</li> <li>• Get to know students' families.</li> <li>• Be an advocate for English learners.</li> <li>• Educate yourself to avoid judgments, biases, misconceptions, and myths.</li> <li>• Display linguistically and culturally diverse classroom decor that promotes equality and social justice.</li> <li>• Hold high expectations.</li> </ul>
<b>Implement Cultural Academic Supports</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use language and content objectives.</li> <li>• Employ cognates (e.g., Asociación/Association, Glossario/Glossary, etc.) to support academic vocabulary.</li> <li>• Incorporate multicultural literature and materials and world news and events into lessons.</li> <li>• Maintain a classroom library and curriculum that is representative of students and diverse cultures and languages and that addresses biases.</li> <li>• Make class notes available to English learners (post online and ask for volunteer note-takers).</li> <li>• Rephrase complex language using familiar vocabulary and simplified syntax.</li> </ul>



## Differentiating Instruction

[Differentiated instruction](#) involves representing students' individual learning styles in the creation of lesson plans and the delivery of instruction. "Research on the effectiveness of differentiation shows this method benefits a wide range of students, from those with learning disabilities to those who are considered high ability" (Weselby, 2021).

<b>Key Actions for Differentiating Instruction for Gifted and Talented English Learners</b>	
<b>Content</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Include activities that are at varying levels of difficulty</li><li>• Organize the curriculum around themes, issues, and across different content areas</li><li>• Differentiate curriculum based on readiness, interest, and learning profile</li><li>• Allow students to select independent study topics related to the curriculum or their interests</li><li>• Provide materials available in a range of reading levels</li><li>• Vary delivery of instruction: field trips, virtual field trips, online scavenger hunts, guest speakers, group work, etc.</li><li>• Incorporate drama with role play</li><li>• Use visual aids: PPTs, pictures, diagrams, charts, graphs and graphic organizers</li><li>• Incorporate videos with captions or written transcripts</li><li>• Offer clear and easy-to-understand materials</li><li>• Provide explicit instruction on key vocabulary and language features</li><li>• Rephrase complex language using familiar vocabulary and simplified syntax</li><li>• Connect previous learning to new concepts</li><li>• Explain relevance of lessons and both long- and short-term goals</li><li>• Employ reciprocal teaching – have students teach each other</li></ul>
<b>Process</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Vary instructional techniques and activities (visuals, debates, projects, journals, models, oral presentations, etc.)</li><li>• Allow students to select different activities to learn the content</li><li>• Institute various forms of cooperative learning</li><li>• Build in multiple and varied opportunities for oral language use</li><li>• Offer student choice and involve students in decision-making</li></ul>
<b>Product</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Give students opportunities to select the way they would like to complete a project or show what they know</li><li>• Differentiate assignment options and provide choice if possible</li><li>• Reflect on students' strengths and weaknesses when designing assessments</li></ul>

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|--|---|
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Offer the option of writing by hand or keyboard</li><li>• Create options for assessment in which extensive language production is not required to demonstrate critical thinking</li><li>• Utilize multimedia and interactive web tools</li><li>• Provide sentence stems and frames and other scaffolds</li><li>• Create models and rubrics with performance criteria</li><li>• Break big projects into smaller chunks</li></ul> |
|--|---|

## What Professional Development Topics Can Support Educators of Gifted and Talented English Learners?

### Professional Development for Serving and Supporting Gifted and Talented English Learners

Professional development topics for supporting educators should include the best practices for serving and supporting GTEs mentioned in the previous section:

- Understanding English Language Proficiency Levels
- Implementing WIDA's English Language Development Standards
- Integrating Content and English Language Development
- Adapting Content Instruction for ELs
- Incorporating Cultural Competence in the Classroom
- Differentiating Instruction

### Professional Development for Implementing the *National Association of Gifted Children's (NAGC) Programming Standards*

Furthermore, the *National Association of Gifted Children (NAGC)* has six [Gifted Programming Standards](#) that may require districts to provide teacher preparation. Each of the six standards include student outcomes and evidence-based practices which “serve as criteria on which to collect data to make informed judgments about the quality and effectiveness of GT programming” (NAGC, 2019).

### Promising Practices

#### Large, Urban District Putnam City

Approximately 20% of Putnam City's students are English Learners, and the district wants GT to truly reflect the student population. In addition, they have a sizeable amount of students with high mobility. In SY 2017, 2.9% of gifted students were English

Leaners; however, at the end of SY 2022, that number increased to 24% identified GTELEs due to Putnam City implementing a more inclusive matrix.

The district has a district GT specialist, site GT specialists at each elementary and middle school, and a college coordinator at the high schools who are responsible for identifying and supporting students who are potentially gifted and talented. The specialists consult their site EL specialists regarding questions about potentially gifted and talented ELs and English language acquisition.

Putnam City notifies parents in English and Spanish and conducts universal screening in grades 2-8 once a year for a more equitable census. Putnam City utilizes the [Cognitive Abilities Test \(CogAT\)](#) screener for 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and the full [Cognitive Abilities Test \(CogAT\)](#) for grades 3-8, which is available in several languages. Students scoring in the top 3% automatically qualify for Category 1, and Category 2 Academic Multiple Measures qualification can also come from ability testing. For students who fall shortly under the 97% on the CogAT, they are offered enrichment times and resources, and they are tracked for future eligibility.

When evaluating CogAT scores under the Category 1 cut score, including the Standard Error Measurement (SEM), Putnam City also looks at individual Nonverbal and Verbal scores to decide if the [Kaufman Brief Intelligence Test \(KBIT\)](#) or the [Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test \(NNAT\)](#) are a better fit for a student, and parents are contacted to consent to individual assessment. Interpreters and small groups are utilized whenever appropriate for the student. Evaluation of CogAT scores under the cut score for Category 1 (including a SEM) may also gain multiple points on Putnam City's matrix (see below).

Category 2 divergent talent nominations from teachers, parents, mentors, tutors, counselors, administrators, coaches, peers, and students themselves can come at any level and are vetted by a subject specialist. Most students in the talent category are at the high school level; however, this is not exclusive to the identification label, and high school students, teachers, etc. can request ability testing during off-schedule testing.

Putnam City's **Gifted, Creative, and Talented Program Identification Matrix** consists of:

#### **Identification Area**

- Nationally Normed Test of Ability (CogAT, KBIT, and/or NNAT/national or local percentiles can be used)
- Nationally Normed Test of Achievement (Iowa or Star)
- Talent Nomination (PC has nomination forms for: Music, Visual Arts, Drama/Theater, Leadership, Debate, Dance/Performing Arts, and Creative Thinking. The nomination can include student portfolios.)

#### **Additional Measures**

- State assessment (OSTP, CCRA)  
(PC hopes to incorporate WIDA ACCESS when this guidance is released.)

**Recommendations Other than Talent Nominator** (teachers, parents, mentors, tutors, counselors, administrators, coaches, peers, and students themselves)

### **Other**

- Title I
- Homeless
- Unrepresented population
- English Learner
- Special Needs

Putnam City utilizes the PEAK (Provide Enrichment and Advanced Knowledge) Framework and Standards. All GT students in grades PK-5 receive pull-out instruction 3 hours per week as appropriate depending on the needs of the student. Middle School students are encouraged to enroll in honors, a PEAK course, and Leadership. They may also receive push-in instruction along with resources. In high school, GT students can self-select courses including Advanced Placement (AP) and honors classes, concurrent college courses, and specialized advanced arts courses, and they are offered additional supports such as AP tutoring and workshops.

In addition to GT specific professional development and monthly meetings, the site specialists train teachers on characteristics of GT students and referral processes. The GT specialists have participated in a book study regarding the importance of cultural competence.

### **Small, Rural District Tahlequah Public Schools**

Tahlequah Public Schools received a Javits grant to develop and implement measurable tools to support diverse learners as well as provide training to better identify and accommodate the needs of diverse learners. In SY 2022, Tahlequah had a student population of 3,495. 22.27% of the student population had been identified as Gifted; 9% were identified as both Gifted and English Learners.

For Category 1 identification, Tahlequah does blanket testing in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade through which, in SY 2022, they tested 200 students and were able to identify 4 GTELs. Next year, they will be adding 5<sup>th</sup> grade. For blanket testing, they use [Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test \(NNAT\)](#). They send out notification letters to parents in Spanish and English informing them of the test and its purpose.

For Category 2, at the beginning of the school year, Tahlequah's GT specialist sends an email reminding teachers to send her names of any students they would like to refer for the GT program. Once she receives a referral, she sends out a nomination form to the teacher and parents and checks to see if students were group tested. For the nomination form, Tahlequah uses the [Scales for Identifying Gifted Students \(SIGS\)](#) instrument which is composed of seven scales: General Intellectual Ability, Language

Arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Creativity, and Leadership. They hope to also incorporate the [HOPE Teacher Rating Scale](#) for more equitable identification starting next year.

Tahlequah permits not only parents and teachers to nominate students but also allows community stakeholders and peers to refer students. They hold a Back-to-School Night in which they share information on the GT program in Spanish and English, and a QR code can be used to access a referral form. The GT specialist believes it is important to not only identify the positive traits but the negatives ones as well in order to get a complete picture of a Gifted student.

If the student was not group tested within the last year, the GT specialist obtains parental permission, and the student is individually assessed using the [Kaufman Brief Intelligence Test \(KBIT\)](#) which is a verbal and nonverbal assessment available in Spanish and English. If students score in the 97th percentile or above, they are identified as Category 1. If students score between the 86th-96th percentile, Tahlequah uses their matrix to see if a student qualifies for Category 2. If students score in the 90th-95th percentile, they are put in a talent pool and are given an individual assessment at a future date.

Tahlequah developed their inclusive Gifted and Talented Education Program Qualification Matrix which consists of:

**Section 1:** Nationally Normed Test of Intellectual Ability (NNAT or KBIT results)

**Section 2:** Measures of Performance/Achievement

- OSTP, CCRA, National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (NMSQT), and ISIP (a district monthly assessment) results (TPS hopes to incorporate WIDA ACCESS results in the future.)
- TPS Rating Scale: Portfolio/Work Samples/Awards/Feedback from Competitions
- SIGS Rating Scale

**Section 3:** Advocacy (a check to see if student is identified as EL, high mobility, SPED, economically disadvantaged, and/or underrepresented)

**Section 4:** Gifted Behavior Positive/Negative Characteristics Checklist

Right now, the two GT specialists in Tahlequah serve as the selection committee, but they are hoping to form committees of Javits trained teachers in each site. Once students are selected, parents are then sent a letter in Spanish or English seeking parental permission for students to participate in GT programming and are provided the programming options for more transparency:

**K-2:** GT students are served in the regular education classroom with support from GT specialist and through a "Gifted" Google Classroom.

**3-6:** GT students are served in the regular education classroom with support from GT specialist, and students identified as Category 1 receive pull out instruction and “Gifted” Google Classroom

**7-8:** honors classes, seminars (project-based learning with field experiences)

**HS:** honors priority placement and mentorships (mini-internships with experts from a field of interest to the student)

Professional development on equitable identification is provided through the Javits grant. In addition, the GT specialist offers general training at the beginning of the school year on identification of GT students including GTEs. TPS also encourages teachers to seek professional development certificates in the Oklahoma State Department of Education’s GT Teacher Training Webinar Series.

## **Additional Resources**

- [English Learner Guidebook: Changing Educational Outcomes for English Learners](#)
- [WIDA’s English Language Development Standards](#)
- [\(SIOP\) Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol](#)
- [National Association of Gifted Children \(NAGC\)](#)
- [NAGC’s Gifted Programing Standards](#)

## **Contact Information**

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**Thank you for serving and supporting Oklahoma’s  
Gifted and Talented English Learners!**

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## Glossary

**English Learner (EL)**- a student whose Home Language Survey indicated a language other than English on any or all of the three language questions and who did not show proficiency when subsequently assessed using a WIDA or state screening tool.

**Gifted**- “designates the possession and use of biologically anchored and informally developed outstanding natural abilities or aptitudes, in at least one domain, to a degree that places an individual at least among the top 10% of age peers” (Rinn, Makel, Plucker, 2017, p. 152)

**Talented**- “designates the outstanding mastery of systematically developed competencies (knowledge and skills) in at least one field of human activity to a degree that places an individual at least among the top 10% of “learning peers” (Rinn, Makel, Plucker, 2017, p. 152).

**Gifted and Talented (GT)**- children identified at the preschool, elementary and secondary level as having demonstrated potential abilities of high-performance capability and needing differentiated or accelerated education or services. For the purpose of this definition, “demonstrated abilities of high-performance capability” means those identified students who score in the top three percent (3%) on any national standardized test of intellectual ability. Said definition may also include students who excel in one or more of the following areas:

- a. Creative thinking ability
- b. Leadership ability
- c. Visual performing arts ability, and
- d. Specific academic ability

**Category 1**- students who score in the top 3% on any national standardized assessment of intellectual ability. The 97th percentile is a strict cut off for Category 1 students. Students identified under Category 1 are fully funded.

**Category 2**- students who excel in one or more of the following areas: creative thinking, leadership, visual or performing arts and specific academic ability as identified through a multi-criteria process. LEAs can identify Category 2 students using local norming practices, different cut off scores, or different assessments (achievement tests, multicriteria assessments, etc.). Funding for Category 2 students caps at 8%.

**Gifted and Talented English Learner (GTTEL)**- a student who is identified as GT based on either a category 1 or category 2 identification and is also identified as an English learner based on Home Language Survey responses and the WIDA or state screening tool.

For more information about definitions pertaining to Gifted and Talented, please visit [Oklahoma Gifted Law -- Education of Gifted and Talented Children Act -- 70 O.S. § 1210.301 - 1210.308](#)