

STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING EFL TO GIFTED LEARNERS

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Abstract

Gifted and talented pupils are more academically capable than their peers and therefore need additional academic challenges. These pupils are commonly integrated into standard classes, so they must be provided with enrichment activities that they can complete independently.

Who are our gifted and talented pupils? What makes a pupil gifted? How are gifted and talented pupils identified? These questions are important in education as we attempt to best meet the needs of each of our pupils. When it comes to meeting the needs of English learners, these questions can seem more complicated. Approximately 3 million pupils in the Uzbekistan. are identified as gifted, yet English learners only account for a small fraction of gifted pupils. Why does this under identification of gifted English learners exists in schools? What are some ways that we can better identify gifted and talented English learners? While there are no simple solutions that will work in every context, there are some strategies and tools that may be helpful. Defining gifted and talented instruction

Gifted and talented pupils are described in differing ways depending on the state or education system. In general, gifted and talented pupils can be described as pupils who are capable of high performance and who possess outstanding ability. These pupils need appropriate instruction and services beyond those provided by the regular school program in order to excel. These may be pupils who are already achieving or who have potential ability. How should teachers get started with determining whether their English learner pupils are gifted? It starts with a belief that every pupil has gifts and talents that they bring to the table. While all teachers may believe this, they may not be looking carefully at those gifts to see if the pupil may be ready for more rigorous or advanced coursework, especially if the pupil is not proficient in English. Begin by being open to any of your pupils potentially being identified as gifted and talented, as in the majority of schools, the teacher's recommendation for testing or deeper analysis is what triggers the process. Additionally, keep in communication with parents and families.

Parents are often the first to realize that their children may be able to handle more advanced coursework. Children may report being bored at school to their parents, and wanting more challenge. Parents of English learners may or may not report this to teachers. But, if teachers have built trust and strong communication with parents and families, they are more likely to discuss topics such as these openly. The primary barrier to identifying English learners, of course, is language. Gifted and talented pupils are often identified by topics such as their demonstration of knowledge, as well as the speed at which they learn new and complex topics. It may be more challenging to determine this if pupils do not have the English vocabulary or complex language structures to demonstrate their understanding of complex topics. It is not uncommon for pupils who are gifted to exhibit boredom in class. Without the challenge these pupils need, behavior problems may also arise. English learners who are not gifted may also exhibit what appears to be boredom, and this may be due to a lack of comprehensible instruction, clear instructions and appropriate scaffolding. We must therefore look for a variety of ways to identify English learners as potentially qualifying for gifted and talented services.

Ways to identify gifted and talented English learners

There are some characteristics that may help us to identify pupils who are gifted. These characteristics and abilities may not be just related to academic achievement. A variety of attributes, including motivation, communication skills, problem solving, creativity, expansive memory, inquisitiveness, insight and logic may also demonstrate giftedness in pupils. For example, some gifted pupils will obsessively read about and research topics they are interested in. Look for pupils who are deeply focused on specific topics, and continue to look for information related to that specific topic. Gifted pupils may, for example, find a specific book of interest and

read all of the books in the series. Teachers may also look more closely at pupils' native language abilities. If pupils are reading at two or more grade levels above their current grade, for example, or are demonstrating accelerated language learning abilities well above their peers, they may be gifted. Look also for leadership abilities, the ability to code switch or switch between language easily, or the ability and willingness to translate for others.

Strategies to serve gifted and talented EL

Even before English learners, or any other pupils, have been identified as gifted and talented, there are many strategies we can employ as educators to challenge pupils and even make learning more interesting and engaging. The following strategies are not unique to this particular group of pupils. Consider beginning to employ the strategies to benefit all pupils, including those pupils who happen to be English learners and gifted and talented. Differentiation and scaffolding of language with challenging content – English learners are capable of learning challenging material, especially if the materials and accompanying language have been scaffolded depending on their proficiency level. Focus on domain-specific as well as general academic vocabulary, and make instruction as comprehensible and concrete as possible, while keeping the rigor of the content being studied. Choices with various modalities – Giving pupils choices is beneficial for a variety of reasons, including allowing pupils to shine based on their strengths. Consider a variety of activities that pupils can utilize to demonstrate their understanding, including visual activities; musical activities such as creating beats, songs and rhymes; writing; developing art projects and more. Open-ended and/or independent assignments or projects – Allow pupils to explore topics that interest them, and give them assignments that are not fixed in terms of the outcomes. This allows pupils to develop their own assignments, or take the assignments or questions given to as deep a level as they are interested in. Rubrics can be useful tools in helping to assess these types of projects. Collaborative environments with other pupils – Teach pupils to work collaboratively with one another. For English learners, teaching them appropriate communication skills such as linguistic turn-taking, collaborative language and roles within a group may be helpful tools as pupils work with each other to complete a task.

References

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