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## **Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership**

*Nannette W. Glenn, Ph.D.*

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of the College of Graduate  
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Abilene Christian University  
School of Educational Leadership

¿Dónde Están? Exploring the Identification Process for Gifted English Language Learners

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

by

Angelita O. Vásquez

May 2021

## **Dedication**

First, I thank God for giving me the drive and perseverance to be where I am today. It has been a long journey and there have been many ups and downs, but God has always guided me to continue, and I give thanks every day for all the blessings in my life. Second, I dedicate this to my family: my mother, Esperanza Vásquez; my in-laws Dr. Floyd and Mrs. Barbara Weber; and of course, my children, Josué, Liane, Isaiah, and Mateo.

Dr. Floyd Weber and Barbara (Grandpa and Grandma) encouraged me to go back to school and become a teacher. My education career started there. My mother, Esperanza Vásquez, who reared her four children as a single mother, supported me with her statements of, “Well, you better get on home. I know you have lots of homework.” All these parents are now deceased, but I honor them by completing this dissertation and continuing to live a life that makes them proud.

My children have inspired me more than they know. They too were brought up in a single-parent household, so they know the value of hard work and education. I thank them for taking on duties to help the family and for the encouraging words they provided throughout this process.

Finally, I honor all my students who have come through my classroom. I hope they remember that “¡Sí se puede!”

## **Acknowledgments**

I would like to acknowledge all the people who pushed me to continue to completion. Parent participants encouraged me by saying they would help any way they could. Administrator and teacher participants were willing to share their thoughts and insights toward a greater good. Colleagues provided kind enthusiasm. Many thanks to them.

I want to thank ACU for guiding me every step of the way. I commend recruitment staff, student counselors, and advisors. It felt so smooth to go from showing interest to being enrolled. Someone guided me through every step. Even as an adult, it is relaxing to have someone guide you through a process. It had a huge impact on my success.

To Dr. Jennifer Butcher and fellow committee members, Dr. Christie Bledsoe and Dr. Amy Barrios, I give praise and thanks. Each of them is an asset to the academic world. I am grateful and honored to be guided by Dr. Butcher. She provided just the right guidance at just the right time. I am grateful for wonderful feedback from the committee and hope that someone else is blessed with their guidance.

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## **Abstract**

The problem this study addressed was the underrepresentation of ELLs in gifted and talented (GT) programs. The purpose of this case study was to explore teacher, parent, and administrator understandings of the identification process for the gifted and talented program in Gray ISD (pseudonym), in order to gain insights for improving the identification of ELLs for the GT program. The overall research question was: Based on their understandings of the GT identification process, what insights do teachers, parents, and administrators provide to improve the identification of ELLs for the GT program? With LatCrit theory serving as a theoretical framework, this qualitative study utilized a narrative case study approach. Key participants were parents and teachers of ELLs, and administrators at Gray Avenue Elementary in Gray ISD, a small, rural school district located in South Central Texas. Findings for the qualitative research indicated that first, teachers, administrators, and parents all need more information on the GT program itself as well as the identification and testing process for the program. Second, participants' insights suggested that changes be made to the identification process so that ELLs are more likely to qualify for the GT program. Third, parents strongly advocated for more information. Parents insisted that they felt left out of the school, mostly due to the language barrier. They also called for more information from the school in general as well as more information about the GT program. Several suggestions were made to improve the identification process for ELLs. Parents made several recommendations on how to improve communication between the school and the bilingual parents.

*Keywords:* bilingual education, English as a second language, English language learner, culturally and linguistically diverse, gifted and talented, twice exceptional

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

“Gifted and talented students,” according to the Texas Education Code, means a child or youth who performs at or shows the potential for performing at a remarkably high level of accomplishment when compared to others of the same age, experience, or environment and who: (1) exhibits high performance capability in an intellectual, creative, or artistic area; (2) possesses an unusual capacity for leadership; or (3) excels in a specific academic field (Texas Education Code, Chapter 29, Educational Programs, Subchapter D, Educational Programs for Gifted and Talented Students §29.121). Gifted education has long been in existence (Jolly & Robins, 2016). Many teachers that lead gifted classrooms do not have any training in gifted education (Kaya, 2015). Teachers need to be aware of characteristics in gifted students and how to address those students’ needs. Additionally, there is concern with the identification of gifted diverse students (Kaya, 2015). Research has found that teachers did not feel knowledgeable enough to identify minority and low-socio-economic students (SES; Gonzalez, 2012; Kaya, 2015). Gonzalez (2012) concluded, “With adequate training, teachers can use classroom-based assessments as individualized tools that can tap into the language, cultural, and idiosyncratic differences present in multilingual/bilingual students” (p. 295).

Underrepresentation of English Language Learners (ELLs) in gifted programs is a concern across the state of Texas. Even though the U.S. public education student population, including the ELL population, has grown since 2010, the increase is not reflected in the number of ELLs enrolled in gifted programs. There was an increase in services for ELLs, yet enrollment in gifted programs did not reflect that growth (Coronado & Lewis, 2017). Much research and theoretical work have supported the idea of inequitable access for minority students and

economically disadvantaged students during the gifted identification process.

Underrepresentation is also affected by the size or locale of a district (Kettler et al., 2015).

ELLs are underrepresented in gifted and talented (GT) programs due to several issues, one of those being identification issues (Allen, 2017; Esquierdo & Arreguín-Anderson, 2012; Ford, 2014). Esquierdo and Arreguín-Anderson called for teachers and school administrators to receive adequate and appropriate training to recognize giftedness in bilingual students. The role that teachers play in the underrepresentation of culturally and linguistically diverse students (CLDs) in gifted programming has been worthy of exploration. Such exploration considered how elementary teachers make decisions about students referred for gifted and talented evaluation and how teacher beliefs and perceptions about CLDs influence their decision to refer or not refer them for gifted and talented evaluation. Findings brought awareness to the underrepresentation of CLDs in gifted programming (Allen, 2017).

The underrepresentation of African Americans and Hispanics in gifted education has been examined extensively (Connery et al., 2019; de Wet & Gubbins, 2011; Ford, 2012, 2014). Identified trends in gifted underrepresentation include social inequality, deficit thinking, and colorblindness. School demographics has also been cited as one factor relevant to the underrepresentation. In other words, in spite of changing demographics, representation in gifted programs is not reflective of those changes. Too often nonwhite students are underrepresented in gifted programs (Lewis et al., 2018) and too many African Americans and Hispanics do not achieve their potential because of society's biases (Ford, 2014).

There has been reported concern "with students who fall through the cracks because the identification of giftedness is affected by an additional consideration or condition, such as poverty, a disability, or limited English fluency" (Stein et al., 2012, p. 3). Stein et al. held that the

term twice exceptional could be used to describe ELLs who might qualify for gifted and talented programs but were overlooked due to their limited English proficiency. James J. Gallagher initiated the phrase “twice exceptional” to refer to students who had disabilities but were also gifted (Coleman et al., 2005; Gallagher, 1988). The issue was that once students were identified as having a disability, developing giftedness in those students often took a back seat. The priority was to address the disability and not focus on developing a disabled student’s giftedness. Similarly, when ELLs’ education is focused on developing English proficiency, any giftedness is ignored. Limited English proficiency is not a disability. Yet, focusing on English proficiency limits the development of giftedness that an ELL may possess. When ELLs are limited to the label of limited English proficient, they are underserved and may not reach their full potential (Stein et al., 2012). Therefore, a diverse population requires diverse methods to accurately identify giftedness (Esquierdo & Arreguín-Anderson, 2012; Harradine et al., 2014; Stein et al., 2012).

### **Statement of the Problem**

The underrepresentation of English language learners (ELLs) in gifted programs has been a concern for many years (de Bernard, 1985; Lewis et al., 2018; Pereira & Oliveira, 2015; Ramos, 2010; Siegle et al., 2016). The process for identifying gifted and talented students needs to be improved so that the number of Latinos in such programs is more equitable (Ramos, 2010). There is still a need to adjust and research identification procedures for gifted ELLs (Pereira & Oliveira, 2015). Barriers to proper identification have been discussed in the literature and solutions have been suggested (Lewis et al., 2018; Siegle et al., 2016).

Other researchers have reached the conclusion that ELLs are underrepresented in gifted programs (de Bernard, 1985; Esquierdo & Arreguín-Anderson, 2012; Ford, 2012; Harris et al.,

2009; Lewis et al., 2018; Stein et al., 2012; Warne et al., 2013). The number of ELLs continues to grow, but the number of ELLs in gifted programs does not reflect that growth (Coronado & Lewis, 2017).

At Gray Avenue Elementary, in Gray ISD, there is a similar trend. Gray Avenue Elementary and Gray ISD serve as pseudonyms, and Gray ISD is in a small, rural area of South Central Texas. Of the 377 students, 25% are ELLs. However, of the 25 identified GT students, only 12% (3 students) are ELLs. There is an underrepresentation of ELLs in gifted programs across the nation (Allen et al., 2016; Brice et al., 2008). Some of the reasons for underrepresentation include inappropriate identification procedures, teachers' lack of experience with ELLs, English testing, and the focus on English development (Siegle et al., 2016).

The problem of practice for exploration is the underrepresentation of ELLs in gifted programs, particularly at Gray Avenue Elementary. This problem is a social justice issue for this population of students (Ford, 2014). Yaffe (2019) quoted Del Siegle, saying, "the only way our country is going to reach its potential is if all the children have an opportunity to reach theirs" (p. 39). Ramos (2010) stated, "it behooves us as a nation to give these high-end opportunities to as many qualified individuals as possible to benefit the individuals involved as well as to develop all of our nation's human resources" (p. 151). Warne et al. (2013) also contended that "an underrepresentation of Black, Hispanic, and Native American students in gifted programs was problematic because it may show that the talents and abilities of these diverse students are being neglected, much to their and society's detriment" (p. 489). Additionally, Warne et al. stated that by not developing all students' gifts and talents, the United States may suffer in global economic competitiveness and development.

## **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this case study was to explore teacher, parent, and administrator understandings of the identification process for the gifted and talented program in Gray ISD, in order to gain insights for improving the identification of ELLs for the GT program. The overall research question was: Based on their understandings of the GT identification process, what insights do teachers, parents, and administrators provide to improve the identification of ELLs for the GT program? With LatCrit theory serving as a theoretical framework, this qualitative study utilized a narrative case study approach. Key participants were parents and teachers of identified ELLs, and administrators at Gray Avenue Elementary in Gray ISD, a small, rural school district located in south central Texas.

LatCrit theory crosses many disciplines and pulls from other schools of thought, including critical race theory and ethnic studies. LatCrit aids in “naming and framing the inequitable educational systems that are currently charged with educating Latina/o children across the country” (Davila & de Bradley, 2010). LatCrit allows for the sharing of experiences of subordination while at the same time acknowledging and supporting areas for change. The four functions of LatCrit theory are: (1) the production of knowledge; (2) the advancement of social transformation; (3) the expansion and connection of antiracism struggles; and (4) the cultivation of community and coalition, both within and beyond the boundaries of the legal scholarly world in the United States (Valdes, 1997). These four functions served as the constructs of the research study. LatCrit theory and these four functions will be further discussed in Chapter 3, the methodology chapter. LatCrit theory, then, will serve as the foundation for the study.

## Research Questions

**Q1.** Based on their understandings of the GT identification process, what insights do teachers provide to improve the identification of ELLs for the GT program?

**Q2.** Based on their understandings of the GT identification process, what insights do administrators provide to improve the identification of ELLs for the GT program?

**Q3.** Based on their understandings of the GT identification process, what insights do parents provide to improve the identification of ELLs for the GT program?

## Definition of Key Terms

**Bilingual education.** Bilingual education is a system for providing English learners in prekindergarten through grade 12 (PK-12) instruction delivered in their primary language, as well as integrated language, literacy, and content instruction in English, to ensure full access to grade level curriculum while acquiring English (Texas Education Agency, 2019).

**Culturally and linguistically diverse.** The term *culturally and linguistically diverse* (CLD) is used to describe persons whose home culture and language usage are different than that of the dominant mainstream culture (Popova, 2014). The term CLED (culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse) is used by de Wet and Gubbins (2003).

**English as a second language.** English as a second language (ESL) is a program of techniques, methodology and special curriculum designed to teach ELL students English language skills, which may include listening, speaking, reading, writing, study skills, content vocabulary, and cultural orientation. ESL instruction is usually in English with little use of native language (U.S. Department of Education – Office of Civil Rights, 2015).

**English language learner.** English Language Learners (ELLs) are students who speak little or no English and/or whose knowledge of English is limited to the extent that they cannot

participate meaningfully in a classroom where English is the sole language of instruction (Escamilla & Hopewell, 2011).

**Gifted and talented.** “Gifted and talented students” means a child or youth who performs at or shows the potential for performing at a remarkably high level of accomplishment when compared to others of the same age, experience, or environment and who: (1) exhibits high performance capability in an intellectual, creative, or artistic area; (2) possesses an unusual capacity for leadership; or (3) excels in a specific academic field (Texas Education Code, Chapter 29, Educational Programs, Subchapter D, Educational Programs for Gifted and Talented Students §29.121).

**Hispanic Bilingual Gifted Screening Instrument (HBGSI).** The HBGSI is the Hispanic bilingual gifted screening instrument (Irby & Lara-Alecio, 1996) developed as an additional screening tool for Hispanic students.

**Twice exceptional.** The term twice exceptional refers to students who are gifted but also learning disabled (Coleman et al., 2005; Gallagher, 1988).

### **Summary and Preview of the Next Chapter**

This chapter introduced the topic of underrepresentation of English language learners (ELLs) in gifted programs in Gray Independent School District (ISD). This chapter also provided the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, and it defined key terms. Research questions were presented. These questions were related to the understanding teachers, parents, and administrators have of the identification processes of the district’s gifted and talented program of the identification process for ELLs identified as gifted and talented in Gray ISD and what insights can be provided to improve the identification process for ELLs. Chapter 2 will include the literature review, which will outline background information on gifted and talented



programs in general. LatCrit theory will be described as the theoretical framework for the study. Chapter 2 will also document the history of underrepresentation of ELLs in gifted programs, and reasons for underrepresentation will also be discussed.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this case study was to explore teacher, parent, and administrator understandings of the identification process for the gifted and talented program in Gray ISD, in order to gain insights for improving the identification process for ELLs. There are four major constructs that will be discussed. The four constructs align with the four functions of LatCrit theory. The four functions of LatCrit theory are: (1) the production of knowledge; (2) the advancement of social transformation; (3) the expansion and connection of antiradicalization struggles; and (4) the cultivation of community and coalition, both within and beyond the boundaries of the legal scholarly world in the United States (Valdes, 1997). LatCrit theory and its four functions will be discussed in the separate section on LatCrit theory.

The literature search strategy extensively used the library available through Abilene Christian University (ACU) and online search engines. Some of the key words used during the search included *bilingual gifted*, *gifted English language learners (ELLs)*, *Hispanic gifted*, *gifted minorities*, and *culturally and linguistically diverse gifted students (CLDs)*. In addition, I read through the reference list of articles and studies I found. Going through reference lists helped to solidify my previous resource selections and it also presented new sources for me to locate.

This literature review chapter provides a discussion of the research and theory that supports the dissertation. This chapter will be presented with sections on the theoretical framework for the study (LatCrit theory), legislation relevant to gifted and talented programs, a history of the underrepresentation of ELLs in gifted programs, a discussion on the various reasons for underrepresentation, and a discussion on the identification process based on the understandings of teachers, parents, and administrators, specifically as that process relates to

ELLs. A closing paragraph will summarize the discussion presented along with a preview of chapter 3, the methodology.

### **LatCrit Theory**

Guided by the theoretical framework of LatCrit theory, this qualitative study utilized a narrative case study approach. The study explored the understandings of parents, teachers, and administrators of the GT identification process, in order to improve the GT identification process for ELLs.

The field of LatCrit discourse and scholarship stems from “a troubled past and a troubling present” (Valdes, 1997). LatCrit theory crosses many disciplines and pulls from other schools of thought, including critical race theory and ethnic studies. LatCrit aids in “naming and framing the inequitable educational systems that are currently charged with educating Latina/o children across the country” (Davila & de Bradley, 2010). LatCrit allows for the sharing of experiences of subordination while at the same time acknowledging and supporting areas for change. Valdes (1997) stated:

Our anti-subordination agenda includes the application of LatCrit insights in classroom, institutional, and community activities; our work at all times requires outward and inward analyses and exertions toward a post-subordinate future. The inspiration and aspiration of this newest scholarly movement within the legal academy of the United States thus calls for an ambitious and egalitarian reconception and reapplication of critical scholarship on behalf of legal reform and social justice for Latinas/os and other outsider groups. (p. 54)

LatCrit originally emerged out of a series of debates stemming from various critical race theory meetings during the late 1980s and early 1990s. The first meeting for what would become LatCrit, occurred in San Juan Puerto Rico as part of a Hispanic National Bar Association Law

Professor's meeting in 1995. Since then, LatCrit has grown from a series of annual meetings to a collection of initiatives and projects with both a local and global presence.

LatCrit builds on critical race theory (CRT) because it “enhances CRT’s focus on inequality due to race, class, gender, and sexuality by integrating additional lenses pertinent to the Latina/o experience, such as oppression stemming from immigration status, language, ethnicity, and culture” (Cooper Stein et al., 2018, p. 104). Cooper Stein et al. (2018) suggested that LatCrit is not in conflict with CRT but instead builds upon it and is therefore more useful for situations specific to Latina/os. Cooper Stein et al. used LatCrit theory to guide their study on Latino/a students’ experiences of injustice at a Texas high school. They identified “inequitable patterns of academic placement, distant relationships with non-Latina/o teachers, and institutional cultures that devalue Latina/o customs and norms” (p. 118).

Additionally, LatCrit scholars have studied the intersection between racial and linguistic discrimination (Freire et al., 2017). Freire et al. suggested that acquisition of a second language by a majority population is seen as a privilege. However, fostering bilingualism in Latinas/os is seen as a problem or a threat Freire et al. stated, Freire et al. stated, “Thus Spanish, as the most common home or heritage language in the U.S., poses the biggest threat and thus retains a strongly contested presence within U.S. schools” (p. 277). Freire et al. call upon the CRT concept of interest convergence to boost the argument. Interest convergence maintains that policies beneficial to people of color only come about when they coincide with the interests of whites. Indeed, Freire et al. discovered this to be the case in their analysis. They studied the extent of Latinas’/os’ inclusion in Utah’s dual language programs. They discovered a pattern of centering on the interests of White, English-dominant majority. Latina/o interests were marginalized or silenced.

Through a fictional dialogue, Revilla (2000) concluded that LatCrit and CRT are tools of analysis and are calls for action in the field of education. Quiñones et al. (2011) also called upon LatCrit theory in their ethnography study. Quiñones et al. stated that LatCrit and CRT can be used to focus on issues of language, power, and race.

While LatCrit theory began as a legal movement, it has gained popularity in the field of education, with a goal to end social injustice (Revilla, 2000). There are four functions of LatCrit theory. The four functions are: (1) the production of knowledge; (2) the advancement of social transformation; (3) the expansion and connection of antiracism struggles; and (4) the cultivation of community and coalition, both within and beyond the boundaries of the legal scholarly world in the United States (Valdes, 1997). The four functions of Lat Crit theory served as constructs for the study. For the present research study, LatCrit aided in sharing subordination experiences. LatCrit theory also acknowledged and supported areas for change. Subordination in the current study presents itself as underrepresentation of ELLs in Gray ISD's gifted program. Acknowledgment and areas for change were provided by the insights of parents, teachers, and administrators, based on their understandings of the GT identification process. The insights will aid in improving the identification process for ELLs. Similarly, social constructivists "believe that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work" (Creswell, 2013, p. 8). LatCrit theory can aid in the understanding of the world.

The first function of LatCrit theory is the production of knowledge. The production of knowledge seeks to enhance socio-legal understanding through critiques of historical and modern experience. Similarly, social constructivists "believe that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work" (Creswell, 2013, p. 8). LatCrit theory can aid in the understanding of the world. For purposes of the current study, knowledge was gained through

interviews of participants. The knowledge was critiqued as a way of obtaining insights from participants on how to improve the gifted identification process for ELLs.

The second function of LatCrit theory is the advancement of social transformation. This second function is meant to be practical and insightful. The advancement of social transformation calls for the creation of social change that improves the lives of Latinas/os and other subordinated groups. For purposes of the current study, insights that came from interviewees will serve as agents of change. That is, insights from the participants will be used to guide social transformation as applied to the identification of ELLs for the gifted program.

The third function of LatCrit theory is the expansion and connection of antiradicalization struggles. LatCrit theory is committed to improving the Latina/o condition, but not necessarily exclusively in the United States because we must attend to more than just immediate self-needs. In doing so, LatCrit theory takes on a struggle on behalf of Latinas/os, but at the same time uses that struggle to work for transformation that benefits all. For the current study, the expansion and connection of antiradicalization struggles were in the form of insights for improvement of the identification process for ELLs. As insights are gained and applied to ELLs, it is possible that these insights could be applied to other populations as well.

The fourth function of LatCrit theory is the cultivation of community and coalition, both in and out of the legal world. While LatCrit started in the legal world, it is now entering the education world. Ultimately, LatCrit theory is about more than knowledge, transformation, and sharing of struggles. It is also about building a community around all of those things in order to improve the lives of Latinas/os and work toward social justice for Latinas/os as well as other populations. For this study, cultivation and community means that participants became a

community by providing insights to the improvement of the GT identification process for ELLs. New knowledge was cultivated, and that new knowledge will aid in continued transformation.

### **Legislation Relevant to Gifted and Talented (GT)**

The first federal role in gifted education dated back to 1931 when the United States Department of Education instituted a section on Exceptional Children and Youth (Jolly & Robins, 2016) and so this was the first federal program to acknowledge the learning needs of gifted children. Then came the 1950 National Science Foundation Act (Ford & Russo, 2013; Jolly & Robins, 2016). The goals of the National Science Foundation Act were to strengthen math and science curricula and to encourage the most able students to enter math and science careers (Ford & Russo, 2013; Jolly & Robins, 2016).

In 1957, Congress enacted the National Defense Education Act, in response to the Soviet Union's launch of the first artificial satellite, Sputnik. The Act emphasized mathematics, science, and foreign languages and was a precursor to later developments and provided comprehensive funding to increase research and learning of science, languages, and technology across all levels of schooling. The Act made gifted children the prime targets of curriculum reforms (Ford & Russo, 2013; Jolly & Robins, 2016).

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 was the next event for gifted education (Ford & Russo, 2013; Jolly & Robins, 2016). As part of this Act, the federal government expanded its role in state education policy by providing funding to improve education for all students. However, the ESEA overshadowed the needs of the gifted because it diverted federal resources earmarked for their educational needs to other programs (Ford & Russo, 2013; Jolly & Robins, 2016).

Lobbying efforts were fruitful, resulting with a bill being introduced as a result of the White House Task Force on the Gifted and Talented. The result was the Gifted and Talented Children's Education Assistance Act, part of the ESEA Amendments of 1969. The law offered the first federal statutory definition of the term "gifted," it called for the development of model initiatives, and it made programs eligible for federal financial assistance under the ESEA (Ford & Russo, 2013). Therefore, the first federal definition of gifted education came from the 1972 Marland Report (Jolly & Robins, 2016).

Commissioner of Education, Sidney P. Marland, submitted a national assessment of programs for the gifted to Congress on October 6, 1972. The Marland Report, as it came to be known, detailed the state of gifted education (Ford & Russo, 2013; Jolly & Robins, 2016). The Marland Report urged Congress to provide ongoing support for the development and maintenance of programs for gifted students, not only because of their unique needs, but also because the federal government had almost no role in the process (Ford & Russo, 2013).

The Gifted and Talented Children's Education Act of 1978 appeared to address the needs of the gifted. This Act intended to provide separate programs for the gifted and allowed the United States Commissioner to provide limited discretionary funding to assist state officials as they planned to develop, operate, and improve programs for gifted students (Ford & Russo, 2013; Jolly & Robins, 2016). The act included funding for demonstration projects, training of teachers, and improving education of those gifted and talented (Jolly & Robins, 2016). When the Act was repealed in 1981, authorizations for gifted education and 21 other programs were combined into a single block grant which reduced funding by more than 40%. Ford and Russo (2013) commented, "In short, the federal government suspended its direct involvement in programs for gifted students during much of the 1980s" (p. 218).



The Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Act originally became law in 1988 and it incorporated many of the recommendations of The Maryland Report. Grant monies were made available to fund research into best practices (Ford & Russo, 2013; Jolly & Robins, 2016). The Act reinstated, expanded, and updated earlier federal programs while offering limited funding for programs supporting gifted students who were from lower income families, of limited English proficiency, or had disabilities (Ford & Russo, 2013). Grants were geared toward gifted low-income and minority students (Jolly & Robins, 2016).

The No Child Left Behind Law was passed in 2001 and required all public schools receiving federal funding to administer a statewide standardized test annually to all students. All students were required to reach mastery in math and reading. This law presented a shift to proficiency, meaning that teachers focused less on the needs of gifted and talented students (Jolly & Robins, 2016).

The Javits Act continued to be funded over the next 30 years at varying levels. However, budget cuts were detrimental to gifted education (Ford & Russo, 2013; Jolly & Robins, 2016). From 2011 to 2013, “the federal government zeroed out the solitary funding source, the Javits Act, which identified evidence-based practices in gifted education and funded the National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented” (p. 144). Funding was reinstated in 2014, but the way legislation is currently funded leaves gifted and talented education vulnerable to future reductions and cutbacks (Jolly & Robins, 2016).

### **Background of Underrepresentation**

The underrepresentation of ELLs in gifted programs has been a concern for many years (Bernal, 1974; de Bernard, 1985; Esquiedo & Arreguín-Anderson, 2012; Ford, 2012; Harris et al., 2009; Stein et al., 2012). Bernal (1974) commented that minority children were not being

identified for gifted programs through traditional means and that alternate measures needed to be developed. Gifted and talented services tended to neglect large and significant subpopulations such as minorities and disadvantaged students. This neglect extends further for Mexican American children and the children of other Spanish-speaking groups (Bernal, 1974). Bernal's (1974) exploratory study considered input from the Mexican American community. Including this input was reflective of Passow's (1972) statement that the abilities that are identified and developed are those that are valued by society. Therefore, traditional identification procedures are inefficient in identifying Mexican American students (Bernal, 1974) and a better instrument is needed to better identify gifted ELLs (Barkan & Bernal, 1991; Bernal, 1974).

Another area of concern is the use of English standardized tests. Due to low performance on English standardized tests, Hispanic students are often miseducated. Low performance on English tests results in Hispanic students being placed in low level classes, having a slow rate of promotion, and being virtually excluded from mainstream gifted and talented programs (de Bernard, 1985). ELLs use different processing skills to determine meaning, and those skills do not help on English tests. As long as English reading test scores are used for entrance into gifted and talented programs, many bright, Hispanic children will continue to be excluded from gifted and talented programs (de Bernard, 1985).

There are too few children from nondominant ethnic groups in gifted programs. Barkan and Bernal (1991) affirmed that "the historical problem of having too few children from nondominant groups in gifted programs derives precisely from decisions about what evidence of actual or potential giftedness one requires" (p. 144). Educators are urged by leaders to use procedures that increased reliability and validity, yet these same measures also served to eliminate many able learners. Many of these able learners, Barkan and Bernal insisted, are from

nonmainstream cultures. Unfair identification practices include individually administered IQ tests and multiple screenings. Not only should revisions be made to the identification process, but there is also a need for more bilingual teachers be certified for gifted roles (Barkan & Bernal, 1991).

Everyone benefits when gifted services are provided to as many as possible gifted individuals because it develops our nation's human resources. However, "it is discouraging to acknowledge that the proportionality of ethnic minority group students engaging in gifted and talented programs is negligible" (Ramos, 2010, p. 151). Ramos cited lack of comprehensive identification measures and cultural differences as reasons for underrepresentation. The process for identifying gifted and talented students needed to be improved so that the number of Latinos in such programs was more equitable. Cultural differences sometimes limit parent nomination because the, "cultural norm is that one is expected to be humble and not showoff one's competencies; obviously, therefore, it would be quite unusual for a Latino child to actively demonstrate his or her giftedness in group discussions, debates, and so on" (Ramos, 2010, p. 152). For this reason, development for teachers is important so that educators can recognize giftedness in ELLs.

School districts needed to do more to address the issue of underrepresentation of Hispanic students in gifted and talented programs. Esquierdo and Arreguín-Anderson (2012) reported:

So much attention is given to the left end of the bell curve, understandably so, with the requirements of the reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind. However, Hispanic bilingual students found on the right end of that curve are typically placed in the same

classroom and receive the same instruction. Unfortunately, there is an increasing number of unidentified gifted bilingual students. (p. 36)

The number of ELLs continues to grow, and school districts have reevaluated their admission criteria for special education services and for other instructional programs. However, such reevaluation efforts have not been made for gifted programs and so the existing student demographic pattern is not reflected in gifted programs (Esquierdo & Arreguín-Anderson, 2012).

Identification for gifted programs remains an issue. Underrepresentation of Black, Hispanic, and Native Americans is a problem because it might imply that the talents of these students are being ignored. This is a problem because if the talents and abilities of these students are ignored or neglected, this neglect is a detriment to society (Warne et al., 2013). The demographic composition of gifted programs is an important issue. One of the reasons cited is that school districts could face legal action under civil rights legislation if gifted programs do not reflect the demographic composition of the general school district population. The 2013 Warne et al. study concluded that although there was only a slight underrepresentation in Utah, there was underrepresentation nonetheless. Another reason cited for the importance of equitable representation is that giftedness is found in every population. Too often African American and Hispanic students are denied access to programs that are necessary in order to reach their full potential. As currently operationalized, gifted education continues to promote inequities (Ford, 2014; Warne et al., 2013).

Harradine et al. (2014) suggested that the underrepresentation of students of color in gifted programs was a concern not only in North Carolina, the site of their study, but across the nation as well. While poverty may be an issue for students of color, these students are overlooked for gifted programs because of other issues or practices, such as identification

practices and assumptions made by teachers. One consideration is the use of a strengths-based approach for identifying giftedness. When given the opportunity to identify strengths and not focus on weaknesses, teachers are able to identify more minority children (Harradine et al., 2014, p. 32).

Although the number of ELLs has been increasing, ELLs are still underrepresented in gifted programs. As mentioned in the 1972 Marland Report, giftedness is found in all groups within society, yet ELLs are still underrepresented. Although identification is still an issue, teachers need to be aware of how to serve those gifted ELLs once they are identified. Teachers may have little preparation to work with ELLs. As a result, Pereira and Oliveira (2015) contended, teachers may need to broaden their conceptions of giftedness so that they are better able to not only identify but also educate high-potential ELLs. Adjusting identification procedures for ELLs is an important step in increasing the number of identified gifted ELLs (Pereira & Oliveira, 2015). Citing 2013 statistics from the National Center for Education Statistics, Siegle et al. (2016) argued that ELLs are the fastest growing population of learners in the United States, yet they are underrepresented in gifted programs. Characteristics of gifted ELLs are sometimes “different from the characteristics of students born in U.S. culture” (Siegle et al., 2016, p. 106) and so identification will require a holistic approach. School systems are responsible for considering language and culture issues as they relate to identification for gifted programs. Siegle et al. (2016) described barriers to proper identification and suggested possible solutions.

Universal screening has been suggested as a better tool than the typical method of teacher referrals (Lakin, 2016). Lakin commented, “When all students in an eligible grade level are administered at least one formal assessment as the first step of identification, then it is called

universal screening” (p. 140). The advantage to universal screening is that it puts all students on an equal playing field so that all students have an equal chance of being identified for gifted programs. Although the use of universal screening has been promoted, it has also been suggested that the alternative, the referral step, is quick and cost-effective because teachers or parents nominate. As a result, fewer students need to be screened, and even fewer will require special services. Too often nonwhite students are underrepresented in gifted programs. Due to a lack of federal legislation and requirements, gifted students are often forgotten by the education system. This extends over to several population groups such as Native American, Black, Hispanic, bilingual, and ELLs. Giftedness occurs in all groups of society, yet students of color are underrepresented in gifted programs (Lewis et al., 2018).

In summary, several studies concluded that ELLs are underrepresented in gifted programs (de Bernard, 1985; Esquierdo & Arreguín-Anderson, 2012; Ford, 2012; Harris et al., 2009; Stein et al., 2011). The number of ELLs continues to grow, but the number of ELLs in gifted programs does not reflect that growth (Ford, 2014).

### **Reasons for Underrepresentation**

The following sections will provide information on some of the reasons for underrepresentation. Some reasons include faulty identification procedures (Ford et al., 2016; Pereira & Oliveira, 2015) and an emphasis on English proficiency (Barkan & Bernal, 1991; de Bernard, 1985; Smutny et al., 2012). Teachers’ lack of experience with gifted ELLs is another reason for underrepresentation (Esquierdo & Arreguín-Anderson, 2012; Ramos, 2010).

### ***Identification Procedures***

School psychologists play an important role in the identification, although their role might be a negative one. There is little research on how well school psychologists are prepared to

provide services to gifted students, yet psychologists are often responsible for gifted education testing and recommendations (Ford et al., 2016). Sometimes psychologists, like teachers, serve as gatekeepers when high-stakes testing is involved, and because of this, Black and Hispanic students are underidentified for gifted programs. School psychologists sometimes limit racially and culturally different students' access to gifted education by not using tests and instruments in a student's native language or not providing translators for non-English speaking and bilingual students. Ford et al. (2016) considered this a form of discrimination, according to Allport's (1954) theory of prejudice. Because they are so important in the testing for gifted eligibility, school psychologists must be aware of their own limitations, such as racial microaggressions (e.g., testing materials might lack diversity), microinvalidations, and implicit bias. Ford et al. (2016) stated, "School psychologists must attend to existing inherent biases in measures and assessments of intelligence" (p. 271). Ford et al. (2016) provided guidelines for school psychologists to follow in order to make testing and the interpretation of that testing more equitable.

Minority and culturally and linguistically diverse students (CLDs) have traditionally been underrepresented in gifted programs when traditional measures are used for identification. Intelligence plays a larger role in gifted identification because it is more readily quantifiable, but creativity should also be used in the identification process (Luria et al., 2016). Creativity, however, is more difficult to quantify (p. 45). While creativity is harder to picture and harder to measure, it could be a reliable inclusive tool. Luria et al. (2016) stated, "we believe that states omitting or undervaluing creativity in their identification process is one reason why minority and ethnically and linguistically diverse students continue to be underrepresented" (p. 47). Bilingual students often outperform monolingual students on creativity tasks and that divergent thinking is

a common creativity measure. Luria et al. (2016) argued in favor of including creativity measures in the identification for gifted programs, yet they realize that it is difficult to measure well.

There is still a need to adjust and research identification procedures for gifted ELLs (Pereira & Oliveira, 2015). Traditional identification procedures are inefficient in identifying Mexican American students (Bernal, 1974) and a better instrument is needed to better identify gifted ELLs (Barkan & Bernal, 1991; Bernal, 1974). Based on interviews with Mexican American families and educators, Bernal and Reyna (1974) developed a behavioral checklist and used that checklist in their exploratory study. The interviews elicited perceptions about gifted and talented children. The interviews also obtained examples of behaviors which would, in the eyes of interviewees, be indicative of giftedness. The study was a first attempt to develop an instrument to identify gifted Mexican Americans who would not ordinarily be identified with traditional techniques. The research was a significant and encouraging step toward better identification methods and, in turn, toward the design of culturally responsive programs for the gifted child of a culturally diverse background (Bernal & Reyna, 1974).

A potential instrument was developed by Irby and Lara-Alecio (1996). The Hispanic Bilingual Gifted Student Instrument (HBGSI) instrument uses the definition provided by Renzulli (1999) and then expands upon that definition. Renzulli's Three-Ring Concept of Giftedness says that gifted behavior occurs when there is an interaction among three basic clusters of human traits: above-average general and/or specific abilities, high levels of task commitment (motivation), and high levels of creativity. The HBGSI expands the Renzulli definition by adding a fourth characteristic, the socio-cultural-linguistic aspect, meaning that the definition used for this instrument is "one who has above average intelligence (IQ), task



commitment, and creativity that is situated within socio-cultural-linguistic characteristics” (Fultz et al., 2013, p. 5). The HBGSI is an individual-teacher-administered instrument designed to assess Hispanic students in grades K through fourth. The purpose of the HBGSI is to screen Hispanic students’ eligibility into GT programs and recommend students for further GT testing. The HBGSI instrument was developed as a response to research that suggests an underrepresentation of Hispanics in GT programs. Fultz et al. (2013) contended that the HBGSI is a necessary addition to current identification procedures. Use of the HBGSI has been suggested to assist in the identification of Hispanic children for gifted programs.

### ***English Testing and Proficiency***

Hispanic bilingual children demonstrate a lower rate of achievement than their Anglo-American counterparts on English standardized reading tests. Sometimes these scores are used for class placement and advancement through the educational system, so many Hispanic children are placed in low-level classes, and as a result, the gifted Hispanic child has been virtually excluded from mainstream programs for the gifted and talented (de Bernard, 1985). Factors other than poor reading ability that may account for poor test scores. While de Bernard’s focus was on the *why* of poor test scores, the idea of using scores is relevant for this study. If ELLs are identified for gifted programs at all, they are admitted into a gifted program only after they have mastered English and can receive instruction in an all-English classroom (Barkan & Bernal, 1991). An obvious point is that you do not have to be fluent in English to be intelligent. Also, there is no need to delay the education of gifted ELLs if bilingually competent teachers of the gifted are available. Barkan and Bernal, therefore, encouraged that certified bilingual teachers secure credentials to teach gifted students. Barkan and Bernal (1991) commented, “Bilingual gifted education must not only build upon the child’s first language, but also take into account

the characteristics of gifted children in designing the program for bilingual or LEP students” (p. 146). Gifted ELLs have unique needs that must be met.

Developing English language proficiency often takes precedence in the English learners’ educational experience, so characteristics of giftedness are easily overlooked. Stein et al. (2012) discussed two different theories on the causes of underrepresentation: the focus on inappropriate identification procedures and causes that must be recognized and prevented, such as lack of resources. Regardless of what theory is considered, over five decades, “we have become increasingly concerned with students who *fall through the cracks* because the identification of giftedness is affected by an additional consideration or condition, such as poverty, disability, or limited English fluency” (Stein et al., 2012, p. 36). Gifted English learners may exhibit characteristics of giftedness in specific areas such as the capacity for abstract thought or creativity but that these traits may go unnoticed due to limited English proficiency. Teachers need training to look beyond English proficiency.

Because the numbers of Spanish-speaking students in the United States continue to rise, gifted education for ELLs is an issue that must be addressed. Smutny et al. (2012) stated, “The challenge is that gifted students who are developing English language skills often become a low priority for districts that are under pressure to ensure minimum competency for all” (p. 53). Although many schools have procedures in place for identifying gifted learners, many do not make accommodations for special populations, such as ELLs. Educators must know how a minority community defines and values talent in order to appropriately identify gifted ELLs (Bernal, 1974; Bernal & Reyna, 1974; Smutny et al., 2012). When it comes to the education of Latinos, educators tended to have deficit thinking, focusing on things like English development (Bianco & Harris, 2014). One does not have to be English proficient in order to be gifted (Bernal

& Reyna, 1974; Castellano & Diaz, 2002; Smutny et al., 2012). Bianco and Harris cited Valdez (2003) as stating that although bilingualism requires cognitive ability, bilingualism is often treated as a detriment in need of remediation instead of a strength that needs development. Focus should be on students' culture, linguistic abilities, interests, needs, and strengths.

Another option has been to develop a culturally, responsive, strength-based response to intervention (RTI) to address the needs of gifted ELLs (Bianco & Harris, 2014; Harris & Plucker, 2014). RTI has traditionally been a multi-tiered model to help struggling students. The first level of intervention, Tier 1, addresses all students and most (85%-90%) will respond appropriately and successfully. Tier 2 addresses those students (5%-10%) that need just a little more help to succeed academically. Finally, Tier 3 support is provided to those students who continue to struggle at Tier 2 intervention and need more frequent assessment and intense intervention. While the RTI system has traditionally been used to help struggling learners, there has been research on meeting the needs of gifted learners through the RTI process (Bianco, 2010; Bianco & Harris, 2014; Coleman & Hughes, 2009; Harris & Plucker, 2014). Just like attention is given to low-achieving students, attention should also be given to high-achieving students. All gifted students, including those from underrepresented populations, must be considered as a potential shift is made to use the RTI process as a tool to serve gifted students. Just as tiers are used to address the needs of struggling students, tiers could also be used to address the needs of gifted learners. Bianco (2010) suggested that Tier 1 should provide high quality instruction intended to cultivate and ignite students' gifted potential. Tier 1 is also where universal screening would take place so that students who need more intensive, strength-based interventions are identified. Students identified as needing more intense strength-based interventions would then be assigned to Tier 2 for those interventions. At Tier 2, more collaboration would be necessary to

meet the needs of twice exceptional learners and gifted ELLs. Such collaboration would involve other school specialists such as the special education teacher or the ESL/bilingual education specialist. It is quite possible that ELLs could receive more than one set of targeted instruction. For example, ELLs might require Tier 2 interventions to help them meet their needs for accelerated learning but also require Tier 2 interventions to develop their literacy skills. The difference is that one set of Tier 2 interventions (strengths-based) would be for an indefinite amount of time while the other set of traditional Tier 2 interventions would be temporary until the student is at a level to return to Tier 1 level instruction in the general education setting.

In a strengths-based RTI model, Tier 3 would be the next step for gifted students whose needs are not met at the Tier 2 level. Coleman and Hughes (2009) suggested that formal nomination for gifted identification occur at Tier 3. Regardless of formal nomination, Hughes and Rollins (2009) had three suggestions for possible Tier 3 interventions: skipping a grade or two, early Advanced Placement (AP), or early college classes. The success of a strength-based RTI depends on the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of classroom teachers.

Ultimately, educators need to shift their thinking from deficits to strengths. Deficit thinking implies that teachers focus on students' weaknesses rather than their strengths (Pereira & Gentry, 2013). Nowhere in the definitions of giftedness is there a requirement that gifted students must have minimum levels of English proficiency (Barkan & Bernal, 1991; Pereira & Gentry, 2013; Pereira & Oliveira, 2015). A common concern among teachers was students' verbal skills. That is, since "most of the students of the participants are Hispanic and bilingual, students may have lack of verbal or language skills despite their at least average nonverbal skills" (Kaya, 2015, p. 68). If assessment of giftedness relies on verbal skills, students may not

be identified as gifted. Consequently, verbal and nonverbal abilities should be evaluated for a more thorough identification process.

Accountability pressures have also affected identification procedures. Accountability pressures prompt educators to focus on language acquisition rather than bilingualism (Colón & Heineke, 2015). Colón and Heineke found that bilingual gifted teachers were in place at their school of study. However, teachers soon felt pressure to teach more English, citing English only testing as the reason. That is, although students were receiving instruction in both English and Spanish, teachers soon felt the need to focus on more English. Pressures from English-only initiatives had an impact on the figured world of bilingual education. In other words, pressure from English-only initiatives affected bilingual instruction for all students, including gifted bilingual students. When CLDs are still learning English and tested for giftedness in English, these tests result in questionable validity (Connery et al., 2019). When IQ tests and other traditional standardized tests are used for identification for gifted programs, there is a detrimental impact on CLDs. By testing CLDs in English, their English proficiency is also tested. If CLDs are made to test in a language in which they are not yet proficient, what is being measured is their English and not their talents. Connery et al. (2019) also speculated that traditional testing measures are often culturally biased.

### **Teachers' Understandings of the Identification Process**

Sometimes parents of ELLs find it difficult to nominate their children for gifted programs, so professional development is critical so that teachers have opportunity to strengthen identification skills of all GT students (Esquero & Arreguin-Anderson, 2012; Ramos, 2010). Teachers need to gain a global perspective and increase cultural sensitivity. Members of the Hispanic culture think in terms of what is best for the group and the individual is not as

important as the group. Ramos posited, “this importance of the group notion is why it is imperative that Latinos be identified as GT so that their peer groups can be other GT Latinos as well as other GT students at large” (p. 152). Professional development should include administrators so that communication with parents can be facilitated and so that instruction can be enhanced for all students. Teachers and school administrators need to receive adequate and appropriate training to recognize giftedness in bilingual students. Few teachers receive academic preparation to work with culturally diverse gifted students. So, teachers must be appropriately trained to work with culturally diverse gifted students in order to appropriately identify culturally diverse gifted students. In-services and other professional development activities related to understanding diverse cultures need to be implemented as they are crucial to improving awareness and expectations of the English language learner (ELL) population (Costello, 2017; Ford, 2012; Harris et al., 2009).

Teachers generally have their ideas of giftedness and so they nominate students for gifted programs based on their own ideas of giftedness. However, sometimes these views may lack understanding about cultural and environmental factors that affect giftedness among diverse students (Kaya, 2015). This lack of knowledge can sometimes result in deficiencies in the identification process, and, consequently, students who need enriched education may not get that enriched education. Although teachers believe there is giftedness in all groups of society, teachers have difficulties in describing the characteristics of gifted minority children. As a result, lack of teacher training may cause teachers to have misconceptions about giftedness. For students to be appropriately identified for and served through gifted programs, teachers must be adequately trained. Teachers need to have a well-developed concept of giftedness. They must also have a complete understanding of the characteristics and special needs of gifted and talented

students, including culturally and linguistically diverse students (CLDs), of which ELLs are a part (Kaya, 2015). Costello (2017) found something similar when she found that teachers felt ill-equipped to identify gifted ELLs because as teachers, they held misconceptions of what giftedness looked like. Teacher participants reported that they had limited knowledge on how to identify gifted ELLs. Most study participants had the traditional thinking of giftedness: smart, highly verbal, motivated to achieve, mature, displaying leadership qualities, and thinking outside the box (Costello, 2017). A change in teachers' misconceptions of ELLs' abilities and skills is necessary so that there no more lost learning opportunities. Costello suggested that along with gifted training, teachers should receive training on language acquisition, traditional and nontraditional characteristics of giftedness, and cultural competence.

Teachers are not always prepared to educate culturally and linguistically diverse students (CLDs), and so educator preparation programs need to prepare White teachers for the classroom. What usually happens is that teachers are trained for the classroom, but not necessarily trained to address the needs of CLDs (Athanasios et al., 2015). Teachers of color might be in a better position to educate CLDs, because these teachers can call on their own experiences to guide CLDs. Athanasios et al. (2015) did not specifically consider *gifted* ELLs, but they did conclude that teachers of color may be in a better position to educate ELLs.

When identifying ELLs for gifted programs, some challenges teachers faced include “cultural differences of the students’ backgrounds, cultural influences on the instruments that were used for instructional and identification purposes, testing situations, language barriers, and absence of training” (Tan, 2016, p. 1). Teachers in Tan’s study suggested tests be designed so that the tests appropriately assess students from different cultures. One teacher commented that knowledge of different cultures and expectations was important because what is considered

important and relevant for one culture might not be so for another. This lack of knowledge affects the classroom environment and how well an ELL, gifted or not, can learn. The majority of teachers in Tan's study also identified lack of training as a challenge in the identification and intervention process. Teachers felt they needed more training for instructional settings as well as testing settings in order to better serve bilingual gifted students (Tan, 2016).

Many teachers focus on a student's language ability so much that they overlook any talents and gifts ELLs might have. The overemphasis on standardized testing contributes to the underrepresentation of culturally and linguistically diverse students (CLDs) in gifted and talented programs (Allen, 2017; Costello, 2017). Teachers in Allen's qualitative study commented that they were concerned with the overreliance on tests. While several teachers believed they had gifted ELLs in their classrooms, those teachers felt that the standardized testing use for GT would hold the students back. At least one teacher did not nominate a potentially gifted ELL because although the student exhibited giftedness, the teacher felt that the student would not score well on one of the tests used for identification. Connery et al. (2019) suggested that, "these students may have the content knowledge and the cognitive ability needed to perform successfully on assessment tasks, but are not yet able to demonstrate in English what they know" (p. 84). English testing may produce invalid results for CLDs.

### **Parents' and Administrators' Understandings of the Identification Process**

Harris et al. (2007) commented that "another contributor to underidentification is fear by parents and school personnel that gifted programs may be compromised if students who do not meet traditional testing requirements are admitted" (p. 27). An emphasis needs to be placed on authentic identification procedures. Another concern is that often there is reluctance on the part of gifted program coordinators and district administrators to address the underrepresentation



because that would mean having to deal with other issues like limited financial and physical resources (Harris et al., 2007, p. 27). Nonetheless, the proactive and dedicated leadership of school administrators is important to the identification of ELLs for gifted programs.

Many gifted children are excluded from gifted programs unless parents advocate for them. However, advocating for a child is not as easy as making phone calls to the school. Students might not be tested for gifted programs because their parents are unaware of gifted programs and are not adequately informed about testing arrangements and deadlines (Kautz, 2017; Yaffe, 2019). In addition, Kautz claimed that in New York City, access to information about gifted programs remains an issue for minority and non-English speaking families. D’Orio (2017) stated, “Parents of typically underrepresented students may not speak up as vocally, either because they are unaware of the existence of such a program, may feel uncomfortable talking with school staff, or could feel they are in danger of being deported” (p. 6). While parents may not speak up for their child, parents are indeed excited when a teacher identifies and recognizes a child’s talents, so it is important for teachers to recognize giftedness in ELLs.

Most Spanish-speaking cultures value the welfare of the family and community over an individual’s achievement. As a result, “gifted Hispanics may feel uncomfortable in an atmosphere of individual competition and achievement” (Smutny et al., 2012, p. 54). Administrators must know this so that they may focus on greater family involvement in the schools. Smutny et al. suggested that parents can learn about gifted services through a variety of resources, such as community meetings, websites in Spanish and English, and parent-teacher conferences.

Professional learning is critical in order to bring awareness for the needs of students from cultures different than their own. Administrators need to “take a pulse” on the beliefs held by

teachers before conducting any professional development. Teachers should be provided a safe zone to discuss misconceptions, should be provided training that is uniquely tailored, and should be able to share culturally relevant information. Administrators also need to guide courageous conversations about underserved populations, engaging culturally diverse families, encouraging collaboration, and capitalizing on strengths (Lewis et al., 2018, p. 53). Engaging culturally diverse families is important because while parents are crucial to a student's success, getting parents involved can be a struggle. Likewise, Harris and Plucker (2014) discussed the importance of family involvement by suggesting the creation of family and community partnerships. While schools typically have parent teacher organizations where information is disseminated, there is no certainty that parents of ELLs are attending meetings of parent teacher groups. As a result, parents of ELLs might miss information on the availability of programs like the gifted program. School mental health professionals should also take an active role in encouraging parent advocacy (Harris & Plucker, 2014). Professional learning could assist in engaging culturally diverse families (Lewis et al., 2018). Ramos (2010) commented, "It is highly unlikely that a disenfranchised, low SES, uneducated ethnic minority would have the nerve or understanding of the opportunity at hand to question authority" (p. 152). The use of bilingual and bicultural social workers is one possible way to encourage parents to nominate children for gifted programs.

Administrators can take the lead in overhauling the identification process (Yaffe, 2019). Yaffe profiled Minnesota's Mankato Area Public Schools as being on the forefront to change the way high-potential learners were identified. The same procedures were providing the same results, so Makato Area Public Schools changed the procedures. Mankato's director of teaching and learning said, "our system was built to get exactly what we were getting, so what we had to

do was build the system differently” (Yaffe, 2019, p. 39). Suggestions offered by Yaffe include using universal screening, using tests that do not favor middle-class English speakers, relying more on local norms, and widening the circle of adults who search for talent. In addition, all sorts of educators like school psychologists, special education teachers, bilingual instructors, and band directors can all be lookouts for talented students.

Administrators are important in the education of gifted ELLs in that administrators, “are confronted with the need to train bilingual and mainstream teachers to provide appropriate curriculum materials to meet the academic, linguistic, and social needs of bilingual gifted students” (Esquierdo & Arreguín-Anderson, 2012, p. 44). Administrators’ involvement is critical since teachers are usually the first to start the identification process. Gifted bilingual students are in a double disadvantage setting because most teachers who are certified in gifted education are English-only speakers and are not trained to work with bilingual students. Ultimately, teachers certified to work with bilingual students need to be trained to identify giftedness in those children. Bilingual teachers also need to be trained in gifted education philosophy, instructional approaches, and best practices (Esquierdo & Arreguín-Anderson, 2012).

Stein et al. (2012) mentioned a specific ELL student nominated and tested for giftedness. The student did not qualify for the gifted program because the student was short one IQ point. When informed that the student was testing in her second language, the administrator would not make an exception. Stein et al. suggested that professional development is needed for teachers, counselors, and administrators so that they can look beyond English language proficiency and instead focus on the strengths of ELLs.

The 2018 “Exploratory Study on the Identification of English Learners for Gifted and Talented Programs” stated that despite the fact that the number of ELLs continues to grow, “their

representation in gifted identification and programming continues to lag behind not only traditional populations of learners from advantaged communities, but also other underserved populations of learners” (p. 9). As a result, the study made recommendations, including establishing a web of communication of include all stakeholders. Specifically, it suggested that administrators, district gifted coordinators, classroom teachers, gifted specialists, psychologists, multilingual teachers, and parents all become aware of the identification system. The authors also encouraged all stakeholders to interact in all components of the system (Gubbins et al., 2018).

### **Summary**

This literature review chapter presented an introduction, a theoretical framework, legislation relevant to gifted programs, a background on underrepresentation, and reasons for underrepresentation. LatCrit theory will serve as the framework for this study, with the four functions of LatCrit theory as constructs. The literature review chapter also presented teachers’ understandings of the identification process, administrators’ understandings of the identification process, and parents’ understandings of the identification process. Chapter 3 will describe the methodology for the research study.

### **Chapter 3: Research Method**

The purpose of this study was to explore the identification process of ELLs identified as gifted and talented. The research questions were: Based on teachers' understandings of the gifted identification process, what insights can teachers offer for improving the identification of ELLs for the district's gifted program? Based on administrators' understandings of the gifted identification process, what insights can administrators offer for improving the identification of ELLs for the district's gifted program? Based on parents' understandings of the gifted identification process, what insights can parents offer for improving the identification of ELLs for the district's gifted program? Using LatCrit theory as a framework, this qualitative study utilized a narrative case study approach. Key participants were parents and teachers of ELLs tested for GT and administrators at Gray Avenue Elementary in Gray ISD, a small, rural school district located in south central Texas.

This chapter will describe the setting for the study. The chapter will also provide an explanation of the study's research design and method. Information in this chapter will include a description of the population, estimated size, and relevant characteristics. There will be a description of the sample, including sample size. Details noting materials, instruments, qualitative data collection, and analysis procedures will also be provided in the chapter. There will be information regarding ethical considerations, assumptions, limitations, and delimitations. Finally, there will be a brief summary of the purpose, design, and method.

#### **Research Design and Method**

This qualitative study utilized a case study design. Bloomberg and Volpe (2019) stated that the purpose of case study "is to generate understanding and deep insights to inform professional practice, policy development, and community or social action" (p. 49). Yin (2014)

suggested that a case study allows researchers to focus and gain a holistic and real-world perspective. LatCrit theory aligns with the case study design because of LatCrit theory's four functions: the production of knowledge, the advancement of transformation, the expansion and connection of struggles, and the cultivation of community and coalition.

In order to understand why ELLs were underrepresented in gifted programs in Gray ISD, it was necessary to explore the understandings of parents, teachers, and administrators. Specifically, it was necessary to explore the understanding teachers, parents, and administrators have of the identification processes of the district's gifted and talented program of the identification process for ELLs identified as gifted and talented. This exploration was necessary so that we could learn how the participants viewed the identification process. Discoveries made during this exploration could be used to guide future endeavors of the Gray ISD GT program. Bloomberg and Volpe (2019) noted that individuals develop meaning of their own experiences, so I spent time talking with study participants to examine their understandings and utilized relevant documents to describe their understandings.

Based on the theoretical framework of LatCrit theory, this qualitative study utilized a narrative case study approach. The four functions of LatCrit theory served as guides for the study. The first function of LatCrit theory is the production of knowledge. For purposes of the current study, knowledge was gained through interviews of participants. The knowledge was critiqued as a way of obtaining insights from participants on how to improve the gifted identification process for ELLs. The second function of LatCrit theory is the advancement of social transformation. This second function is meant to be practical and insightful. The advancement of social transformation calls for the creation of social change that improves the lives of Latinas/os and other subordinated groups. For purposes of the current study, insights that

came from interviewees will serve as agents of change. Insights from the participants will be used to guide social transformation as applied to the identification of ELLs for the gifted program.

The third function of LatCrit theory is the expansion and connection of antiradicalization struggles. LatCrit theory is committed to improving the Latina/o condition. In doing so, LatCrit theory takes on a struggle on behalf of Latinas/os, but at the same time uses that struggle to work for transformation that benefits all. For the current study, the expansion and connection of antiradicalization struggles was in the form of insights for improvement of the identification process for ELLs. As insights are gained and applied to ELLs, it is possible that these insights could be applied to other populations as well, and in this way, struggles are connected. The fourth function of LatCrit theory is the cultivation of community and coalition, both in and out of the legal world. While LatCrit started in the legal world, it is now entering the education world. Ultimately, LatCrit theory is about more than knowledge, transformation, and sharing of struggles. It is also about building a community around all of those things in order to improve the lives of Latinas/os and work toward social justice for Latinas/os as well as other populations. For the current study, cultivation and community means that participants became a community by providing insights to the improvement of the GT identification process for ELLs. New knowledge was cultivated, and that new knowledge will aid in continued transformation, including a better system to identify gifted ELLs.

The qualitative study included interviews and review of documents. Key participants were parents of ELLs that were tested for GT, regardless of whether the ELLs were identified for GT. In addition, teachers and administrators at Gray Avenue were also participants. Teachers of ELLs, the GT teacher, and administrators were interviewed.

One source of qualitative data for the study was gathered through interviews. Interview participants were parents, teachers, and administrators. Parents of ELLs tested for GT were interviewed on their (parents') understandings of the identification process for participation in the district's GT program. Two categories of parents were interviewed: those who had ELLs tested and *identified* as GT and those who had ELLs tested and *not identified* as GT. Based on the parents' understanding, they provided insights on improving GT identification of ELLs for the gifted program. Similarly, teachers and administrators were interviewed on their understandings of the identification process for participation in the district's GT program. Based on the teachers' and administrators' understandings, they provided insights on improving GT identification of ELLs for the gifted program.

Interviewing as a research method is valid (Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Terrell, 2016). Patton (2015) stated, "the purpose of qualitative interviewing is to capture how those being interviewed view their world, to learn *their* terminology and judgments, and to capture the complexities of *their* individual perceptions and experiences" (p. 442). Interviewing allows for gathering descriptions from separate interviewees in order to develop a picture of a process (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Interviews provided that in-depth look at the understanding teachers, parents, and administrators have of the identification processes of the district's gifted and talented program. Probing was also part of the process. Probing allowed for interviewees to provide more detail about their responses.

A final consideration in the interview task was to develop separate interview questions for the different level of stakeholders. The questions for teachers and administrators were different from the questions for parents. The different interview questions aligned with Ivankova's (2015) suggestion that "the purpose of sampling is to ensure that the selected people



and informational sources adequately reflect the characteristics of the population for whom the study results are intended and may be relevant” (p. 183). Developing separate sets of questions for parents ensured that those stakeholders’ interests are addressed.

Other sources of qualitative data were gathered from review of documents. The documents reviewed in this study were the Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented Students (State Plan), the Gray ISD district policy for the GT program, and the GT district policy of a neighboring small school district.

### **Population**

The school was selected for this study because of available resources, my experience with gifted ELLs, and the availability of central office administrative staff to provide relevant district data. The research was conducted in the school district where I was employed. This year, there were two bilingual teachers in first grade and three English as a second language (ESL) teachers as well as one bilingual teacher in second grade and one ESL teacher in second grade. However, the number of bilingual teachers and ESL teachers varies yearly based on the needs of the campus. There was one GT teacher for the district that provides GT instruction one day a week at Gray Avenue Elementary. Of the approximately 380 students at Gray Avenue Elementary, 25% were English language learners (ELLs). However, of Gray Avenue’s 25 identified gifted and talented students, only 12% (3 students) are ELLs.

The population for this study was the Gray Avenue Elementary family, which included teaching and administrative staff as well as parents. This population was appropriate to respond to the study problem and purpose because this group of participants had a true connection to the problem. Parents of ELLs were connected to the problem because they had students tested for the program, and we wanted to explore what they understood of the identification process. ESL and

bilingual teachers were connected to the problem because they educate ELLs and teachers often take the first step in the identification process. The GT teacher was connected to the problem because she is part of the identification process for the district as well as provides GT instruction one day a week on the campus. Finally, administrators are responsible for the entire campus, so they need to know what is happening on the campus, including what is happening with the gifted program and the education of ELLs. Parents of the identified gifted ELLs had a very specific understanding of the identification process, as did the teachers, those who teach those ELLs and those who do not. Likewise, the campus administrators had a role in the education of ELLs. In summary, the population consisted of parents, teachers, and administrators affiliated with Gray Avenue Elementary.

### **Sample**

Interviewees were selected through purposeful sampling. Leavy (2017) defined sampling as “the process by which you select a number of individual cases from a larger population” (p. 76). Leavy also suggested that qualitative approaches favor smaller sample sizes. Purposeful sampling was appropriate for this study because there was a set group of people from which to choose for participation. This group included parents, teachers, and administrators. The parents interviewed were the parents of ELLs that were tested for the GT program. Included in the parent interview group were parents of ELLs presently in the district’s gifted and talented program as well as parents of ELLs who were tested but not identified for the GT program. The teachers interviewed were teachers that had English language learners in their classrooms as well as the GT teacher. The administrators interviewed were those administrators on the campus of Gray Avenue Elementary.

For this research study, bilingual and ESL teachers were selected for interviews, based on their teaching assignment. The campus GT teacher was also interviewed. She is included in the ESL teacher group. The administrators interviewed were the ones that lead the Gray Avenue campus. Parents interviewed were the ones that had ELLs tested for the GT program, regardless of whether the ELLs were identified as gifted or not. Names of these parents were obtained from the district GT coordinator. Names were obtained in accordance with IRB guidelines. In summary, those interviewed were the two campus administrators, the seven ESL/bilingual teachers, the GT teacher, three parents of ELLs that were tested and qualified for the GT program, and three parents of ELLs that were tested and not identified for the GT program.

### **Setting**

The setting for this research study was a school in a district I will refer to as Gray ISD. Gray ISD serves as a pseudonym, and it is in a small, rural area of South Texas. For the school year 2016-2017, Gray ISD had a total enrollment of 2,891 students, and for the 2017-2018 school year, Gray ISD had a total enrollment of 2,848 students (Texas Education Agency, 2017, 2018). The district has six campuses. Five campuses house two grades each (PK and K, first and second, third and fourth, fifth and sixth, seventh and eighth) and one campus houses four grades (ninth through 12th). A student in Gray ISD will attend six campuses throughout his or her education career.

More specifically, the setting was an early elementary school that houses first and second grades. The principal of the school holds a doctorate. The assistant principal holds a master's degree. There are 10 first grade teachers and nine second grade teachers. There is one PE coach, two special education teachers, one gifted and talented teacher, one music teacher, and one Response to Intervention (RtI) teacher. There were approximately 380 students on this campus.

Of the 10 first grade teachers, three were Hispanic, and seven were Anglo. Of the nine second grade teachers, three were Hispanic, five were Anglo, and one was African-American. Of the 25 total teachers on campus, three had master's degrees or advanced certifications. Only one staff member on the campus was currently pursuing higher education.

The structure of the organization was typical for a public school. There were two administrators, a counselor, and a licensed social school psychologist. The principal and assistant principal shared the responsibility of evaluating teachers. The current teacher evaluation system was the Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (T-TESS). According the Texas Education Agency (TEA), T-TESS is a system designed by educators to support teachers in their professional growth by striving to capture the holistic nature of teaching. T-TESS encourages the idea of a feedback loop between teachers and students. T-TESS therefore gauges the effectiveness of teachers by focusing on how students respond to their teachers' instructional practices. While the administrators typically have an equal number of teachers to evaluate, it is the principal that evaluates the bilingual teachers because she is the only bilingual administrator. One of the areas T-Tess considers is that of professional development, so T-TESS is a good guide for ensuring that teachers receive the appropriate training, including GT training, to meet the needs of all students, including ELLs.

### **Materials/Instruments**

In-depth interviews with parents, teachers, and administrators were used as data sources for this study. Teacher, parent, and administrator interviews followed a semistructured format using an interview protocol that was developed for this study. The interview protocol for teachers and administrators as well its justification is found in the appendix section of the study.

The interview protocol for parents as well as its justification can also be found in the appendix section of the study.

Due to concerns about COVID-19, interviews were conducted digitally with the online program Zoom, where audio and visual files were created. The participants that were unable to access Zoom were audio recorded by phone using the SpeechNotes app. I also used a recording sheet to take notes during the interviews.

Other materials were documents. Document review was a source of data. Creswell (2013) stated that qualitative documents are one of four basic collection procedures in qualitative research. Creswell suggested that qualitative documents help a researcher acquire the language and words of participants. Bloomberg and Volpe (2019) also commented that document review is one of the most common types of qualitative data collection methods. Document review can include data from policies, lesson plans, mission statements, letters, posters, and other forms of written text (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019).

The documents reviewed in this study were the Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented Students (State Plan), the Gray ISD district policy for the GT program, and the GT district policy of a neighboring small school district. The State Plan was obtained from the Texas Education Agency website. The district policy for the Gray ISD GT program was obtained from a district administrator. The GT policy of a similar-size, neighboring district was obtained from that district's website. The three policies/plans were reviewed for similarities. The State Plan was compared against the Gray ISD plan and the neighboring district's plan.

### **Data Collection**

The first step in the data collection process was to identify the participants that would be interviewed. The parent participants were located through a search of district databases. District

personnel provided me with the names of parents of ELLs that were tested for placement in the gifted program. I contacted the participants mevia phone call, letter, and/or in person. The first initial contact was with a phone call. The phone call asked the parent to be on the lookout for a letter to be mailed to the home. A letter mailed to the home explained the study and the participants' options for participation. Parents were also contacted in person when the opportunity arose in an informal setting. Participants were told what the interviews would involve and that they were free to stop at any point. Participants were asked to view and sign a consent form (Appendix H). They were asked for permission to record the interviews and were notified that I would also be taking notes by hand. One of the advantages of semistructured interviews is that adjustments could be made. For example, if it appeared that a question needed to be altered, I could modify the question and make note of the change. The point is that participants be free to respond as comprehensively as possible. Semistructured interviews also allowed for probing as necessary. The interview protocols are included as Appendix D and Appendix F.

Teacher participants were contacted via email. The teachers to be contacted were the ESL, bilingual, and GT teachers (one GT teacher for the district). The email explained the study and the participants' options for participation. I requested a return email indicating each teacher's preference to participate or not. At a campus faculty meeting, the I also shared plans for the study. As with the parent participants, teacher participants were told what the interviews would involve and that they were free to stop at any point. Participants were asked to view and sign a consent form (Appendix H).

Due to concerns with COVID-19, interviews took place via the online meeting program Zoom. Participants signed up for a Zoom time slot using the app SignUp Genius. The SignUp

Genius app was used to schedule several meetings throughout the day with a 30-minute break in between sessions. This allowed time for addressing any technical difficulties or tardiness on my part or participants' part. The I made every attempt to accommodate parents, teachers, and administrators, including meeting after hours if necessary. Those participants that could not access the Zoom program were interviewed through the SpeechNotes app. These participants also signed up for a time slot though the SignUp Genius app. Data collection for interviews, therefore, was done through Zoom meeting recordings or with the SpeechNotes app.

Data collection for the document review involved obtaining the district's GT policy from a district administrator. I contacted the administrator via email to schedule an initial meeting. I explained the research study to the administrator and asked for assistance in obtaining relevant documents, in this case, the district GT policy or plan. That district administrator emailed the district policy. So, the district policy was obtained from the district administrator. The State Plan was obtained and printed from the Texas Education Agency website, and the GT policy/plan of a neighboring school district was obtained and printed from that district's website.

### **Data Analysis**

After interviews were conducted, there was a process of transcribing, coding, and sorting into themes. The first step was to prepare a word-for-word transcript. Interviews were be recorded, so this helped ensure an accurate rendition of the interview. While transcribing into a word document, notes were also made to document reflections or thoughts of the transcriber. Rubin and Rubin (2012) suggested these notes made by the transcriber help guide the reformulation of questions later if necessary. Also, these notes were reminders to document prior references in the research.

After transcribing, the data were coded. One of the coding passes (Ryan & Bernard, 2003) was to read for general themes, meaning that I read the transcripts looking for themes that arose in more than one interview. This coding pass was important because it helped identify commonalities among the interviewees. Finding commonalities was important because if a theme, idea, or concern was seen, then it would mean that a particular theme was likely to be prevalent among others as well.

A second coding pass looked for something to quote. This particular coding pass was useful and important because presenting a direct quote from a participant provides a “real person” touch to the issue at hand. In addition, sometimes we come across a participant thought or expression that is just eloquent and expresses a thought so well. Also, it is important to express how a participant actually feels about an issue. These quotes added substance to the data, giving it a sense of reality, not just relying on statistics. The use of quotes also exemplifies an emic classification system because quotes use “language and categories used by people in the culture studied” (Patton, 2015, p. 337). In essence, this coding pass to look for quotes can be considered an example of the emic perspective or in vivo coding.

A third coding pass related to language. Patton (2015) stated, “Language organizes our world for us by shaping what we see, perceive, and pay attention to. The things for which people have special words tell others what is important to that culture” (p. 371). Education and educators have their own culture and their accompanying language and terminology. In the interview transcripts it was evident that there are terms unique to education, at least in the way they are applied to education or to gifted ELLs.

After rereading and coding, themes were identified. Ryan and Bernard (2003) suggested the use of word repetitions as a valid method because, “if you want to understand what people



are talking about, look at the words they use” (p. 3). Ryan and Bernard (2003) suggested that repetitions were one of the easiest ways to identify themes, but that how many repetitions warrant a theme is up to the investigator. Rubin and Rubin (2012) suggested that interviews are important because they look for examples, experiences, narratives, and stories. Interviewing allows participants to use their own words to describe their own experiences. After transcribing and coding, excerpts with the same code were sorted into a single data file and the contents of each file was summarized. Finally, the descriptions were integrated to create a complete picture. The descriptions addressed triangulation. Triangulation is using more than one source of data (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019; Terrell, 2016). Triangulation adds to the overall validity of the study by adding rigor, breadth, and depth to the study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). In the current study, triangulation was addressed through the interviewing of three different sources: parents, teachers, and administrators.

Data analysis for the document review included the analysis of the three plans or policies obtained. After obtaining the paper copies of the three policies or plans, a table was developed to compare the components of each document. The State Plan served as the focus with the other two documents analyzed on how well each addressed the components in the State Plan.

### ***Methods for Establishing Trustworthiness***

To establish trustworthiness, I used credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. When we establish credibility, Terrell (2016) stated, “we are stating that our study results are believable or credible from the perspectives of a participant in the study” (p. 174). Trustworthiness was done with triangulation, using interviews and document review.

Bloomberg and Volpe (2019) defined transferability as “how well the study has made it possible for readers to decide whether similar processes will be at work in their own settings and

communities by understanding in depth how they occur at the research site” (p. 205). Bloomberg and Volpe stated that although qualitative researchers do not expect their findings to be generalizable to all other settings, it is quite likely that what is learned in one setting could be useful to another. For this research study, transferability was done by providing a thick description of results, meaning that there were substantial details of the results. Dependability, Bloomberg and Volpe (2019) stated, “refers to the stability and consistency of data over time; in addition, the implication is that data are dependable in the sense that they are answering your research questions” (p. 204). Dependability was addressed by including detailed and thorough explanation of how data were collected and analyzed. A goal of confirmability, according to Bloomberg and Volpe (2019), “is to acknowledge and explore the ways that our biases and prejudices impact our interpretations of data, and to address those to the fullest extent possible through reflexivity, dialogic engagement, and reflective discourse” (p. 205). Confirmability was established through reflexivity, meaning that I was able to maintain awareness that any actions on my part might affect outcomes of the study.

### ***Researcher’s Role***

Bloomberg and Volpe (2019) stated that, “since description, understanding, interpretation, and communication are the primary goals, the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and data analysis” (p. 46). Bloomberg and Volpe suggested that the researcher is both insider and outsider. With respect to this research study, I was an insider in the sense that I have nominated ELLs for the district’s gifted program. As a bilingual educator, I have the cultural awareness necessary to identify characteristics of gifted ELLs. I have a keen interest in the study because I have seen gifted ELLs go unidentified. On the other hand, I was also an outsider in the sense that I am not part of the district’s gifted program.

My role in the study was both subjective and objective. My role was subjective in the sense that I know the setting and I am a part of it. I played a significant role in developing relationships with interviewees in order to obtain genuine data from interviews. I was objective in the sense that I abstained from influencing responses from participants and conducted reflexivity. Creswell (2013) suggested that when a researcher practices reflexivity, “the inquirer reflects about how their role in the study and their personal background, culture, and experiences hold potential for shaping their interpretations, such as the themes they advance and the meaning they ascribe to the data” (p. 186). In other words, as applied to this study, reflexivity means that my own background may have shaped the direction of the study. I was therefore cognizant of my own experiences and how they could potentially guide the study.

### ***Ethical Considerations***

The study received approval from ACU’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to data collection. The study used human subjects, so confidentiality and anonymity had to be maintained. Anonymity was achieved by using pseudonyms for the study site and pseudonyms for participants. The study did not include any identifying information of individual participants.

Confidentiality, Bloomberg and Volpe (2019) stated, “is an agreement with the researcher about what can be done with the information obtained about a research participant; this is specified in the informed consent” (p. 201). Confidentiality was maintained through the use of a consent form developed with ACU. Maintaining confidentiality was critical to developing and maintaining a trust relationship between me and the participants.

### ***Assumptions***

Researcher assumptions, according to Bloomberg and Volpe (2019) are, “statements that reflect what you hold to be true as you go into the study and from which you believe you will be

able to draw some conclusions” (p. 130). I made assumptions about the population, setting, and research design for the study. I assumed that teachers, administrators, and parents of gifted ELLs would have specific understandings related to the identification process. I assumed that all participants would be truthful in their interviews. I assumed that the case study approach was the best method for this study because the case study approach would present richer, detailed data than a quantitative study. I assumed that all relevant stakeholders would genuinely commit to participating in the study. Additionally, I assumed that district personnel would provide the relevant, necessary district data. Later, at the end of the research, I revisited and reflected on my initial assumptions.

### ***Limitations***

Limitations, according to Bloomberg and Volpe (2019), are potential weaknesses of the study and the scope of the study (p. 13). For this research study, limitations included the data sources, which were limited to interviews and document review. The interview data from administrators may be a small contribution to results because only two administrators were interviewed, so this was a limitation. Another limitation was generalization. Because the case study was so specific, generalizations cannot be made. That is, we cannot say that these results will be indicative of results elsewhere. Yet, this is not necessarily negative. Study results will contribute to knowledge about contexts that are similar to the study site.

### ***Delimitations***

Delimitations are “those conditions or parameters that the researcher intentionally imposes in order to limit the scope of a study” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019, p. 13). Bloomberg and Volpe commented that limits on the scope of a study include using participants of certain ages, genders, or groups, or conducting the research in a single setting. Delimitations for this

research study include the fact that the study took place in a single setting (Gray Avenue Elementary) and that very specific groups participated in the study. That is, participants were adults affiliated with gifted ELLs. This study researched the understandings of the identification process of ELLs for gifted programs in Gray ISD. The identification process applies to all students, but this study only considered the identification process as it applies to ELLs, so this is yet another delimitation. In addition, while important, the study did not consider how ELLs are served in gifted programs once they are identified.

### **Summary**

This chapter described the problem to be studied, the research method, and design for the study. The problem that was examined was the underrepresentation of ELLs in gifted programs, particularly at Gray Avenue Elementary in Gray ISD. The purpose of this study was to examine the identification process of ELLs identified as gifted and talented. The research questions were: What are teachers' understandings of the identification process for ELLs identified as gifted? What are parents' understandings of the identification process for ELLs identified as gifted? What are administrators' understandings of the identification process for ELLs identified as gifted? Using LatCrit theory as a framework, this qualitative study utilized a narrative case study approach. Key participants were parents of ELLs tested for GT, teachers of ELLs, and administrators at Gray Avenue Elementary in Gray ISD, a small, rural school district located in south central Texas.

The chapter described the setting and context for the study. The context was an elementary school in Gray ISD, a small, rural school district. The study used a qualitative method with a case study design. It included interviews and document review. Teachers, parents, and administrators were interviewed. In addition, the documents that were reviewed in this study

were the Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented Students (State Plan), the Gray ISD district policy for the GT program, and the GT district policy of a neighboring small school district.

The population consisted of parents, teachers, and administrators affiliated with gifted ELLs at Gray Avenue in Gray ISD. The eight teachers interviewed were those teachers of bilingual or ESL students. The district GT coordinator was included the group of ESL teachers. The two administrators on the campus were interviewed. Six parents were interviewed: three parents of ELLs that were tested and identified for GT and three parents of ELLs that were tested but not identified for GT.

Data were collected through semistructured interviews and through the review of documents. Interviews were transcribed, coded, and summarized to look for themes. Document reviews were compiled with interview data to develop a compilation of understandings of the GT identification process. Ethical considerations included obtaining IRB approval and ensuring anonymity and confidentiality. Assumptions were made and explained. Limitations and delimitations were included. Limitations included the small number of administrators interviewed. Delimitations included the study considered the understanding of the identification process for ELLs and not how they are served once identified.

Finally, the method helped me successfully carry out my purpose by providing me with rich and detailed data that could not otherwise be obtained from a quantitative study. A case study provides the opportunity to develop substantial relationships with participants. This in turn helped ensure reliable interview data.

## **Chapter 4: Results**

The purpose of this case study was to explore teacher, administrator, and parent understanding of the identification process for the gifted and talented program in Gray ISD, in order to gain insights for improving the identification of English Language Learners (ELLs) for the gifted and talented (GT) program. The overall research question was: Based on their understandings of the GT identification process, what insights do teachers, administrators, and parents provide to improve the identification of ELLs for the GT program? There were three research questions posed in the study: (1) Based on their understandings of the GT identification process, what insights do teachers provide to improve the identification of ELLs for the GT program? (2) Based on their understandings of the GT identification process, what insights do administrators provide to improve the identification of ELLs for the GT program? (3) Based on their understandings of the GT identification process, what insights do parents provide to improve the identification of ELLs for the GT program?

The purpose of this chapter is to report the results of the data analysis gathered from 16 semistructured interviews that were conducted. This chapter will also report on the document review and analysis of the district's policy on GT. This chapter is organized in the following order: introduction and restatement of purpose, review of research process, analysis of the data, themes that emerged from the interviews, summary of the analysis of the district's GT policy, and a summary of the chapter.

### **Review of Research Process**

This qualitative case study utilized a case study design. In-depth interviews with parents, teachers, and administrators were used as data sources for this study. Teacher, parent, and administrator interviews followed a semistructured format using an interview protocol that was

developed for this study. There were two sets of protocols developed for interviews. The interview protocol for teachers and administrators as well its justification is found in the appendix section of the study. The interview protocol for parents as well as its justification can also be found in the appendix section of the study.

Due to concerns about COVID-19, interviews were conducted digitally with the online program Zoom, where audio and visual files were created. The participants that were unable to access Zoom were audio recorded by phone using the SpeechNotes app. I also used a recording sheet to take notes during the interviews.

Other materials in the study were documents. The documents reviewed in this study were the Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented Students (State Plan), the Gray ISD district policy for the GT program, and the GT district policy of a neighboring small school district. For purposes of this study, the neighboring school district is referred to as Now ISD. The State Plan was obtained from the Texas Education Agency website. The district policy for the GT program was obtained from a district administrator. The GT policy of a similar-size, neighboring district was obtained from that district's website. The three policies/plans were reviewed for similarities. The State Plan was compared against the Gray ISD plan and the neighboring district's plan.

### **Presentation of the Findings**

This study utilized a qualitative case study approach to data collection to answer the three research questions. The goal was to gain insights from teachers, administrators, and parents in order to improve the GT identification process for ELLs. Triangulation added to the overall validity of the study by adding rigor, breadth, and depth to the study. Triangulation is using more than one source of data (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019; Terrell, 2016). In this study, triangulation



was addressed through the interviewing of three different sources: parents, teachers, and administrators. Creswell (2013) stated that if themes are established based on combining several sources of data or perspectives from participants, then this process can be considered as adding to the validity of the study. Participants concluded that ELLs were not being appropriately identified for the district's GT program due to a variety of issues. The issues were identified, and suggestions were made for improvement. Some of the major issues identified were the language barrier, lack of teachers' and administrators' knowledge of the GT process, and parents' lack of awareness. The three different perspectives helped triangulate this data.

The research questions were used to guide participants in offering ideas and suggestions. The presentation of findings is divided into a section on interviews and a section on document review. The interviews section is divided into teacher interviews, administrator interviews, and parent interviews. Within each of these interview sections, themes are identified and explored.

### ***Interviews***

Interviews were conducted to address all three research questions. Those interviewed were eight teachers of ELLs, two campus administrators, and six parents of ELLs. The eight teachers interviewed included six ESL teachers and two bilingual teachers. The district coordinator was included among the six ESL teachers. The administrators that were interviewed were the two campus administrators. Two sets of parents were interviewed. One set of parents was parents of ELLs that were tested but did not qualify for GT. The other set of parents was parents of ELLs that were tested and did qualify for GT.

### ***Teacher Interviews***

The overall discovery here was that most teachers felt unprepared to identify ELLs. Most teachers welcomed additional training on GT in general and specifically on identifying ELLs for

GT. Parents were mentioned frequently. Teachers felt that parents want to be involved and need more information and guidance to be more involved. Language of testing as well as language for informational material was also widely expressed.

Teacher interviews were needed to address Research Question 1: Based on their understandings of the GT identification process, what insights do teachers provide to improve the identification of ELLs for the GT program? Teachers interviewed were those teachers on the Gray Avenue campus that had ELLs in their classrooms. This included six ESL teachers and two bilingual teachers. The GT facilitator/teacher was included in the group of six ESL teachers. The ESL teachers were identified as ESL-1, ESL-2, ESL-3, ESL-4, ESL-5, and ESL-6. The bilingual teachers were identified as BIL-1 and BIL-2. The two themes that emerged from teacher interviews were that teachers needed more training on the GT program itself and that changes needed to be made to the GT testing process.

**Theme 1 From Teacher Interviews: Teachers Need More Training on the GT Program Itself.** Four of the six ESL teachers reported they did not have enough training or knowledge of the GT program. ESL-2 and ESL-4 were the only teachers who reported having the 30-hour foundation training. The two bilingual teachers both reported not having enough training or knowledge of the GT program. None of the bilingual teachers reported having the 30-hour foundation training. All teachers stated they would welcome additional training to help identify ELLs for GT.

ESL-4 also serves as the district's GT facilitator/teacher, so she reported more training and knowledge than any of the other teachers. This teacher reported that she had received the initial 30-hour foundation training and then also completed the yearly 6-hour update. She is the person who writes and conducts GT training for the district. She stated she had written a few of

the 6-hour updates over the years and later conducted some shorter sessions after school. One year she offered an optional 45-minutes session at the beginning of the year.

ESL-1, ESL-3, ESL-5, and ESL-6 all reported having the yearly 6-hour update but not the original 30-hour foundation. However, these four teachers did state that the yearly 6-hour update, although required, was not consistently completed or verified. ESL-2 and ESL-4 reported having the 30-hour foundation training and then the yearly 6-hour update. ESL-2 commented, “I think teachers need better training to help identify because overall I think that the tests she gives are ok.” ESL-2 reported that the possibility is there to identify ELLs but feels that teachers are not educated enough in looking for those criteria in their students. While ESL-2 reported having training, she admitted she had not received any training specific to identification.

Several teachers had issue with the GT facilitator/teacher and the training that was provided. Four of the six ESL teachers and both bilingual teachers were dissatisfied with the training provided by the district. In Gray ISD, GT training is provided by the GT facilitator/teacher. Six of the eight teachers interviewed reported unsatisfactory or incomplete training. One teacher reported receiving training from the district coordinator but felt that it was incomplete because it was simply a one-page pamphlet or flyer. She felt the training was rushed and hurried and felt more like, ‘here you go, and my part is done.’ There were a few pages of what GT looks like in special populations, but teachers wanted a more specific idea of what goes on during testing. ESL-6 reported a feeling of haphazardness when it came to training, saying that training should be more than a sheet of paper. She suggested teachers needed examples of a gifted child’s work versus the work of an intelligent child. This would help for comparison purposes. Teachers would be able to distinguish a gifted child from an intelligent child. Further

guidance would be needed as this distinction applies to ELLs. ESL-1 commented that training was not done very well in Gray ISD, stating:

I think it's more education for everybody, including Mrs. X (GT facilitator), education in terms of testing and teachers to, you know, know what we're really getting. We're not looking specifically at ELLs, you know. It's just a general overview of what your GT kid looks like. I think it's going to be different when you're looking at ELL kids.

ESL-1 commented, "I feel like I know it, but I wish I knew more about the actual testing, like what our kids see or do, you know? I wish I could see what kids see, the actual test." This teacher reported the testing as cumbersome, taking hours to complete, yet remains unsure of the process. She also suggested that training needed to start with the GT facilitator/teacher. ESL-1 suggested that the GT facilitator/teacher herself needs more education, particularly regarding ELLs and other subpopulations. If the facilitator was more knowledgeable about the district's subpopulations, she could in turn guide classroom teachers. ESL-6 reported:

I feel okay about it although I wouldn't say I'm super knowledgeable about it. When I first started teaching, we did have GT trainings, but now it seems like it's only for the teachers who are GT certified. Those of us who are not GT certified, we don't get included on trainings.

Another teacher reported her only training as being videos. The training was completed at the beginning of the year and she received no further training. Because it was the beginning of the year, she really did not give it the time it required so that hindered her learning. No other formal training was received and nothing specific to identifying gifted students. She said she would welcome some in-person training so she could feel more knowledgeable and therefore more capable of identifying and helping gifted ELLs.

## **Theme 2 From Teacher Interviews: Changes Need to be Made to the Testing**

**Process.** In addition to needing more training, teachers also suggested that changes need to be made to the testing process. They felt that many ELLs were being excluded using the current testing process. Teachers also felt that the testing process was not culturally sensitive. One teacher felt that ELLs were not qualifying because they were not accustomed to test taking. ESL-1 suggested knowing more about the testing. Although she did not advocate teaching to the test, she did advocate for teachers having more knowledge of what testing looks like and what it involves. She questioned what in the format of the test or in the questioning made it so much more difficult for ELLs to qualify.

Suggestions made by the interviewed teachers included the use of portfolios, testing in the students' native language, educating parents as much as possible, and online testing. What follows is discussion on each of those suggestions.

**Portfolios.** Six of the eight teachers suggested that portfolios be used. ESL-5 commented not being aware of portfolios but believed it would be wise to use them. Portfolios are a better reflection of what a student can actually do. Although she was unfamiliar with the portfolio component, she was sure that it would help in the identification process. She concluded that entry into GT should involve more than a test. She commented, "From my understanding, they take a test, like, for hours, but it doesn't really showcase anything the students are capable of doing."

ESL-1 also reported that portfolios were not used in the GT process in Gray ISD, stating that she has never been asked to collect a portfolio for review by the GT facilitator/teacher. However, she felt that a portfolio would give a more complete picture than a checklist.

ESL-4 stated that currently the testing is made up of mostly quantitative measures and no portfolios are used. Students take verbal abilities tests and a cognitive test. The only qualitative measure is a creativity test. At one point, parent checklists were used, but so many of them came back incorrect, they were not useful as a valid data point. Parent checklists are no longer used. She commented, “The creativity test is the only qualitative piece of information we have. Everything else is based off what the kid does on their own on the test.”

***Test in Native Language.*** Most teachers advocated for testing in Spanish, the native language of most ELLs in Gray ISD. Teachers felt that English testing was hindering ELLs in their efforts to qualify for GT. They also commented that Spanish testing is available for state testing so it should be available for GT testing as well. One interviewee believed that ELLs often qualify for GT later in their academic years when they have more fully developed their English language. However, she considered this to be unfair to ELLs. ESL-3 stated, “I feel that testing needs to be more geared to them, in their language.”

ESL-3 also commented that while cognitive tests were given, she still believed that testing should be done in Spanish by a bilingual staff member that could adequately explain directions and expectations to students. One of the bilingual teachers also expressed that testing should be done in Spanish because not all students had a high enough fluency level in English to be able to fairly test in English. She stated, “Testing is unfair to our bilingual students. They are tested in a language they have not yet mastered. Just because they are not fluent in English doesn’t mean they are not gifted.” ESL-4 also commented that during testing she sees a lot of insecurity in the ELLs and wonders if part of that is related to language differences.

ESL-5 commented that students are tested in a language they are struggling to master, saying, “It already takes five to seven years to master a second language, so how could they

fairly be tested in that language?” Teachers agreed that students needing testing in another language should be tested in that other language in order to get a more accurate picture of their capabilities.

Several teachers reported that they had nominated ELLs for GT in the past but that none had qualified. ESL-1 commented, “I don’t know if there is breakdown in vocabulary because of language, or, I don’t know.” She stated that currently the district’s process does not identify ELLs or other subpopulations, saying, “We don’t know why and maybe it’s because testing is geared more towards kids who have access to, you know, like resources. All the resources are in English and I was thinking we need more opportunities for different experiences.” She suggested that non-ELLs are at an advantage because ELLs do not typically have the means to learning experiences outside the school environment.

Another teacher stated that some students are still young, and they are not good test takers. Tests are still overwhelming to them. Sometimes they qualify later when they have their English more developed and can communicate a little better. She advocated for testing in Spanish, saying:

I mean as far as like STAAR testing or other different things, it’s offered in their language. So why not GT test them in their native language if they need it, and help explain words to them like they do on different tests?

BIL-2 believes that because the Spanish language is not appreciated, there is a barrier for bilingual students. She commented, “Teachers are not familiar with bilingualism, so they do our students a disservice by not really knowing about them, what they need, and how they learn.” She also reported that if teachers do not understand bilingualism, they cannot accurately identify bilingual students for GT and service them once they do get identified for the program. Parents

need to know that Spanish is an option so they can advocate for their students. BIL-1 expressed her concern with Spanish language in general, commenting:

Honestly, I know because our person who's in charge of GT doesn't have the ability to speak, you know, both languages, she needs help. But I do think it would be nice if we had, you know, someone who could come in and conduct it in their first language also is they needed it, you know what I mean?

**Parents.** All teachers reported that parents were not as involved as they could be and suggested that more be done to educate and include parents. Most teachers shared that parents of ELLs were not involved at school but did not blame the parents. Teachers stated that parents do not have the resources or information that they need. Parents had shared their concerns about not aware of things or happenings at school.

To help with information, ESL-4 commented that she is working on a PowerPoint presentation for parents and teachers but there was no indication as to when this presentation would occur. SL-6 suggested the district host informational sessions for parents. She was aware of dyslexia information sessions so perhaps there could be something similar held for GT information. Parents need to know what GT looks like, although some parents do not even know the program exists. ESL-1 added that parents do not know what characteristics to look for.

BIL-1 felt that nominations should come from teachers but that parents should be educated about how the program works. She commented:

Like a lot of my ELL kids, the parents didn't really understand what GT was. They didn't realize that yes, your kid is really, really gifted. If we could maybe explain that better to parents and maybe give them different strategies to be able work with these kids to help



them, you know, because they're extremely smart and whatever helps them is what we need to do.

BIL-2 reported that although teachers might be the starting point for the GT process, parents should also play a role. She believes that parents should also have a voice in the process of recognizing the talents of their students and having a fair chance at entry into the GT program. This bilingual teacher suggested informing parents about the program so they know their children can also be in the program. Parents had previously shared their concerns about language of the testing and that they did not know where to go to ask for questions or for help.

Parents should be able to speak with anyone affiliated with the GT program. If parents have any questions or concerns, they should be able to know who to contact and be able to communicate with that person as needed for the benefit of their students. Bil-2 shared that parents have commented they would like to be able to help their student but do not know how to help or what kind of help to provide.

***Online Testing.*** Only one teacher made mention of this idea. ESL-4 reported that online testing would be a good change. Online testing had been used for intermediate grade levels but starting the following school year, online testing would be used for all grade levels. She felt this would be a better indicator than the booklet testing that had been done. However, the booklets will continue to be used until they are all gone. She commented, "I'm really excited about the online testing and where it's going to take us because I really feel, you know, it's going to be a great thing for the program moving forward. I'm excited, it's very promising."

### ***Administrator Interviews***

Administrator interviews were needed to address Research Question 2: Based on their understandings of the GT identification process, what insights do administrators provide to

improve the identification of ELLs for the GT program? The administrators interviewed for this study were two administrators from the Gray Avenue Elementary campus. The administrators were identified as Admin-1 and Admin-2. The two major themes that emerged from administrator interviews were that administrators needed more training on the GT program itself and that changes needed to be made to the GT testing process. What follows is discussion on those two themes.

**Theme 1 From Administrator Interviews: Administrators Need More Training on the GT Program Itself.** This theme also emerged from teacher interviews. Teachers concluded that more training was needed. Administrators also expressed a need and an interest for more training. They felt that more training for them could in turn help teachers and students. Both administrators interviewed stated that they lacked information and training on the district's GT program. Admin-1 commented, "I feel that it's not as out there as other districts that I've worked in. Right now, here, it's not clear how to go about nominating and testing for GT." When she first started teaching, she received the initial 30-hour foundation training and subsequently received the yearly 6-hour update. However, she reports that since being in Gray ISD, she has not consistently received yearly training or updates, stating:

Since being in Gray, I don't feel like I've had the training, or it's not been as prevalent or as important as it was at the other district. I feel like it's kind of like, do it on your own. And a lot of times people don't do it on their own, you know, and so if they don't, they don't. They're not required or made to do it.

Admin-1 feels that perhaps an expectation has not been set or perhaps there is no follow-through when there are requirements or expectations. Nonetheless, she believes that there needs

to be mandatory yearly GT training for teachers and administrators. Not only should teachers watch videos for GT training, they should also have hands on training. She commented:

I mean, you could do all the online videos that you want, but really, hands on and person to person, I think it's going to give you a better output and better understanding of what you need to be doing for your students.

Training is important so that teachers know how to adequately serve or help their students. Specifically, she mentioned that teachers will often give students harder work or above grade level work, thinking that by doing this they are meeting the needs of their gifted students. She believes that if administrators are better trained, they in turn can influence and guide teachers accordingly.

Admin-2 reported she did not receive the basic 30-hour foundation training that is typical for teachers of GT students and added that if she did receive any kind of training it was back in the late 80's when she first started teaching. While working at a catholic school, she did not receive any GT training because there was no GT program there. Then, once she returned to Gray ISD, training has been minimal. She remembered viewing the required videos at the beginning of the school year since those are required of all staff, but nothing beyond video training. However, Admin-2 did suggest that more training is needed for all staff and that training should include information on how to specifically identify ELLs for GT. She believes that kind of training would be beneficial for all staff, especially since all staff should take part in looking for talent. She believes if all staff are properly trained, they could all take part in identifying ELLs for GT.

Admin-2 also reported feeling uneasy about the GT identification process in general as well as how it applies for ELLs. She stated, "All I know is it's basically a teacher

recommendation for the student who they feel has those qualities of a GT student. Of course, a parent can request that their child go into that process.” Admin-2 understands the process to be determined on a test. She added, “I’m sure the teachers and parents have some informative form that they fill out to give, you know, a little background on the child, but I honestly couldn’t tell you how heavily that information is weighed.” Admin-2 also believes that teachers and parents receive checklists to complete on a nominated student but that cognitive tests are a big part of qualifying for GT.

**Theme 2 From Administrator Interviews: Changes Need to be Made to the Testing Process.** This theme also emerged from the teacher interviews. Teachers suggested changes to the testing process but differed a bit from the administrators’ responses. Teachers’ suggestions did not include accommodations.

Both administrators addressed concerns with the testing process in general and had several suggestions regarding the testing process. Specifically, they advocated for the use of accommodations during testing, the use of portfolios, the use of classroom observations, and the use of different staff members. What follows is a more detailed report of those comments and suggestions.

***Accommodations.*** This is one area where teachers and administrators differed. Teachers made no mention of accommodations as a change for testing. However, both Admin-1 and Admin-2 suggested the use of accommodations during testing. Admin-1 expressed her concern about GT being misunderstood, commenting:

So, I think that GT has become a kind of place where we have this idea, this ideology, of perfect behaved students in this perfect little room in this perfect little world where

they're so great and we forget about the other kids who may fall out of that little realm of perfection and might not qualify because they don't fit the pattern.

Admin-2 suggested that testing was too limiting, and that certain students are sometimes excluded because of that. For example, she shared that students with ADHD might not do so well on a written test because they cannot sit still long enough. However, that should not hold them back from being in GT if they are truly gifted. Accommodations need to be made for those kinds of students as well as for others who have conditions or circumstances that affect their testing.

Admin-2 stated there are accommodations for STAAR testing, so there should also be accommodations for GT testing. It is, after all, another type of high stakes testing. She suggested that some students may need one-on-one or small group testing, just like for STAAR testing.

Admin-1 commented:

Well, if he can't sit still for the test, he's not going to qualify, right? We have to take into consideration what we do for all tests. For one thing, we let them take a break. We do that for STAAR, so why can't we do that for GT?

Both administrators that were interviewed agreed that although accommodations were not currently used for GT testing, they should be.

***Portfolios.*** Like the teachers, administrators also suggested the use of portfolios. Currently, portfolios are not part of the testing or identification process. Admin-1 commented, "I know in my other district there were portfolios, and they pull the students, and they do different activities with them. But here, in Gray ISD, I don't know that they do that." She stated that in Gray ISD, entry into GT was all based on academic qualifications, but she was worried about what happened to those students who fall behind academically. Administrators suggested that

portfolios could provide a more in-depth and complete picture of a student's abilities. Admin-2 stated:

I would think portfolios should be used because that's an important piece to the process. You'd think that would be a good indicator to like the kind of things they could produce, or I think you just need different pieces besides just the test and one teacher's perspective. So, more than just the test and more than just one teacher's perspective.

***Classroom Observations.*** This suggestion was unique to the administrators as teachers did not identify classroom observations as a potential change. Admin-2 did suggest the use of classroom observations as a change. Classroom observations are conducted by various staff members when a student is identified for special education testing. Likewise, she stated, classroom observations would provide another perspective on students nominated for GT. Admin-2 suggested someone come in and observe a student in the classroom and how that student relates to peers. It could be an opportunity to look for leadership qualities. Characteristics like leadership qualities would not be evident on a test. Sometimes there might be a question about leadership on a teacher questionnaire, but that simple question would not provide enough information like an actual observation would. Again, she pointed out there is more to identification than a test.

***Different Staff.*** This did not emerge as a theme from teacher interviews, but one teacher did mention using different staff. However, both administrators did advocate for the use of different or additional staff. One of the main staffing issues identified by administrators was the fact that the district GT facilitator is also the GT teacher. One person is responsible for testing and teaching, so administrators expressed concern about this. Administrators believed that it was not feasible for one staff member to carry all that responsibility.

Admin-1 insisted that not only is more staff needed overall, but specifically, more staff is needed in the district's GT program. She shared:

You come down to a staffing issue because you'll have more kids to pull, and that one person can't do it all. Well, maybe we need another person to be able to help with that. I think it comes down to the staffing piece, you know, when one person has to do six or seven grade levels. It really is hard. You know, it's not a feasible thing for a person to do all that.

Admin-2 supported the staffing issue, saying, "I think in our district we rely so heavily on just that one perspective from that test, okay, and it's given by the teacher who runs the program or who is the teacher of the program." Because the same person administers the test and also serves as the GT teacher, this complicates the situation for students. Admin-2 advocated for the use of a committee instead of relying so heavily on testing and teacher recommendations. There are committees for 504 and LPAC, so there should be a committee for GT selection. Additionally, the committee should interview student nominees to get to know those students on a personal level because a paper and pencil test does not always tell you everything you need to know to make an informed decision. The interview suggestion was unique to Admin-2.

Another concern for Admin-1 was that Gray ISD does not specifically address GT testing of ELLs, stating, "It may be the fact that, you know, when we think about the GT teacher, and nothing against her, but she is monolingual English, and we have no one else who will do our bilingual students." Admin-1 advocated for more Spanish testing resources so that bilingual students can more accurately be tested in their native language. She shared:

I guess I'm saying we should use the right testing resources so that we test them in their L1 (native language) instead of transitioning them to L2 (English) just so that the GT teacher is able to provide services to them.

Both administrators agreed that students should be tested by someone familiar to them. The GT facilitator/teacher is monolingual and serves several campuses, so students on the Gray Avenue campus do not have an opportunity to get to know the GT facilitator/teacher. Because the GT facilitator/teacher is monolingual, students cannot communicate with her unless they themselves have a good command of the English language. Admin-1 commented that students might be hesitant to answer questions and interact with the GT facilitator/teacher because they do not know her. As a result, students will not perform to the best of their abilities because they do not feel comfortable with her. She suggested that the district hire a bilingual GT facilitator or an additional staff member that would be better able to communicate with the bilingual students. This additional staff member would be able to test students in their language and would also be someone with which they are comfortable.

### ***Parent Interviews***

Parent interviews were needed to address Research Question 3: Based on their understandings of the GT identification process, what insights do parents provide to improve the identification of ELLs for the GT program? Six parents were interviewed for this study. The six parent participants included three parents of students who were nominated but did not qualify for GT and three parents of students who were nominated and did qualify for GT. The parents of students who were nominated and qualified for GT were identified as Parent-1-Qual, Parent-2-Qual, and Parent-3-Qual. The parents of students who were nominated but did not qualify for GT were identified as Parent-1-DNQ, Parent-2-DNQ, and Parent-3-DNQ. Three themes emerged



from parent interviews: (1) parents need more information overall, (2) parents and students need more opportunities, and (3) parents need everything in their native language of Spanish. What follows is a breakdown of how parents responded.

**Theme 1 From Parent Interviews: We Need More Information Overall.** Regardless of whether their student qualified for GT, all parents interviewed expressed a concern for a lack of information. None of the parents had heard of the GT program until the child's teacher had nominated the student. In most cases, the parents did not even sign the permission form for testing until the teacher explained the contents of the form itself and for what it was going to be used. Lack of information about GT about a concern for all parents. Parent-1-Qual stated:

I don't know much about a program. When he was in kindergarten his teacher sent me a letter that if I wanted him to get tested because she thought that he had what he needed to be in the program. So, at first, I was like, well, what is it, you know? I was kind of questioning because ... what is GT? You know, I don't want to sign no papers and not knowing what it is, right?

Parent-1-Qual shared that the teacher briefly explained the program to her and informed her that he would be tested in English. This parent explained that she was concerned about testing because her son spoke mostly Spanish and the little English he did know was what she taught him at home. She added:

Me not understanding the program, right, as a parent, has made it really hard for him because I don't know how to help him or make him grow because I thought this was just happening at this school. I thought maybe the program was different at other schools. I really don't have an explanation or ever had a meeting where they tell me really what it is or how it works. I think that would especially help Hispanic parents to help us figure out

what this program is and how I can help my children, or my kids, go into this program. A lot of us receive letters and we really don't know what it is.

Parent-2-Qual was one of the few parents who could read English. He was able to read the permission form requesting that his son be tested for GT but was unsure about what GT was. Again, as other parents did, he asked the classroom teacher about it. He stated that the letter was not clear about who would do the testing, what the testing involved, or how his child would benefit once he was in the program. He added, "I'd like to know what they do in GT. I mean, I guess he's doing well, but how do I know?" He advocated for a kind of progress report from GT or perhaps a meeting with the GT teacher to talk about his son's progress. Overall, parents need informational meetings so they understand what is going with their students' education and how they can better support their students for academic success.

Parent-3-Qual agreed with the need for information. She, like every other parent in the study, reported that she was hesitant to sign the permission form for testing because she did not understand what it was. She could not ask anyone at school because no one in the office spoke Spanish. Once she signed the form, her daughter was tested and qualified. However, she was concerned because she still lacked information. She commented:

Who's in charge of GT? Who is the teacher? I don't know who she is. I've never met her and I wouldn't know her if I saw her. What do they do there in GT? How can I help my daughter succeed? We need more personnel and more information from personnel.

This parent, although glad her daughter qualified for GT, still lacked information. She understood that she would get updates from the program but to date she has not received anything like a progress report. Just like there are progress reports and report cards for all other

classes, there should be a report card from the GT teacher. Parent-3-Qual feels that she needs to know how her daughter is performing in GT so she can help her improve as needed.

Parents were also adamant that they wanted more information overall, including information on the district's bilingual program and the UIL competitions.

Most parents knew nothing about school programs or where to find information on programs. One parent commented, "There is no meeting or gathering of any kind to help me learn what is going on in school or how I could help my children succeed." She shared that when she got a note about GT testing for her son, it was in Spanish and so she could understand the letter, but she was still not clear about the content. She had no idea why her son would be tested or what it would involve. She hesitated to sign the letter until another teacher explained the program to her. She also felt fortunate that her sister had gone through that experience so she could go to her sister with basic questions. However, although her sister had gone through the process, they were both confused as to the workings of the program.

Parents need more information overall and would like to see some kind of meeting or notice informing them of the different types of programs or activities that are offered at school. Parents need to know what is offered, what it takes to qualify, and if they do not qualify, why the child did not qualify. They also need to be given, or at least offered, some ideas and materials on how to help their students. Parents reported needing information on the bilingual program itself. They do not understand the program and what it does for the students. For one parent, there was frustration with her son's education because one year he received all English instruction and struggled. Then the following year he received all Spanish instruction and struggled. She did not understand why her son was placed in such different settings and no one explained any of that to her.

Parent-3-DNQ also commented that there is a lack of information from school. She was unsure of the GT note that came home. She was hesitant to sign something she did not understand and did not know where to go for answers. She, like other parents in the study, went to the classroom teacher since she was bilingual. The classroom teacher gave her a brief overview of the program but could not explain the program or the qualifying process in detail like the parent requested. Parent-3-DNQ also stated that she would like to know what is involved in the GT testing, saying, “I don’t know how to help my child if I don’t know what’s on the test. Is it all in English? Especially if it’s all in English, I don’t know how to help her.” Parent-3-DNQ suggested that the school hold informational meetings specifically for bilingual parents so they could be better informed about programs and activities at school.

Parent-2-DNQ reported a lack of information as a major concern. She was not familiar with the GT program until a permission form came home for her son to be tested for GT. However, like other parents, she did not understand the purpose of the testing and how participation in the program would be beneficial to her son. She also commented that she had a sincere interest in helping her son but felt ill-equipped to do so. She commented, “I know nothing about programs at school. I would love to attend a meeting where I could learn about what’s going on at school.”

### **Theme 2 From Parent Interviews: Parents and Students Need More Opportunities.**

The overall sentiment with this theme was that parents felt their students needed more opportunities at school. Parents advocated for their students getting more Spanish learning opportunities and more opportunities for different learning activities. Parents also felt they themselves needed opportunities to be informed and be involved.

Parent-1-Qual expressed concern about Spanish learning opportunities. Once her child qualified for GT, she was worried about his success because he was Spanish dominant and did not speak very much English. Her son even relayed to her, once he was in GT, that he found it difficult because he did not read or write any English. He was an outstanding and above average in Spanish but was a non-speaker in English. Parent-1-Qual stated that although bilingual students learn a second language, they are being left behind, adding:

It's hard to say that this is the only language you're going to speak. Yes, you're a very capable person and you have a lot of knowledge, but unfortunately because you don't speak that language, they're keeping you behind. So that makes a big difference, you know, to kids. They don't feel validated, you know.

In her opinion, her son qualified for GT because he knew enough English to understand the test. However, she worries about those kids who do not have any English support at home. Those kids might never qualify for GT because although they are fluent and academically superior in Spanish, they do not have enough English to qualify for GT. Those students need to be given opportunities like everyone else. She suggested:

One thing we could do is if we could test bilingual kids in Spanish, it will give a big change to those kids, testing them in their own language and then little by little helping them learn, you know, English. But testing them in their main language and giving them that opportunity to say, I'm equal to others. You know, my language, my color, does not make a difference.

Another parent, Parent-3-Qual, concurred with the need for Spanish learning opportunities. She expressed pride that her daughter qualified for GT, but she also feared for her daughter's success. She shared a story that her daughter came home crying one day because she

had difficulty in the GT class. She did not understand the teacher and she could not ask for help because the teacher was not bilingual. This mom expressed her frustration, saying:

My daughter is very capable and deserves an opportunity to show what she can do. How can I encourage her to do her best if I myself don't know what's going on or who to ask?

My daughter is very capable. She is not ready to shine in English, but she certainly shines in Spanish. Why is that not happening for her in GT?

Parent-2-Qual also advocated for more opportunities in Spanish. Although his son understands English, the language at home is Spanish and his son is more comfortable in Spanish. This parent requested that more GT work be done in Spanish so his son could feel more successful, although he was not sure how to request this of the program. He commented, "My son speaks, reads, and writes in Spanish, and he is very strong in that. Why can't he do GT work in Spanish?" Another parent, Parent-1-Qual, also shared that there are lots of intelligent children whose first language is Spanish, but unfortunately lots of those kids are getting left behind because they lack English proficiency. She added:

That's messed up, you know, that's messed up. I understand the language is English in this country, but some of those kids are in the process of coming from a home where all they speak is Spanish. They're coming to a new world. That's what I call it, you know, it's a new world for him because they go from one language to another and so it is like a new world.

Parent-3-Qual advocated for more learning opportunities and more helping opportunities. That is, that parents need more opportunities to gain information so they can support their students. Parents are more than willing to help their students, but they have not had the opportunity to do so. Parents are even willing to help each other, but, she added, "How can we

share information if none of us knows what's out there for our kids? We feel very uninformed and shut out.”

Parent-1-DNQ also shared her concern about opportunities at school. She stated that there is no room for Spanish at school. She wants to do more for her children but feels left out because there are no opportunities for things to be explained in Spanish. She expressed her frustration in feeling shut out. She added that although her son did not qualify for GT, she did not understand why. She wanted to understand why he did not qualify so she could help him improve. She added:

I didn't know why he did not qualify. Did he not pass the reading? The writing? No, I only received a letter in the mail saying he did not qualify. But I never knew why. And, I think, here in Gray, opportunities, awards, medals, and things like that only go to certain people. Not everyone gets the same opportunities. We want our children to have those same opportunities, and we are willing to put our kids in different programs if that will help them, but how can we help them if we can't even find out what exists for our kids?

Two parents suggested something along the lines of a special class for those students who did not qualify for GT. The daughter of Parent-3-DNQ has been tested twice and still has not qualified. This parent feels maybe her daughter just needs more exposure so she can develop enough to qualify for GT. Both Parent-1-DNQ and Parent-3-DNQ felt that perhaps their students could be motivated by the opportunity to attend a special class outside the traditional class where they would be further exposed to high-order thinking and special projects. These parents reported that their students just need more opportunities and more exposure to different kinds of activities. Parent-1-DNQ stated, “Even if they don't get pulled with the ones who qualified, we still need some kind of program where they can show what their capable of. I think the school needs that.”

Both parents also wanted to know how to help their student so that they could eventually qualify for GT.

Parent-2-DNQ expressed concern about GT opportunities. Her son did not qualify for the GT program, but she did not know why. She received a letter in the mail informing her that her son did not qualify but she wanted to know why he did not qualify. She stated, “Even though he did not qualify, maybe next year he will? But then, how do I help him prepare? What do I need to do help him?” She felt her son needed more time and more opportunities to prepare and qualify for the test.

**Theme 3 From Parent Interviews: Parents Need Everything in Their Native Language of Spanish.** This theme was very strong and very serious for parents. Most parents of ELLs in Gray ISD are Spanish dominant. These parents read and write Spanish and need information in Spanish. However, they reported not having the information they need in Spanish. All parents pushed for informational meetings in Spanish. The issue of general communication in Spanish was also frequently discussed. Throughout the interviews, all parents asked when such informational meetings would be held.

All parents reported that they felt a disconnect with the school because of the language barrier. Even things like registration packets were confusing because the language is confusing. Specifically, forms like media releases are confusing. Parent-1-Qual shared that she does not want her son to miss out on being celebrated in things like the yearbook or school related activities, but she does not want his picture all over the world, either. So, there is a need for more information in Spanish so she can make informed decisions.

Parent-1-Qual agreed with the need for everything from school to be in Spanish. She desperately wants to help her children but sometimes she just cannot explain things to them. She



can decipher some letters that come from school but then finds it hard to explain it to her children. In addition, her husband does not understand English at all, so if he wants to be an involved parent, he cannot. If all communications from school were in Spanish as well as English, then he could feel like a true partner with the school. The way things are now, neither parent feels adequately prepared to participate in school activities.

Any information that comes from school is in English and so parents struggle to know what is going on at school. For example, most paperwork from GT was in English so parents had a hard time knowing what to do with the paperwork and notes. In addition, according to Parent-3-Qual, the issue was the same with the UIL program. A note was sent home informing parents about upcoming UIL testing but it was in English, so she did not know what the letter was for. She spoke with the classroom teacher to get a better understanding of what the letter was asking. The classroom teacher, being a bilingual generalist teacher, could very generally explain what the letter was asking but could not adequately explain what each component of UIL was. This parent was interested in challenging her student but was not clear on the areas of UIL competition. In addition, she feared that her student would not do well because all UIL competitions were in English and not Spanish. Her daughter was academically superior in Spanish but knew little English.

Parent-3-DNQ also expressed her concern about language. She shared that she needs information from school to be in Spanish and that school hold informational meetings specifically for bilingual parents. There needs to be a meeting in Spanish and not just have a translator present. She commented, "It starts with me as a parent. I need information in Spanish. Then, well, then the testing, I think testing should be in Spanish, so all kids have a fair chance of getting into the program."

Another parent said she was willing to help her children any way she could, but she was not aware of any material that she could use. She suggested having informational meetings for parents. She commented, “There is so much out there. I think, but we, the bilingual parents, don’t know anything about it. There might be information available, but we don’t know how to get it, especially if it’s in English only.”

### ***Document Review***

Within the section on document review, three documents were reviewed: Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented Students (State Plan), the Gray ISD district policy for the GT program, and the GT district policy of a neighboring small school district. For purposes of this study, the neighboring school district is referred to as Now ISD. The section on document review presents similarities and differences among these three documents to explore how closely Gray ISD follows the State Plan for implementation of the GT program.

A review of the district’s GT policy was conducted to discover how well the district policy aligned to the state’s policy as outlined in the Texas Education Agency’s guidelines. Also, Gray ISD’s policy was compared to the policy of a similar, neighboring school district. Analysis of the two district plans revealed that Now ISD better aligned with the State Plan. Gray ISD’s policy was not as detailed nor as comprehensive as the policy of Now ISD. What follows is a breakdown of differences.

The State Plan is divided into six sections: Fidelity of Services, Student Assessment, Service Design, Curriculum and Instruction, Professional Learning, and Family/Community Involvement. Although neither school district divided its policy exactly in line with the State Plan, each district did have key components recommended by the State Plan. Neither district was 100% aligned to the State Plan.

One of the main differences between Now ISD and Gray ISD is in the definition of gifted and talented. Now ISD states its definition exactly as the State Plan, which defines gifted and talented students as

a child or youth who performs at or show the potential for performing at a remarkably high level of accomplishment when compared to others of the same age, experience, or environment and who: (1) exhibits high performance capability in an intellectual, creative, or artistic area; (2) possesses an unusual capacity for leadership; or (3) excels in a specific academic area.

Gray ISD's definition of gifted and talented does not include creative or artistic ability nor the unusual capacity for leadership. Specifically, Gray ISD's definition of a gifted and talented student is "any child or youth in grade K-12 who performs at, or shows the potential for performing at, a remarkably high level of accomplishment when compared to other of the same age, experience, or environment and who (1) exhibits high performance capability in general intellectual ability; or (2) excels in one or more specific academic fields: math, science, language arts, and/or social studies."

Another difference is in provision of services. Now ISD policy states, "A continuum of learning experiences will be provided in the Gifted/Talented services which promote self-directed learning, thinking, research, and communication." The Gray ISD policy states, "A continuum of learning experiences will be provided in the Gifted/Talented services which lead to the development of advanced-level products and/or performances." The State Plan requires that students have learning opportunities in the four foundation curricular areas, and both districts adhere to this. In addition, both districts' policies state, "Documentation of services will be maintained and that parents will be notified of in-school and out-of-school options during the

school year that are relevant to the needs of the gifted and talented students.” However, Now ISD policy is more detailed in that it states that academic options vary based on campus and teacher decisions. Now ISD also provides links to view some of the elementary academic options and the secondary academic options.

Program evaluation is another difference. The State Plan’s guidance on program evaluation falls under Fidelity of Services. The State Plan calls for annual evaluation activities to be conducted for the purpose of continued service development. Long-range evaluation of services is also required. In addition, curriculum for gifted/talented students should be modified based on annual evaluations. Now ISD and Gray ISD have differing policies on program evaluation. Gray ISD’s policy states, “Gray ISD will annually evaluate effectiveness of the Gifted/Talented program. Parents will be included in the evaluation process by having the opportunity to complete a survey on the program. The evaluation data will be shared with the school board and will be used to modify and update the district/campus improvement plans.” Now ISD’s policy states, “Now ISD will annually evaluate the Gifted/Talented program by surveying all stakeholders including students, parents/guardian, and teachers. The evaluation data will be presented to the school board and will be used as a needs assessment to be addressed in the district/campus improvement plans.” Now ISD also lists the composition of the district committee that will conduct the program evaluation.

Another area that was explored was the dissemination of information. The State Plan requires that policies, procedures, and forms be communicated and provided to families in a language and form that the families understand or to have a translator or interpreter provided to the extent possible. The two districts differed here. In Gray ISD, anyone may refer a student for the program, but only during a certain period every year. Now ISD accepts referrals from

parents, teachers, or another party at any time during the school year. In addition, Now ISD actively seeks referral during its referral period. Both districts' policies state that parents can access the identification policies through the district or campus handbook, and/or the district website, and/or by request of the written policy and procedures for the Gifted/Talented program.

There is also a difference with regard to the GT committee that convenes to determine eligibility. The State Plan requires that such committee consist of at least three local district or campus educators who have received training in the nature and needs of gifted/talented students and who have met and reviewed the individual student data. The Gray ISD policy meets this minimal State Plan for committee composition. Now ISD, however, meets the State Plan exemplary status for committee composition because its committee is composed of at least three local district or campus educators who have received the 30-hour GT training.

Transfer of GT students was also considered. The State Plan requires that a policy be in place for transfer students and the student's assessment data be made available to the receiving district. Here the two districts are similar but still differ in how the transfer student and his records are handled. Gray ISD policy states that when screening records are received from the student's previous district, the records are examined for correspondence to Gray ISD's criteria. If it is determined that data are insufficient, Gray ISD will assess the student to see if placement is appropriate and a decision will be made within 30 days of receipt of the student's Gifted/Talented assessment results from the previous district. Now ISD's policy for transfer students is straight forward. In Now ISD, identified gifted and talented students transferring into the district are automatically placed in the district's program.

Another area considered was appeals. The State Plan requires there is a policy for appeals that allows parents, students, and educators to appeal placement decisions in a timely manner and

to present new data if appropriate. Now ISD's policy on appeals is more comprehensive than Gray ISD in its content. Now ISD's policy states that appeals must be made in writing within 30 days of notification of action by the G/T selection committee. Upon receipt, the committee will review the student's referral, scores, and performance. The committee may interview the student to determine whether special or unusual circumstances should be considered in the committee's final decision. The district will communicate this decision in writing to the parents. In Gray ISD, appeals must also be made in writing to the G/T committee, but the appeal letter must be postmarked within five business days of receipt of the parent/guardian letter indicating the committee's initial decision. The committee will reconvene in order to consider the need for further assessment data or other information.

Reassessment was an area that differed among the two districts. The State Plan requires there be a policy in place for reassessment, if it happens at all, and it should occur no more than once in the elementary grades, once in middle school grades, and once in high school. Gray ISD policy states that students are reassessed in second and sixth grade to determine appropriate program placement as a student moves from the primary to the elementary level and from the middle school to the secondary level, respectively. Now ISD does not have a policy on reassessment.

One thing both districts have in common is professional development for GT. The State Plan requires that teachers of GT students receive the 30-hour foundation training, and that if any teacher of GT students does not have that training, they obtain it within one semester. Teachers are also required to have an annual 6-hour update. Both districts' policies have the same requirements as the State Plan.

## **Summary**

This chapter began by reviewing the purpose of the study and restating the three research questions. There was a review of the research process and presentation of the findings. Major themes within each research question were identified and discussed. The two themes that emerged from teacher interviews were that teachers needed more training on the GT program itself and that changes needed to be made to the GT testing process. The two major themes that emerged from administrator interviews were that administrators needed more training on the GT program itself and that changes needed to be made to the GT testing process. The three themes emerged from parent interviews were that parents need more information overall, parents and students need more opportunities, and parents need everything in their native language of Spanish. Chapter 5 contains a discussion of the summary of findings, implications, some limitations of the study, recommendations for future research and discussion of findings.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations**

The purpose of this case study was to explore teacher, administrator, and parent understanding of the identification process for the gifted and talented program in Gray ISD, to gain insights for improving the identification of ELLs for the GT program. The study used a case study design. Semistructured interviews were conducted with eight teachers, two administrators, and six parents. All participants were affiliated with Gray Avenue Elementary School in Gray ISD, a small school district in south central Texas. A document review was also done. The documents reviewed in this study were the Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented Students (State Plan), the Gray ISD district policy for the GT program, and the GT district policy of a similar neighboring small school district. For purposes of this study, the neighboring school district is referred to as Now ISD. The State Plan was obtained from the Texas Education Agency website. The district policy for the GT program was obtained from a district administrator. The GT policy of a similar-size, neighboring district was obtained from that district's website. The three policies/plans were reviewed for similarities. The State Plan was reviewed against the Gray ISD plan and the neighboring district's plan.

Chapter 5 focuses on the interpretation of research findings and related recommendations. The implications of major themes are addressed, and recommendations for action and future study are identified. There is also a connection made to LatCrit theory and its four functions. The chapter ends with reflections and conclusions.

### **LatCrit Theory**

The results of this study align with the four functions of LatCrit theory. The first function of LatCrit theory is the production of knowledge. The production of knowledge seeks to enhance socio-legal understanding through critiques of historical and modern experience. LatCrit theory



can aid in the understanding of the world. For purposes of this study, knowledge was gained through interviews of participants.

Knowledge gained was three-fold. First, knowledge was gained through the research presented here. Knowledge was gained on the GT status of ELLs in Gray ISD and so it contributes to the literature on ELLs in GT programs. Second, knowledge was gained on how the participants, particularly teachers and administrators, perceived ELLs. All participants considered ELLs as underrepresented in GT. Teachers, administrators, and parents all identified issues with the current testing and identification situation in Gray ISD. Finally, parents gained knowledge as they went through the GT process for their children. Additionally, knowledge was gained about parents needing more information and how parents strongly advocated for information sessions. The knowledge was critiqued as a way of obtaining insights from participants on how to improve the gifted identification process for ELLs.

The second function of LatCrit theory is the advancement of social transformation. This second function is meant to be practical and insightful. The advancement of social transformation calls for the creation of social change that improves the lives of Latinas/os and other subordinated groups. For purposes of this study, insights that came from interviewees will serve as agents of change. That is, insights from the participants will be used to guide social transformation as applied to the identification of ELLs for the gifted program. This will be done by recommendations for next steps in Gray ISD's GT program.

While participants have not yet been transformed, it is anticipated that such transformation will take place once suggestions and recommendations have been pursued. These social changes will improve the lives of ELLs in Gray ISD as it relates to GT participation. For teacher and administrator participants, transformation will be in the form of better understanding

by way of relevant training. This will allow them to have a better understanding of the GT program in Gray ISD and will also help them advocate for the ELLs they teach. Transformation for parents will be in the form of feeling more respected and being more knowledgeable. Parents discussed how they felt alienated from the school environment due to the language barrier. Once recommendations are acted upon, parents will be transformed into active, dedicated, and respected members of the school community.

The third function of LatCrit theory is the expansion and connection of antiracism struggles. LatCrit theory is committed to improving the Latina/o condition, but not necessarily exclusively in the United States because we must attend to more than just immediate self-needs. In doing so, LatCrit theory takes on a struggle on behalf of Latinas/os, but at the same time uses that struggle to work for transformation that benefits all. For this study, the expansion and connection of antiracism struggles were in the form of insights for improvement of the identification process for ELLs. Administrators made connections with other struggles when they suggested that accommodations be used with ELLs just as accommodations are used for other populations in other high-stakes testing. Similarly, as insights are gained and applied to ELLs, it is possible that these insights could be applied to other populations as well, and therefore antiracism struggles are expanded and connected. Other identified struggles include the struggles of parents as they long to be included and involved in the school system, including activities like UIL. Connecting the antiracism struggles will improve the Latina/o condition first as it relates to GT then as it relates to other programs.

The fourth function of LatCrit theory is the cultivation of community and coalition, both in and out of the legal world. While LatCrit started in the legal world, it is now entering the education world. Ultimately, LatCrit theory is about more than knowledge, transformation, and

sharing of struggles. It is also about building a community around all those things in order to improve the lives of Latinas/os and work toward social justice for Latinas/os as well as other populations. For this study, cultivation and community means that participants will become a community by using the insights to the improvement of the GT identification process for ELLs. New knowledge will be cultivated, and that new knowledge will aid in continued transformation.

### **Research Question 1**

Based on their understandings of the GT identification process, what insights do teachers provide to improve the identification of ELLs for the GT program? This question was answered by use of semistructured interviews of eight teachers. Each was asked about her own understanding of the GT identification process. Six of the teachers were ESL teachers and two of them were bilingual teachers.

The two major themes that emerged from teacher interviews were 1) teachers need more training on the GT program and 2) changes need to be made to the GT identification process. Six of the eight teachers suggested more training for teachers. Those six had varying levels of training but nothing consistent within the district. The teachers reported feeling ill prepared to identify ELLs for GT. They also expressed concern about the types of training that was being conducted by the district. Some teachers reported that having one person responsible for everything was too much. In Gray ISD, one person is responsible for testing, coordinating, and teaching at the elementary level. The district GT facilitator performs all the testing and serves as the GT teacher. Interviewed teachers felt that hiring additional staff would be beneficial to the district and ultimately to the students.

Teachers also welcome the idea of bilingual staff to be added to the GT program. Bilingual GT staff would be an important addition. This would help ELLs be better identified

and subsequently receive services in Spanish. All teachers felt that more needed to be done to adequately prepare teachers to identify giftedness in ELLs. Perhaps this would be achieved by having bilingual staff as part of the GT program. Along these lines, Rios (2013) advocates a shared ethnic heritage between teachers and students. However, he also suggests that simply having this in common will not guarantee meaningful academic and social connections. It will, however, allow teachers to understand, “the social-cultural realities of their students, high expectations, an advocacy for the students' primary language(s) and home culture, the implementation of a culturally responsive pedagogy, and forging robust relationships with parents and the local community” (Rios, 2013, p. 63). He suggests that schools need to be willing to hire educators who would be critical of the broader society as well as the school itself. In addition, educators would need to advocate for meaningful change on behalf of historically marginalized students. In this case, the marginalized students are ELLs.

A few teachers also mentioned needing more knowledge of the actual test. They want to view an actual test to see what it consists of. Being more aware of what is tested could help teachers prepare the students. As ESL-1 shared, they do not want to “teach to the test,” but rather, they want to know what kinds of skills are tested so they could better prepare ELLs, knowing that often ELLs have less exposure to opportunities and resources.

Teachers made suggestions for testing, one of these being testing in Spanish. Teachers felt that many ELLs were not qualifying for GT because of English testing. Teachers reported that ELLs will often qualify in later years when they have developed enough English to perform well on an English test and expressed concern over this. In the meantime, ELLs are being left out from GT. Teachers reported some of their ELLs as being quick learners and creative in many areas, yet somehow, they did not qualify for GT. BIL-2 suggested that testing in Spanish would

truly reflect the ability of ELLs because they would be tested in their dominant language.

Teachers shared that not all ELLs would require Spanish testing but that it should be available to those who would be more successful in Spanish. These insights from teachers support the claims of Barkan and Bernal (1991) who found that if ELLs are identified for gifted programs at all, they are admitted into a gifted program only after they have mastered English and can receive instruction in an all-English classroom.

Teachers also advocated for the use of portfolios as part of the identification process. No one mentioned the current use of portfolios. However, most suggested that portfolios would give ELLs a chance to exhibit talents that would not otherwise be evident in a testing situation (Connery et al., 2019; Gubbins et al., 2018). Teachers said portfolios would give ELLs an opportunity to showcase some of the work they might not otherwise be able to express on a written test conducted in English.

## **Research Question 2**

Based on their understandings of the GT identification process, what insights do administrators provide to improve the identification of ELLs for the GT program? This question was answered by use of guided protocols and semistructured interviews of two campus administrators. Each was asked about her own understanding of the GT identification process. The two themes that emerged from administrator interviews were 1) administrators need more GT training and 2) changes need to be made to the GT identification process. Both administrators felt like the teachers felt, ill prepared to identify students, especially ELLs, for GT. One administrator had most of her experience in another district and did not feel properly trained in Gray ISD. The other administrator reporting having even less training. Both administrators felt that their involvement was critical to the identification process. Both reported

receiving minimal training in Gray ISD and stressed the importance of receiving that training. They concluded that they needed better training so they could adequately guide teachers. Admin-2 even said that they, as administrators, also have dealings with students so administrators should have a say in the matter as well.

One administrator suggested the use of a talent pool. She explained the talent pool as an opportunity for ELLs to be exposed to more advanced teaching and thinking. She stated that her previous district used a talent pool and students were successful with that. Using a talent pool, students, who did not qualify but showed potential, were pulled with those that were identified. Together, the identified GT students and the potential GT students received instruction from the GT teacher. This extra exposure would give them more and different learning opportunities, so she strongly advocated for establishing a talent pool group.

Both administrators suggested the use of accommodations. They advocated for accommodations like those used during STAAR testing. The accommodations suggested included things like frequent breaks, small group testing, and language assistance. Rather than have students sit for a test for hours at a time, administrators suggested giving the students breaks during the test. This would alleviate some pressure on the students. Also, the administrators suggested students be tested in small groups to accommodate some uneasiness often felt by the students. Administrators also mentioned language assistance, like perhaps having directions explained or translated for the students. Administrators felt that students need to fully understand what is being asked of them so they can have better outcomes on testing.

### **Research Question 3**

Based on their understandings of the GT identification process, what insights do parents provide to improve the identification of ELLs for the GT program? This question was answered

by use of guided protocols and semistructured interviews of six parents. Three were parents of ELLs identified for GT and three were parents of ELLs not identified for GT. The themes that emerged from parent interviews were 1) parents want more information overall, 2) parents and students need more opportunities, and 3) parents need everything in their native language of Spanish.

Parents practically shouted, “We need information!” Regardless of whether their student qualified for GT, all parents expressed concern about a lack of information about GT and lack of information overall. Parents shared a concern about being shut out of the school, mostly due to the language barrier. All parents reported having no knowledge of the GT program before receiving a letter requesting their student be tested. The classroom teacher was often seen as a resource, often for translating documents for parents. Parents asked for information sessions to be held so that they could better understand the programs available to their students.

Even though the ELLs were participating in a bilingual program, the parents knew very little of that program. They were confused about what the program was and what was being provided to their students. One parent reported being part of a parent panel for the district’s bilingual program. She was one of two parents who participated in a Zoom discussion about the future of the district’s bilingual program. She shared that she felt useless and ignored. The entire discussion was held in English and she found it difficult to participate and share her concerns. The other parent did translate for her, but there was not enough dedicated time for either of them to express any concerns or ask any questions.

Lewis et al. (2018) suggested that culturally diverse families should be engaged to participate in the school system. Sometimes this means more aggressive ways of reaching out to parents. Siegle et al. (2016) also advocated for parental input, stating, “Honoring cultural voice is

an important aspect of incorporating ELLs into the gifted classroom, as they are learning a new language and possibly a new culture.” Parents in Gray ISD currently do not feel engaged or honored.

Parents shared a need for more opportunities. They felt that their students were not prepared for GT testing and that they would benefit by additional opportunities. One parent mentioned the idea of small groupings. What she described sounded like a talent pool, something one of the administrators had also mentioned. This parent suggested that her daughter did not qualify because she did not have enough experience with academic concerns. She shared that she would like her daughter to be part of a small group where students get a little extra so that they can become more advanced in their thinking. Another parent shared the same concern about her son. She shared that she saw critical thinking in her son and that he made intricate deductions and conclusions about different situations. However, she felt that he too was not prepared for the testing situation. She also made mention of a small group that could be pulled for extra lessons. So, the idea of a talent pool came from administrators as well as parents.

### ***Document Review***

One insight was that none of the participants interviewed mentioned the district policy. None of them mentioned knowing of it nor referred its existence. When I looked for the district policy on the district’s website, there was no link but simply a name of someone to contact for more information. I spoke with a district administrator who emailed me a copy of the policy. She shared that the policy was still in revision.

When analyzing the three documents, State Plan, Gray ISD’s plan, and Now ISD’s plan, it was clear to see that the State Plan and the neighboring district’s plan were much easier to locate and read. Each of these two plans were readily available and printable. The State Plan was



available, via link, on the Texas Education Agency's (TEA) website. Now ISD's plan was available, via link, on the district's website under the department of special programs. Gray ISD did not have the district plan/policy on its website. There was only the name of a contact person.

Even though Gray ISD's plan closely matched that of Now ISD, the latter plan was more closely aligned with the State Plan. One key element of commonality between the State Plan and Now ISD was the definition of gifted. Now ISD's definition exactly matched the more comprehensive definition provided by the State Plan.

Now ISD's definition of gifted and talented:

a child or youth who performs at or show the potential for performing at a remarkably high level of accomplishment when compared to others of the same age, experience, or environment and who: (1) exhibits high performance capability in an intellectual, creative, or artistic area; (2) possesses an unusual capacity for leadership; or (3) excels in a specific academic area.

Gray ISD's definition of gifted and talented:

any child or youth in grade K-12 who performs at, or shows the potential for performing at, a remarkably high level of accomplishment when compared to other of the same age, experience, or environment and who (1) exhibits high performance capability in general intellectual ability; or (2) excels in one or more specific academic fields: math, science, language arts, and/or social studies.

Gray ISD's policy had a more limiting definition of gifted. Gray ISD's definition suggested the criteria were mostly academic based and did not include giftedness in creative, artistic, or leadership ability.

## Implications

The findings of this study have the following implications for change in the identification of ELLs for the district's GT program. First, teachers and administrators need more training on the GT program in general and specifically on identification of ELLs (Costello, 2017; Ford, 2012; Harris et al., 2009). Second, Gray Avenue Elementary, as well as the district, needs to be aware of the characteristics and needs of all populations (Kaya, 2015). Third, there is a need to hire bilingual GT staff to help identify and then more adequately serve gifted ELLs once they are identified (Barkan & Bernal, 1991). Fourth, changes need to be made to the GT identification process (Bernal, 1974; Luria et al., 2016). Fifth, there is a dire need to better inform parents (Kautz, 2017; Yaffe, 2019). Parents practically shouted, "We need information!" Regardless of whether their student qualified, all parents expressed a great concern over the lack of communication with the GT teacher and the school in general.

Based on the findings and limitations of this study, there are several recommendations for action. Some of the more common suggestions that emerged during this study include:

- Hire bilingual staff for GT;
- Hold parent informational meetings for all school programs;
- Hold parent informational meetings for GT;
- Provide all information in Spanish;
- Provide more teacher training on GT;
- Provide more administrator training on GT;
- Test students in Spanish when needed;
- Include the use of portfolios;
- Include the use of accommodations;

- Include student interviews;
- Send home GT progress reports;
- Hold parent conferences with the GT teacher;
- Establish a talent pool to pull those that almost qualified;
- Modify or update the district GT policy.

All parents that were interviewed spoke on the need for bilingual staff. This included staff in the front office and GT staff. Parents have trouble communicating from the moment they enter the school building. Having bilingual staff in the front office would make parents feel welcome and would give them a place to start when they have questions of any kind. Even though office staff might not help with GT, the office staff could be the first point of contact for parents, but only if staff is bilingual.

Bilingual GT staff is another recommendation. Currently, in Gray ISD, there is one GT facilitator/coordinator that also serves as the district GT teacher. This teacher is also responsible for the scheduling and administration of testing. This teacher, however, is not bilingual. All interviewees (i.e., teachers, administrators, and parents) advocated for adding bilingual GT staff so that staff is available for Spanish testing and for communicating with parents.

Another recommendation was informational meetings. Teachers repeatedly commented on how parents needed to be better informed and more aware of the GT program. One teacher commented that Gray ISD holds dyslexia informational meetings and so something similar should be held for GT. However, those meetings should be held in Spanish or at least have an interpreter available. Parents themselves were quite vocal in their requests for information. They want informational meetings in Spanish but not necessarily with an interpreter available. Sometimes an interpreter cannot keep up with the presenter and sometimes the interpreter is not

fluent enough to adequately translate for the parents. None of the parents interviewed were aware of the GT program until they received a permission form for testing. They did not have access to information in Spanish. Parents all voiced concerns about being left out of the school community. They want to help their students but do not know how to do so. They blame the lack of information available to them as the main reason they cannot or have not helped their students. Parents want more informational meetings, starting with information in general. They are willing participants in their child's education. They just need the resources to be fully and successfully involved.

### **Recommendations for Action and Further Study**

While this study included parent participants, it was limited to six parents. A recommendation would be a repeat study with more parent participants. There is not enough research that includes parent perspectives so including more parents would help address this missing element.

Another recommendation is to conduct a follow up study in Gray ISD. It would be beneficial to see if any suggestions were implemented. If they were, what were the results of that implementation? Did parents gain access to information they sought? Overall, was transformation achieved?

Another avenue for study would be to investigate ELLs in GT as two separate groups: one group of bilingual students and one group of ESL students. This type of investigation would explore how much a student's level of English affects participation in GT.

### **Reflections**

Throughout my profession as an educator, I have observed many teaching styles and programs aimed at student success. Throughout all of this, I have always looked out for the

underdog. My experience has always been with ELLs, specifically bilingual students. As an ELL myself, I know firsthand the struggles of ELLs and their families. I was one of those ELL students that translated for my mother, but eventually, I lost some of my native language when I started school. I remember my younger brother's teacher telling us that he was having difficulty learning English, so it would be better if we spoke only English to him. We followed her suggestion, and he was able to learn English. However, he too suffered the tragedy of losing his native language of Spanish. This was repeated for my younger sister as well.

When I began teaching, I taught children that were just like me, struggling to learn English while still maintaining their native language. I taught them everything they needed to know, and of course I came across some brilliant learners. I felt they needed the additional challenge of a gifted and talented program, so I went through the process of nominating them for the program. I was disappointed when my nominated students did not qualify. I finally asked a parent about it and she said that yes, she had received a letter in the mail about her son not qualifying. When she asked her son, he replied he had difficulty with the test because it was all in English. I was truly devastated. I had assumed he would be tested in his native language of Spanish. He was in the process of learning English and was learning it quickly, but he still was not proficient enough to pass a test in English. Years later, I wondered if, after all these years, English testing was still excluding some exceptional ELLs. If it was not English testing that was excluding these students, then what was? It felt like a great injustice that my bilingual students were not being represented in GT

Completing this research has allowed me to learn more about my district, its programs, its faults, and its successes. I am hopeful that positive changes come out of this research. I know

parents want more for their students. They just need to know what is available and how they can help their students.

### **Summary**

This study sought to contribute to the broader literature on the identification of ELLs for GT programs. Using an exploratory case study design, this study has gained insights from teachers, administrators, and parents. Participants concluded that ELLs were not being appropriately identified for the district's GT program due to a variety of issues. The issues were identified, and suggestions were made for improvement. Some of the major issues identified were the language barrier, lack of teachers' and administrators' knowledge of the GT process, and parents' lack of awareness. Findings from this qualitative research indicated a pronounced need for changes in Gray ISD's GT program. There was also an identified need for parent information sessions.

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## Appendix A: IRB Approval

**ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY**  
*Educating Students for Christian Service and Leadership Throughout the World*  
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs  
320 Hardin Administration Building, ACU Box 29103, Abilene, Texas 79699-9103  
325-674-2885



Dear Angelita,

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board, I am pleased to inform you that your project titled

(IRB# 20-030 )is exempt from review under Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects.

If at any time the details of this project change, please resubmit to the IRB so the committee can determine whether or not the exempt status is still applicable.

I wish you well with your work.

Sincerely,

*Megan Roth*

Megan Roth, Ph.D.  
Director of Research and Sponsored Programs

## **Appendix B: Initial Contact Letter/Email for Recruitment**

Teachers and Administrators

### **Request to Participate**

The purpose of this email is to request participation in a study concerning the underrepresentation of English language learners in gifted programs. This study will be part of a doctoral dissertation designed to explore understandings of the gifted identification process. The exploration of those understandings might also provide some insights to improve the identification process for ELLs.

The study will consist of a semistructured interview which may take 30-45 minutes to complete. If you are interested and willing to participate in such an interview, please reply to this email affirmatively and a Letter of Consent and Confidentiality will be sent to you. If you have further questions please let me know. I may be contacted at xxxxxx@acu.edu or xxx-xxx-xxxx.

Before participating in the interview, each participant will have a letter of consent with signature before moving forward in the interview process.

Thank you for consideration.

Angelita Vásquez  
Abilene Christian University, Doctoral Candidate

## **Appendix C: Initial Contact Letter for Recruitment, Parents**

### **Solicitud de participación**

El propósito de esta carta es solicitar la participación en un estudio sobre la subrepresentación de los estudiantes del idioma inglés en los programas para superdotados. Este estudio será parte de una tesis doctoral diseñada para explorar la comprensión del proceso de identificación de dotados. La exploración de esos entendimientos también podría proporcionar algunas ideas para mejorar el proceso de identificación de los estudiantes ELL.

El estudio consistirá en una entrevista semiestructurada que puede tardar entre 30 y 45 minutos en completarse. Si está interesado y dispuesto a participar en dicha entrevista, responda y se le enviará una carta de consentimiento y confidencialidad. Si tiene más preguntas, hágamelo saber. Es posible que me contacten en xxxxxxx@acu.edu o al xxx-xxx-xxxx.

Antes de participar en la entrevista, cada participante contará con una carta de consentimiento con firma antes de avanzar en el proceso de entrevista.

Gracias por la consideración.

Angelita Vásquez  
Abilene Christian University, candidato a doctorado

**Appendix D: Interview Protocol for Teachers and Administrators**

1. How do you feel about the GT nomination and identification process? Do you feel it identifies gifted students from all groups, specifically ELLs?
2. Tell me about any GT training you have received. Have you received any training related to identification? Tell me about it.
3. Explain, as you understand it, the process of nominating and identifying students for the GT program.
  - a. Tests used?
  - b. Checklists?
  - c. Portfolios?
4. Tell me about some of the students you nominated in the past. What were some of their characteristics?

Tell me about ELLs you may have identified or nominated. What were some of their characteristics?

5. Give me some insights on improving the identification process for ELLs. What you would change about the process, if anything?

Why do you think ELLs are underrepresented in GT programs?

### **Appendix E: Justification for Interview Protocol for Teachers and Administrators**

Question 1 will be more of a subjective, personal response. From this question, the researcher will gather how teachers or administrators actually feel about the identification process. Also, it will also prompt the interviewee to focus specifically on ELLs. Question 2 will give information on any knowledge or training that teachers have received. A possible probe will be to ask for specific strategies or ideas received from such training. From the sub-question, the researcher will try to discover if any teachers or administrators have received training on identifying culturally or linguistically diverse students. Question 3 will give an overview of how a teacher or administrator understands the identification process. It will provide varying degrees of understanding. Question 4 will provide real life information. By asking teachers about the students they have nominated in the past, the researcher can gauge what characteristics they perceive as relevant and important. Additionally, the researcher will discover whether ELLs have been nominated by this teacher or administrator. Question 5 is purposely broad to see if there are any suggestions for change. This is important because a lack of suggestions for change would imply that participants think the system is fine. Anyone suggesting changes might indicate that participants see some fault or discrepancy in the system. Regardless of suggesting or not suggesting, there will be some indication of how the system is perceived.

### Appendix F: Interview Protocol for Parents

1. Explain, as you understand it, the process of identifying students for the GT program.  
*Explique, tal como lo entiende, el proceso de identificación de estudiantes para el programa GT.*
2. How do you feel about the GT identification process? Do you feel it identifies gifted students from all groups, specifically ELLs? *¿Qué le parece el proceso de nominación e identificación de GT? ¿Siente que identifica a los estudiantes dotados de todos los grupos, específicamente los estudiantes ELL?*
3. Your child was tested for GT. Who nominated him/her? *Su hijo/a fue examinado para GT. ¿Quién lo nominó?*
4. Did your child qualify for GT? Why do you think your child qualified/did not qualify? *¿Su hijo calificó para GT? ¿Por qué crees que él / ella calificó / no calificó?*
5. Tell me about some characteristics in your child that you consider gifted qualities.  
*Cuénteme acerca de algunas características de su hijo que considera cualidades superdotadas.*
6. Give me some insights on improving the identification process for ELLs. What would you change about the process, if anything? *Dame algunas ideas sobre cómo mejorar el proceso de identificación de los estudiantes ELL. ¿Qué cambiarías sobre el proceso, si acaso?*

### **Appendix G: Justification for Interview Protocol for Parents**

Question 1 will give an overview of how a parent understands the identification process. It will provide varying degrees of understanding. Question 2 will be more of a subjective, personal response. From this question, the researcher will gather how parents feel about the identification process and whether they feel ELLs are appropriately identified. Question 3 will produce information on who nominated the student. This will reveal who plays a role in starting the identification process. Question 4 will provide some very specific information on why the parent feels the student did not qualify. Information obtained from this question can be used to improve any obstacles the parent believes exists. Question 5 will provide real life information. By asking parents about the qualities they consider gifted qualities, the researcher can gauge what characteristics they perceive as relevant and important. Question 6 is purposely broad to see if there are any suggestions for change. This is important because a lack of suggestions for change would imply that participants think the system is fine. Anyone suggesting changes might indicate that participants see some fault or discrepancy in the system. Regardless of suggesting or not suggesting, there will be some indication of how the system is perceived.



## **Appendix H: Informed Consent**

**Title of Study:** ¿Dónde están? Exploring the Identification Process for Gifted English Language Learners

**Principal Investigator:**

Angelita Vásquez

Abilene Christian University

xxx-xxx-xxxx

xxxxxx@acu.edu

**Purpose of Study:**

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Before you decide to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read the following information carefully. Please ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information.

The purpose of this study is to develop a profile of the identification process for the gifted program of Gray ISD as perceived by parents, teachers, administrators, and students, specifically as that process applies to English language learners.

**Study Procedures:**

You will be asked a series of questions about the gifted program of Gray ISD. You may decline to answer any or all questions and you may terminate your involvement at any time if you choose.

Interviews may be recorded using audio recording to assist with the accuracy of your responses. You have the right to refuse the audio recording. Please select one of the following options:

I consent to audio recording:                      Yes \_\_\_\_\_                      No \_\_\_\_\_

**Time required:**                      Approximately 30 – 60 minutes

**Risks and Benefits:**

There are no foreseen risks to participate in this study. There is no incentive for participating; therefore, you will not be adversely affected in any way if you choose not to participate.

**Confidentiality**

Your identity will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law. Your information will be assigned a code number. The list connecting your name to this number will be kept in a locked file. When the study is completed and the data have been analyzed, the list will be destroyed. Your name will not be used in any report or publication.

**Contact Information**

If you have questions at any time about this study, or you experience adverse effects as the result of participating in this study, you may contact the researcher whose contact information is provided on the first page. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, or if problems arise which you do not feel you can discuss with the Primary Investigator, please contact the Institutional Review Board at (xxx) xxx-xxxx.

**Voluntary Participation**

Your participation in this study is voluntary. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part in this study. If you decide to take part in this study, you will be asked to sign a consent form. After you sign the consent form, you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. Withdrawing from this study will not affect the relationship you have, if any, with the researcher. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed, your data will be returned to you or destroyed.

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**CONSENT**

I have read and I understand the provided information and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason and without cost. I understand that I will be given a copy of this consent form. I voluntarily agree to take part in this study.

Participant's signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Investigator's signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Appendix I: Matrix for Research Question 1

**Research Question 1:** Based on their understandings of the GT identification process, what insights do teachers provide to improve the identification of ELLs for the GT program?

Theme	Description	Evidence
Training	Teachers need more training on the program.	<p>I did the original 30-hour training to get the GT endorsement. I did that 15-18 years ago and I do the 6-hour update every year. ESL-2</p> <p>I think it mainly has to do with teachers noticing characteristics. I think teachers need better training to help identify because overall I think that the tests she gives are ok. ESL-2</p> <p>There is a 6-hour update they make us do at the beginning of the year but other than that I don't receive anything else. BIL-1</p> <p>I feel like I know it, but I wish I knew more about the actual testing, like what our kids see or do, you know? I don't feel like I know. ESL-1</p> <p>I don't have the 30-hour initial training, but I have the yearly 6-hour update. ESL-1</p> <p>Mrs. X (GT coordinator) gave us training, maybe it was a PD or it wasn't, but she gave us like a pamphlet or flyer, one-pager. But I didn't appreciate that because it was just like, it was, 'here you go.' There was a couple of pages of, you know, what GT looks like in ELLs, poverty, but I'm looking at what happens when you're actually doing your testing. ESL-1</p> <p>Yeah, I appreciated the information she gave us, but honestly, I just stick it in my binder and it just stays there. But again, we need more discussion. I mean, I don't like all these meetings, but if I'm going to get something out of it, you know depending</p>

how it's presented, yeah, it would be helpful. It was more of a 'we just have to do this so let's get it done' kind of thing. Here's your paper, I gave it to you, and my part is done. We don't do training very well in our district. ESL-1

No he recibido ningún entrenamiento para identificar a estos estudiantes. Recuerdo que tuvimos una junta escolar donde nos explicaron rápidamente sobre el proceso de identificación, pero no recuerdo lo que se dijo. Así que tuve que leer un poco más acerca del proceso y leer los papeles de información por mi cuenta. BIL-2

I feel okay about it although I wouldn't say I'm super knowledgeable about it. When I first started teaching, we did have GT trainings, but now it seems like it's only for the teachers who are GT certified. Those of us who are not GT certified, we don't get included on trainings. ESL-6

I know one year, we did get, and I couldn't tell you what it was exactly, but it was either a flyer or a handout about what to look for GT in like a child of poverty. I remember something like that. It was kind of last minute, like, by the way, here it is. So, I don't feel like I got anything out of it. ESL-6

Well, it might be nice to have a training, you know, telling you what to look for versus just being handed a sheet of paper and have someone read it to you. Maybe give you examples of the gifted child's work versus the intelligent child, you know. ESL-6

I've been working on a PowerPoint specifically for parents, explaining, you know, what are GT characteristics and then explaining our process. I'm also doing a short training for the new teacher

		orientation for new teachers to explain that to them. So we're working on, you know, getting that information out there. ESL-4
	Teachers need more training on identification of ELLs.	<p>"I think it has the possibility to identify ELLs. But I think teachers aren't educated enough in looking for those criteria in their students." Participant ESL-2</p> <p>I have not had any training specific to identification. ESL-2</p> <p>It's not so much on teaching strategies. We get all that through differentiation but it's helping teachers learn to identify that kid's gifted rather than just smart. ESL-2</p> <p>We don't have any training on how to identify kids besides that pamphlet she gives us about it. BIL-1</p> <p>Our process does not identify ELLs and other sub-pops too or I don't feel like we know. Maybe it's, I don't know if the test is geared more toward kids who have more access, you know what I mean? ESL-1</p> <p>I think it's more education for everybody, including Mrs. X (GT coordinator), education in terms of testing and teachers to, you know, know what we're really getting. We're not looking specifically at ELLs, you know. It's just a general overview of what your GT kid looks like. I think it's going to be different when you're looking at ELL kids. ESL-1</p>
Testing	Teachers need more knowledge of the testing process.	<p>I know there are tests, but I don't know what they are. ESL-2</p> <p>Teachers and parents are asked to nominate students. Teachers are given an inventory to complete. It's not a very good document but I'm not sure what else she has available. There are things on the checklist that are</p>

just not applicable to kids at our level. ESL-2

A lot of my ELL kids the parents didn't really understand what GT was. They didn't realize, like, hey, your kid is really smart. Did you know that your kid is really gifted? BIL-1

If we could really explain that better to parents and maybe give them different strategies to be able to work with these kids, to help them, you know, because they're already extremely smart. So the parents really understand what it means because they're not aware of the program, not aware of what GT really is. BIL-1

I would suggest that maybe there be more personnel and more, better, communication with the parents as to what the program consists of. BIL-1

Si usamos un test, pero no se como se llama. BIL-2

Yo ofrecería ayuda e información para los padres, además de un examen en su idioma nativo que este diseñado por un(a) maestro(a) bilingüe certificado. Este examen me gustaría que fuera diseñado con el contexto y vocabulario apropiado para la edad de estos estudiantes, porque muchas veces solamente al traducir estos exámenes, algunas palabras u oraciones pierden su significado y esto afecta el entendimiento de los alumnos. También si se ofrece ayuda que sea alguien certificado y que sepa acerca de nuestros estudiantes bilingües. BIL-2

I know I've heard there are different tests out there, but I don't know what they use here. ESL-6

I'd like to know the process because maybe this kid needs to be tested and then I don't know what happens. I would really like to know like, what kind of test do they get? ESL-6

Portfolios should be used.

I have not done portfolios. I know Gray Avenue tried but once they got to the next school, nothing was done with them. ESL-2

I don't think we do portfolios. Yeah, I don't think she's ever asked to look at student work.

No usamos portafolios, que a mi parecer me gustaría más por el simple hecho de que serían un reflejo más apropiado de lo que se ve en el salón de clases. BIL-2

Creo que me gustaría más como un portafolio de los niños, porque eso no lo usamos, no lo implementamos. Creo que eso mostrara realmente las habilidades de los niños bilingües. BIL-2

I don't think we really have portfolios. I think if we had a portfolio of like the student's work, you know, something along those lines of being able to show visually what the student can do, it would help in the process. I'm not really sure, but, I would prefer a portfolio be used. ESL-5

GT testing needs to be more sensitive to needs of ELLS.

I know I've nominated several ELLs, but they've not gotten in. ESL-2

Sometimes there are those that are really close, but just lack something. ESL-2

I don't know. I just don't feel like the ELL kids who have been nominated never qualified, you know, and I don't know if there's a breakdown in vocabulary or I don't know. ESL-1

I think specifically about an ESL kid I recommended who didn't qualify. I really feel like it was probably a breakdown in the testing, like maybe he didn't necessarily understand, you know, the vocabulary of the format of the testing because in class he was very impressive, and things came easily. He was like the top in everything, even the top reading group. ESL-1

I feel like it must be something to do with the testing. I just don't know if we're not giving them what they need. And I'm not saying like you teach to the test or anything, but maybe they're not understanding, like areas maybe, or maybe they've not had any knowledge for that. ESL-1

What in the format of the test or the questioning makes it so difficult to just get them to qualify? ESL-1

I go back to my son's class. He was the one who qualified for GT and I look at his graduating class and there were so many ESL kids in that top 10%. So, I mean, they just were never identified though as GT and that's, I don't know, that's unfortunate. So, what happened? ESL-1

Creo que es un proceso un poco injusto para nuestro estudiantes ELLs porque no es ofrecido en su primer idioma, dándonos a entender que solamente los posibles candidatos a este programa son estudiantes monolingües del inglés. También no estoy de acuerdo en que se usen Teacher Assistants en compensación de alguien experto en el tema, por ejemplo un maestro(a) bilingüe. BIL-2

Yo nomine 3 estudiantes el ciclo escolar pasado, estos estudiantes son brillantes, cooperativos, responsables, y saben trabajar independientemente y en grupo. Aparte de que tienen una habilidad excepcional para



pensar más allá de lo normal. Además estos 3 estudiantes son bilingües y saben perfectamente como usar sus habilidades lingüísticas como code-switching. Saben a quién hablarle español y a quien ingles, o cuando es correcto usar los dos. Eso es algo extraordinario para niños de su edad. Pero claro, comprendo perfectamente que es solamente algo que vería un maestro bilingüe y no un maestro de educación general. BIL-2

Sinceramente creo que las escuelas ven un idioma nativo diferente del inglés como un impedimento o un obstáculo, en general, como algo negativo que tiene que remediarse, en lugar de verlo como un atributo o algo positivo con el cual los estudiantes pueden desarrollar un segundo idioma más fácilmente. Sin saber o entender que si se desarrolla de forma apropiada puede incluso sobrepasar los beneficios de ser monolingüe. BIL-2

Of the 4 or 5 that I nominated, none qualified. I was heartbroken. It's almost like, if they don't fit into this 'little box,' they don't qualify. ESL-3

I don't think it identifies gifted ELLs. I feel like it's, I don't know how to explain it, like, sometimes if I nominate a student, I tell the GT teacher, Hey this kid needs a little bit more time processing, or they might need you to explain words. Then she seems like, well, whenever they take the test, they'll take it like everybody else. ESL-6

As far as like STAAR, or different things, are offered in their language, why not the GT testing? And help explain words to them like they do different tests. ESL-6

It should be more than just tests because tests may not be a good indicator. So, I say

it should be more than a test. I feel it's very limiting to what the student is capable of, you know? ESL-5

ELLs have a hard time qualifying maybe because they are tested in a language that they are already struggling to master, and it could take from five to seven years to master a second language. ESL-5

We have to consider how to reach the kid and wherever he or she is, not just get into this little box for the test. Not this one size fits all kind of idea, but I feel like it's kind of a cultural bias even, because of the language barrier. ESL-5

I see a little bit of insecurity. Some of them are, you know, very shy and quiet and that might be a little bit due to their insecurities, you know, with language. But overall, I'm impressed with how quickly they pick things up, you know, do things in both languages. ESL-4

I'm really excited about online testing and where it's going to take us. I'm really excited about it. I think it's going to be a great thing for the program moving forward. ESL-4

Additional staff, including bilingual staff, are needed.

Honestly, because our one person who's in charge of GT doesn't have the ability to speak both languages, I think she needs help. BIL-1

But I do think it would be nice if we had, you know, someone who could come in and conduct it in their first language if they needed it. BIL-1

We don't have the personnel for it. We have such a hard time getting bilingual teachers here, and I don't know how the district works. And now I'm imagining that it's even harder to get certified GT bilingual

teachers who would be willing to come here. BIL-1

I really think across the board, it really has to start with Mrs. X (GT coordinator), like I just think she needs more education, you know, in ELLs and other sub-pops with testing and then be sure she could give us guidance or you know, I think it's going to have to start with her to be honest. ESL-1

So, I feel like whoever is doing the GT testing needs to have more education about testing those subpopulations. I mean it's got to start there. ESL-1

Well, our GT person is very black and white. I feel like she looks at GT as being one way and not everyone can fit in that. I feel like she should be looking at GT in terms of our population. ESL-2

También necesita empezar con ella (GT coordinator), que se informe y que tenga más información acerca de los niños bilingües. Y también que trabaje con maestras bilingües para saber que buscar. Debería ser diferentes puntos, no solamente lo monolingüe. BIL-2

Mrs. X (GT coordinator), she's real black and white, real basic, boom. There you go. That's it. So, you really don't get a lot. ESL-6

## Appendix J: Matrix for Research Question 2

**Research Question 2:** Based on their understandings of the GT identification process, what insights do administrators provide to improve the identification of ELLs for the GT program?

Theme	Description	Evidence
Training	Administrators need more training.	<p>All I know is, you know, it's basically a teacher recommendation for the student who they feel, like, has the qualities of a GT student. Admin-2</p> <p>As far as I know the bulk of the process is basically determined on a test. I'm sure it's some kind of cognitive ability test that the GT teacher gives. Admin-2</p> <p>I'm sure the teachers, the parent and the teachers, have some informative form that they need to fill out to give, you know, a little background on the child, but I honestly couldn't tell you how heavily those, that, information piece is weighed, other than the fact, you know, it's probably weighted on that cognitive test that is given by the GT facilitator, right? Admin-2</p> <p>I feel that it's not as out there as other districts that I've worked in. Right now, here, it's not clear how to go about nominating and testing for GT. Admin-1</p> <p>Since being in Gray, I don't feel like I've had the training, or it's not been as prevalent or as important as it was at the other district. I feel like it's kind of like, do it on your own. And a lot of times people don't do it on their own, you know, and so if they don't, they don't. They're not required or made to do it. Admin-1</p>

## Testing

Testing needs to be more sensitive to ELLs.

I mean, you could do all the online videos that you want, but really, hands on and person to person, I think it's going to give you a better output and better understanding of what you need to be doing for your students. Admin-1

I really don't know the percentage of GT students, like ethnicity. I would probably say a majority of them come from the Anglo ethnicity with maybe just a few Hispanics, and I couldn't even tell you if there are any African Americans in that, you know. Admin-2

In our district we rely so heavily on just that one perspective from the test. There should be other variables to look at besides just a test and maybe the checklist. Admin-2

Classroom observations should be used.

Someone could come in and observe the kid in the classroom and how they relate to their peers, you know, how they relate in the classroom as far as leadership qualities. You know, do they answer questions, do they take a leadership role, where you're not going to get that off a test. Admin-2

Port folios should be used.

So, as far as my own experience, I can't really say that they do [use portfolios] and I would think that that's an important piece to the process. You think that'd be a good, like that would somehow be a good indicator to the kinds of things they can produce, or I think you need to use different pieces. Admin-2

I would think portfolios should be used because that's an important piece to the process. You'd think that would

be a good indicator to like the kind of things they could produce, or I think you just need different pieces besides just the test and one teacher's perspective. So, more than just the test and more than just one teacher's perspective. Admin-2

Accommodations should be used during GT testing.

So, I think that GT has become a kind of place where we have this idea, this ideology, of perfect behaved students in this perfect little room in this perfect little world where they're so great and we forget about the other kids who may fall out of that little realm of perfection and might not qualify because they don't fit the pattern.

Admin-1

An ADHD kid might not do so well on a written test because he can't sit still long enough but that shouldn't hold him back from being in GT if he really is gifted. We need to make some accommodations for him, and others like him. Admin-2

Well, if he can't sit still for the test, he's not going to qualify, right? We have to take into consideration what we do for all tests. For one thing, we let them take a break. We do that for STAAR, so why can't we do that for GT? Admin-1

Other staff members should be involved.

It may be the fact that, you know, when we think about the GT teacher, and nothing against her, but she is monolingual English and we have no one else who will do our bilingual students. Admin-1

Your elective teachers, when we do a 504 kid, they have input. Now, whether they do that for GT, I don't

know. I think that if they don't, there should be because I think it should be more than one person doing the evaluating, you know, besides the teacher. The teacher's input plus maybe two other teachers that see that student throughout the day. Admin-2

I mean it's just not fair to go off one person's input and it would seem like it would be more. I don't know. It's, more broad, or general, or you've got a better, more complete picture. Admin-2

Sometimes, you know, you're the classroom teacher, there could be a personality conflict or whatever. There could always be an issue, you know. Admin-2

They may not give a true valid picture of that student for whatever reason so it's always good to have that, an outsider or second or third opinion. Just like when you go to a doctor and he diagnosed you with something, you know, you want a second opinion on it, and that makes sense. Admin-2

It's [the test] given by the teacher who runs the program or who is the teacher of the program. I kind of think that you know there should be a committee just like you have a committee with LPAC, and you have a committee for 504, you know. Admin-2

You come down to a staffing issue because you'll have more kids to pull and that one person can't do it all. Well, maybe we need another person to be able to help with that. I think it comes down to the staffing piece, you know, when one person has to do six or seven grade levels. It really is hard.

You know, it's not a feasible thing for a person to do all that. Admin-1

I think in our district we rely so heavily on just that one perspective from that test, okay, and it's given by the teacher who runs the program or who is the teacher of the program.” Admin-2

I guess I'm saying we should use the right testing resources so that we test them in their L1 (native language) instead of transitioning them to L2 (English) just so that the GT teacher is able to provide services to them. Admin-1



### Appendix K: Matrix for Research Question 3

**Research Question 3:** Based on their understandings of the GT identification process, what insights do parents provide to improve the identification of ELLs for the GT program?

Theme	Description	Evidence
Information	Parents need more information overall.	<p>I don't know much about a program. When he was in kindergarten his teacher sent me a letter that if I wanted him to get tested because she thought that he had what he needed to be in the program. So, at first, I was like, well, what is it, you know? I was kind of questioning because ... what is GT? You know, I don't want to sign no papers and not knowing what it is, right? Q-1</p> <p>I would like to know about this program and other programs offered by the school. Q-3</p> <p>Me not understanding the program, right, as a parent, has made it really hard for him because I don't know how to help him or make him grow because I thought this was just happening at this school. I thought maybe the program was different at other schools. I really don't have an explanation or ever had a meeting where they tell me really what it is or how it works. I think that would especially help Hispanic parents to help us figure out what this program is and how I can help my children, or my kids, go into this program. A lot of us receive letters and we really don't know what it is. Q-1</p> <p>There is no meeting or gathering of any kind to help me learn what is going on in school or how I could help my children succeed. DNQ-1</p> <p>I say maybe it also has to do with the parents, they are in there and putting their children in a program, but we don't even know how to inform ourselves. DNQ-1</p>

Who's in charge of GT? Who is the teacher? I don't know who she is. I've never met her and I wouldn't know her if I saw her. What do they do there in GT? How can I help my daughter succeed? We need more personnel and more information from personnel. Q-3

I don't know how to help my child if I don't know what's on the test. Is it all in English? Especially if it's all in English, I don't know how to help her. DNQ-3

I wish there were meetings where we could be informed. Q-3

Is there a meeting where all this is available? DNQ-1

I don't know anything about school programs because there is no place where they tell me about programs and how children can qualify. DNQ-2

I know nothing about programs at school. I would love to attend a meeting where I could learn about what's going on at school. DNQ-2

I'd like to know what they do in GT. I mean, I guess he's doing well, but how do I know? Q-2

Opportunities

Parents and students need more opportunities.

It's hard to say that this is the only language you're going to speak. Yes, you're a very capable person and you have a lot of knowledge, but unfortunately because you don't speak that language, they're keeping you behind. So that makes a big difference, you know, to kids. They don't feel validated, you know. Q-1

One thing we could do is if we could test bilingual kids in Spanish, it will give a big change to those kids, testing them in their own language and then little by little

helping them learn, you know, English. But testing them in their main language and giving them that opportunity to say, I'm equal to others. You know, my language, my color, does not make a difference. Q-1

I worry she won't do well. She already came home crying that she didn't understand the teacher and she couldn't ask the teacher anything because the teacher wasn't bilingual. My daughter is very capable and deserves an opportunity to show what she can do. How can I encourage her to do her best if I myself don't know what's going on or who to ask? My daughter is very capable. She is not ready to shine in English, but she certainly shines in Spanish. Why is that not happening for her in GT? Q-3

How can we share information if none of us knows what's out there for our kids? We feel very uninformed and shut out. Q-3

We, as moms, we want to get in there and do what we can for our kids. But I feel that there is no room for Spanish at school or for things to be explained to us in Spanish. We feel shut out. DNQ-1

I didn't know why he did not qualify. Did he not pass the reading? The writing? No, I only received a letter in the mail saying he did not qualify. But I never knew why. And, I think, here in Gray, opportunities, awards, medals, and things like that only go to certain people. Not everyone gets the same opportunities. We want our children to have those same opportunities, and we are willing to put our kids in different programs if that will help them, but how can we help them if we can't even find out what exists for our kids? DNQ-1

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What I don't like is that they don't tell us about things. DNQ-2

Even if they don't get pulled with the ones who qualified, we still need some kind of program where they can show what their capable of. I think the school needs that.  
DNQ-1

Even though he did not qualify, maybe next year he will? But then, how do I help him prepare? What do I need to do help him?  
DNQ-2

I don't know why she didn't qualify but I want to help her. Maybe she wasn't ready? Maybe she needs more practice? DNQ-1

Can he take the test again? How does that happen? DNQ-3

I want to know how to help him, what he needs in order to qualify. DNQ-1

I received a letter that he had not qualified, but I did not know why, and then I also feel here in Gray ISD, in the schools, almost always the honors or the medals are given to certain people, not all of us are given the same opportunities. DNQ-1

Language

Parents need everything in their native language of Spanish.

That's messed up, you know, that's messed up. I understand the language is English in this country, but some of those kids are in the process of coming from a home where all they speak is Spanish. They're coming to a new world. That's what I call it, you know, it's a new world for him because they go from one language to another and so it is like a new world. Q-1

It starts with me as a parent. I need information in Spanish. Then, well, then the testing, I think testing should be in Spanish, so all kids have a fair chance of getting into the program. DNQ-3

There is so much out there. I think, but we, the bilingual parents, don't know anything about it. There might be information available, but we don't know how to get it, especially if it's in English only. DNQ-2

They sent me the letter for the program for my child and I filled it out because I said, see if he qualifies, but, in reality, I did not even really know what program it was for. Q-1

I want to help my child, but I don't understand anything from the school. DNQ-3

I received a letter in the mail, but I did not understand it. DNQ-3

What happens is that I feel that there is no space for Spanish at school, there is no space for programs explained in Spanish to mothers. DNQ-1

My son's teacher is the one who explained everything to me. DNQ-2

If it hadn't been for the teacher, I would not have signed the permission form. DNQ-1

## Appendix L: Document Review

Definition of gifted and talented		
State Plan	Now ISD	Gray ISD
a child or youth who performs at or show the potential for performing at a remarkably high level of accomplishment when compared to others of the same age, experience, or environment and who: (1) exhibits high performance capability in an intellectual, creative, or artistic area; (2) possesses an unusual capacity for leadership; or (3) excels in a specific academic area	a child or youth who performs at or show the potential for performing at a remarkably high level of accomplishment when compared to others of the same age, experience, or environment and who: (1) exhibits high performance capability in an intellectual, creative, or artistic area; (2) possesses an unusual capacity for leadership; or (3) excels in a specific academic area	any child or youth in grade K-12 who performs at, or shows the potential for performing at, a remarkably high level of accomplishment when compared to other of the same age, experience, or environment and who (1) exhibits high performance capability in general intellectual ability; or (2) excels in one or more specific academic fields: math, science, language arts, and/or social studies
Provision of Services		
The State Plan requires that students have learning opportunities in the four foundation curricular areas.	A continuum of learning experiences will be provided in the Gifted/Talented services which promote self-directed learning, thinking, research, and communication.	A continuum of learning experiences will be provided in the Gifted/Talented services which lead to the development of advanced-level products and/or performances.
Program Evaluation		
Evaluation activities are to be conducted for the purpose of continued service development. Long-range evaluation of services is also required. In addition, curriculum for gifted/talented students should be modified based on annual evaluations.	Now ISD will annually evaluate the Gifted/Talented program by surveying all stakeholders including students, parents/guardian, and teachers. The evaluation data will be presented to the school board and will be used as a needs assessment to be addressed in the district/campus improvement plans.	Gray ISD will annually evaluate effectiveness of the Gifted/Talented program. Parents will be included in the evaluation process by having the opportunity to complete a survey on the program. The evaluation data will be shared with the school board and will be used to modify and update the

district/campus improvement plans.		
Dissemination of Information		
Policies, procedures, and forms are to be communicated and provided to families in a language and form that the families understand or to have a translator or interpreter provided to the extent possible.	Now ISD accepts referrals from parents, teachers, or another party at any time during the school year. In addition, Now ISD actively seeks referral during its referral period.	Anyone may refer a student for the program, but only during a certain period every year.
Selection committee		
Committee will consist of at least three local district or campus educators who have received training in the nature and needs of gifted/talented students and who have met and reviewed the individual student data.	Committee will consist of at least three local district or campus educators who have received training in the nature and needs of gifted/talented students and who have met and reviewed the individual student data.	Committee is composed of at least three local district or campus educators who have received the 30-hour GT training
Transfer of students		
A policy must be in place for transfer students and the student's assessment data be made available to the receiving district.	Identified gifted and talented students transferring into the district are automatically placed in the district's program.	When screening records are received from the student's previous district, the records are examined for correspondence to Gray ISD's criteria. If it is determined that data is insufficient, Gray ISD will assess the student to see if placement is appropriate and a decision will be made within 30 days of receipt of the student's Gifted/Talented assessment results from the previous district.
Appeals		

<p>A policy for appeals is in place that allows parents, students, and educators to appeal placement decisions in a timely manner and to present new data if appropriate.</p>	<p>Appeals must be made in writing within 30 days of notification of action by the G/T selection committee. Upon receipt, the committee will review the student's referral, scores, and performance. The committee may interview the student to determine whether special or unusual circumstances should be considered in the committee's final decision. The district will communicate this decision in writing to the parents.</p>	<p>Appeals must also be made in writing to the G/T committee, but the appeal letter must be postmarked within five business days of receipt of the parent/guardian letter indicating the committee's initial decision. The committee will reconvene in order to consider the need for further assessment data or other information.</p>
<p>Reassessment</p>		
<p>The State Plan requires there be a policy in place for reassessment, if it happens at all, and it should occur no more than once in the elementary grades, once in middle school grades, and once in high school.</p>	<p>No policy on reassessment.</p>	<p>Students are reassessed in second and sixth grade to determine appropriate program placement as a student moves from the primary to the elementary level and from the middle school to the secondary level, respectively.</p>
<p>Professional Development</p>		
<p>Teachers of GT students must receive the 30-hour foundation training, and if any teacher of GT students does not have that training, they must obtain it within one semester. Teachers are also required to have an annual 6-hour update.</p>	<p>Teachers of GT students must receive the 30-hour foundation training, and if any teacher of GT students does not have that training, they must obtain it within one semester. Teachers are also required to have an annual 6-hour update.</p>	<p>Teachers of GT students must receive the 30-hour foundation training, and if any teacher of GT students does not have that training, they must obtain it within one semester. Teachers are also required to have an annual 6-hour update.</p>