Bilingual Gifted Students: How can We Better Identify Them?

Dr. J. Joy Esquerdo
University of Texas-Pan American
Presentation Description

- Historically there has been an underrepresentation of bilingual students in gifted programs.
- This session will describe the unique characteristics of giftedness in Hispanic bilingual students.
- Additionally, this session will differentiate between mainstream giftedness and bilingual giftedness.
- Teachers will provided with ideas on how to foster giftedness in a bilingual/ESL classroom.
Reflection

Education is the movement from darkness to light.

~Allan Bloom
Introduction

• Much attention is given to the left end of the Bell Curve, understandably so, with the requirements of 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.
The Current Challenge

• The definition of giftedness used for identification purposes, and teachers’ level of preparation in gifted education are two key factors in the underrepresentation of bilingual students in gifted and talented (GT) programs.
Part of the Challenge

Definition of GT

Under-identification of Bil/GT

Teacher Prep in GT
• The U.S. Census’ American Community Survey 2010 found that about one-fifth of all children enrolled in kindergarten through twelfth grade are Hispanic.

• Hispanics make up about one-fourth of the kindergarten classrooms in the country.

• This implies that in a given kindergarten classroom of 20, one could find at least five Hispanic students.
Numbers in Texas

• In 2012-13, the Texas Education Agency (2014) reported that 51.3% of their student population was Hispanic

• Followed by white students at 30%.

• The academic year of 2001-2002 was the first year the percentage of Hispanic students surpassed that of white students.
## National GT Enrollment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Total Enrollment</th>
<th>Percentage of Enrollment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White (non-Hispanic)</td>
<td>2,191,210</td>
<td>67.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>296,150</td>
<td>9.15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>414,060</td>
<td>12.79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islanders</td>
<td>304,220</td>
<td>9.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian/Alaskan</td>
<td>31,360</td>
<td>0.97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>3,236,990</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Data retrieved from the National Center for Education Statistics, [http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d08/tables/dt08_053.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d08/tables/dt08_053.asp)
Texas GT Enrollment

• In Texas, the percentage of identified GT students per year has decreased from 8.0% in 1997-1998 to 7.6% in 2012-2013.

• Even with the general student population increasing by almost 20%, the GT population has only changed by less than 10%.

• The GT population in Texas has remained stagnant compared to the general population increase.
Special Programs in Texas

Enrollment in Instructional Programs, Texas Public Schools, 2002-03 Through 2012-13

Note. Students may be counted in more than one category. Career and technical data reflect the percentages of students in Grades 5-12 only who are participating in career and technical education programs. Students taking career and technical education courses in Grades 6-8 or as electives are excluded. ESL=English as a second language.
Hispanic Bilingual Students in GT Programs

In Texas the number of identified gifted students does not reflect the growth patterns of the student population.

For example, as the bilingual/ESL and LEP student population has sharply increased, the number of identified gifted and talented students has flat lined.

If schools were to continue to identify roughly between 7%-8% of the general population as gifted, then the number of identified gifted Hispanic students would reflect the growth of the student population.

However, as shown in Figure 1, that is not the case.
In 2012-13, Hispanic representation was smaller in gifted and talented programs (40.6%) than in the overall student population (51.3%) and larger in Title I programs (62.4%).

Conversely, Asian, White, and multiracial representation was larger in gifted and talented programs (8.5%, 41.6%, and 2.2%, respectively) than in the overall student population (3.6%, 30.0%, and 1.8%, respectively).
GT Enrollment in Texas

Data retrieved from TEA (2009)
GT Enrollment in Texas

Note. Data retrieved from TEA (2009).
What needs to happen?

School districts need to understand that addressing the issue of underrepresentation will require more than one or two simple adjustments to their current policies and procedures concerning testing for gifted programs.

The restructuring of the identification process for gifted programs will call for a strong focus on educating teachers, parents and the community (Grantham, 2002).

More specifically, all stakeholders need to be better informed of the distinct characteristics of gifted bilingual students.
Definition of Giftedness

• The conservatives support the primary use of IQ to determine giftedness.
  • Only the people in the top 1% of IQ scores should be labeled as gifted (Renzulli, 1999).
  • Equate giftedness with academic intelligences.
  • Limits the identification possibilities for other diverse groups (Ford & Grantham, 2003).

• In opposition, the liberals support a more inclusive definition of giftedness.
  • Valdés (2003) reported that liberals’ flexible definition of giftedness encompasses more than intelligence.
  • It includes creativity, memory, motivation, and talent.
The Department of Education (1993) defined gifted and talented in National Excellence: The Case for Developing America’s Talent in 1993 as children and youth with outstanding talent performance or show the potential for performing at remarkably high levels of accomplishment when compared with others of their age, experience, or environment. These children and youth exhibit high performance capability in intellectual, creative, and/or artistic areas, possess an unusual leadership capacity, or excel in specific academic fields (p. 26).
Based on years of research, Lara-Alecio and Irby (2000) constructed a definition of giftedness for bilingual Hispanic students as those who possess above average intelligence, task commitment, and creativity, considering the socio-linguistic-cultural context.
Definition of Hispanic Bilingual Giftedness
Utilizing Renzulli’s definition of giftedness provided the initial framework to identify 11 characteristics of Hispanic bilingual gifted students.

**Irby and Lara-Alecio (1996)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Motivation for Learning</td>
<td>Keen Social and Academic Language (both in English and Spanish),</td>
<td>Ability to be Imaginative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Sensitivity</td>
<td>Strong Familial Connections</td>
<td>Use of Collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Academic Achievement</td>
<td>Creative Performance</td>
<td>Utilizes Environmental Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to Problem Solve</td>
<td>Locus of Control</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Motivation for Learning

- Students demonstrate a value for education through good school attendance.
- They exhibit a desire for learning, are persistent, and have a sustained motivation to succeed in school.
Bilingual/GT students not only like to read, speak, listen, and write in their native language, but they also achieve well in those areas.

They are expressive, elaborate, and fluent in verbal behaviors.
Cultural Sensitivity

- They appear to have pride in their language/culture, respect for traditional cultural and linguistic patterns and a value for oral tradition and history of the native culture.
The students exhibit a “Caretaker” personality within the family.

The strong family and adult relationships and respect for authority figures that are exhibited among this population may be perceived as non-gifted trait, since gifted identification scales tend to equate non-conformity toward authority and independent thought with superior abilities.
Collaboration

- The students have ability to lead and work in groups.
  - Good at setting goals.
  - Keen sense of justice.
  - Judge events and people.
  - Good social adjustment.
  - Possesses leadership qualities.
  - Participates in school activities.
Imagery

- They tend to exhibit language rich imagery and appear to be imaginative in storytelling.
Achievement

- They have the ability to use stored knowledge to solve problems.
- They have the ability to generalize learning to other areas and to show relationships among apparently unrelated ideas.
- Talents are demonstrated through various projects and interests at home or in the community.
- Performs at or above grade level in math.
Creative Performance

- Students have attributes that deal with creative productivity in the arts. They are perceived to be creative in lyric production to songs with more creativity exhibited in groups.

- They also prefer alternative assessments to standardized assessments. This means that teachers need to use multiple assessments and evaluation tools.
Support

- It is important to note that simply because teachers and administrators perceive students to be gifted, does not negate the fact that they are in need of support.
- The children tend to respond favorably and perform better when the teachers expressed confidence in their abilities.
- Teachers need to support their area of interest, but enrich their academic environment.
Problem-solving

- Students are more likely to be global learners who complete tasks in a patient, non-hurried manner, yet effective and accurate.

- They perform better on spatial fluency tasks as opposed to verbal fluency tasks, and they exhibit high nonverbal fluency and originality.
Locus of Control

- Bil/GT students tend to have an internal locus on control.
- Individual believe that his/her behavior is guided by his/her personal decisions and efforts.
- However, many times these students have a keen sense of observation of expectations from society and desire to meet those expectations (external locus of control).
Other Important Characteristics

• Learn better through social interaction than through isolation,
• Tend to be more cooperative than competitive,
• Reason in a step-by-step process rather than spontaneous.
• [www.teachbilingual.com](http://www.teachbilingual.com)
Understanding Characteristics

• It is critical that teachers understand the particular characteristics of gifted bilingual students, especially when a number of them contradict those of mainstream giftedness.

• Unfortunately, when classroom teachers are not aware of the unique characteristics of gifted bilingual students, they are less likely to regard the students as gifted (Strip & Hirsch, 2000).
What needs to happen?

- Restructuring of the Id Process
- Administrator & Teacher Training
- Stakeholders need to be better informed
School administrators are confronted with the need to train teachers to provide an appropriate curriculum that meets the academic, linguistic and social needs of bilingual gifted students.

As much literature has noted, teachers are key in identifying and servicing gifted bilingual students.

Many gifted bilingual students are placed in a double disadvantage in the school setting.
Conclusion

• The mismatch of giftedness, identification, and practice stems from prevailing views that overlook socio-linguistic and cultural characteristics of bilingual gifted students.

• Reversing this trend will take more than minor adjustments to the process of identification; it is going to take a shift in paradigm before change can remain a permanent in the practice of identifying giftedness.
In order to infuse diversity in the identification process, teachers need to receive adequate and appropriate training to recognize giftedness in bilingual students.

Ultimately, change will not occur in traditional, middle-class-based gifted programs until significant data can be used to substantiate the move to a more alternative selection process (Bernal, 2002; Lewis et al, 2007).