II. GENERAL AUDIENCE PROJECT SUMMARY (300 words)

The United States education system has faced challenges and reforms regarding assessment and identification of gifted students in the past fifty years which continue to change as the nation develops new goals and needs (Giuliani & Pierangelo, 2012). In recent years, school demographics have changed due to an influx of students from immigrant families who speak native languages other than English (Carter, 2005). The need for educating this large population of students learning English as a second language has led to new policies and programs developed specifically for English Learners (ELs) (Elizalde-Utnick 2008). Due to these recent educational initiatives, this research study will focus on how the assessment of ELs impacts their identification and placement in gifted and talented programs. For this Honors Thesis, there are two research questions explored in depth. Overall, what assessment strategies, procedures, and instruments are more effective in identifying ELs for gifted programs? Once identified for these programs, what instructional and assessment strategies appear to be more effective? This is a current topic because most studies have focused on the overrepresentation of ELs as having learning disabilities. However, several researchers have considered the underrepresentation of ELs in gifted and talented programs and how these same students can be successful in gifted and talented programs. This thesis will include research and data related to historical perspectives, the magnitude of the need for improved assessment and identification, current strategies and their effectiveness, misunderstandings about ELs and gifted and talented programs, and directions for future research and its importance.

"

III. PROPOSED THESIS TITLE AND PROPOSED ABSTRACT (200-300 words)

Title: Identification of English Learners as Gifted Students

Researchers have focused on the overrepresentation of ELs with learning disabilities and in need of special education services (Elizalde-Utnick, 2008). However, fewer researchers have examined the underrepresentation of ELs in gifted and talented programs. National data collected by the Office of Civil Rights (2011) shows that in the 2009-10 school year, almost half a million ELs were approved through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) for special education services while fewer than 80,000 ELs were considered gifted and talented. Statistically, because 9.5% of total public schools students are classified ELs, this number should be mirrored in the percentages for IDEA and Gifted-Talented. This data shows that EL representation for IDEA is 8.5%, but only 2.4% of gifted and talented students are EL which is a clear underrepresentation of students with limited English language proficiency. Because of this underrepresentation of the EL population in gifted and talented programs, researchers have recognized that some EL may not receive the services they need due to languages differences or inefficient identification procedures. This study will focus primarily on the state, district, and school practices concerning ELs and gifted and talented programs in the state of Ohio. The methodology will include the development of a survey instrument designed for evaluating the effectiveness of schools districts' or individual schools' EL services.

IV. PROJECT DESCRIPTION (not to exceed 5 double spaced pages in length)

Introduction to the Problem

Because of the underrepresentation of the ELs population in gifted and talented programs, researchers have recognized that some ELs may not receive the services they need due to languages differences or inefficient identification procedures. Several case studies have been published illustrating the struggles of ELs who have already been admitted into gifted and

talented programs but may not be receiving proper instruction (Harris, Plucker, Rapp, & Martinez, 2009). This study will focus primarily on the state, district, and school practices concerning ELs and gifted and talented programs in the state of Ohio. As seen in Image B, the ELs population in Ohio is larger in some districts than others depending on location (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2012). The school districts with the largest ELs populations are the urban school districts which include hundreds of schools with varying diversity. However, the districts included in the chart (Table 2) contain less than 3% of the total ELs population enrolled in public schools in Ohio.

Table 2[1]

	Cincinnati	Columbus	Cleveland
Rural (large ELs population)	n/a	n/a	n/a
Suburban (large ELs population)	a. Princeton City School District	Hamilton Local School District	Orange City School District
	b. Winton Woods School District		
# of ELs	a. 658 b. 292	2 1	1 9
Urban (large ELs population)	Cincinnati City School District	Columbus City School District	Cleveland Municipal School District
# of ELs	12 69	495 1	259 8
Rural (small ELs population)	n/a	n/a	n/a
Suburban (small ELs population)	West Clermont School District	n/a	n/a
# of ELs	10 7		
Urban (small ELs population)	n/a	n/a	n/a

[1] Each block marked n/a (not applicable) indicates that any school district within that city has an ELs population less than twenty

These statistics suggest that ELs services are a growing need in Ohio due to the significant population of students learning English as a second language (Office of Civil Rights, 2011). One interesting fact to note from Table 3 is that although almost 35,000 students are in need of ELs services, only 30,000 students receive them in public school districts in the state of Ohio (Office of Civil Rights, 2011). This illustrates that the foundation of the problem between ELs and gifted and talented identification may begin with the obstacles that come with language differences.

Table 3

Demographics	Total Students	ELs Students	% ELs/ Total Students
Enrolled in Public School	1, 671,948	35, 562	2. 1
In Need of ELs Services	34, 851	--	--
Enrolled in ELs Services	30, 090	--	--
Gifted - Talented	76, 785	4 28	0. 5

For this Honors Thesis, there are two research questions explored in depth.

• Research Question 1: Overall, what assessment strategies, procedures, and instruments are more effective in identifying ELs for gifted programs?

• Research Question 2: Once identified for these programs, what instructional and assessment strategies appear to be more effective?

Issues in the Assessment and Identification of ELs as Gifted and Talented

There is a significant amount of literature relating to Research Question One. The assessment and identification of ELs begins almost immediately when a student from an immigrant family enters a public school in the United States. First, the student must go through a series of tests in order for administrators and experts to decide what services the child needs in

learning English. Before the student receives any services, the school district must establish whether a student qualifies as an ELs or a bilingual student. Schools use an assessment of language proficiency in order to determine which category a non-native English speaking student belongs. The assessments for identification of ELs vary in each state, but a popular example of a language proficiency assessment is the Home Language Survey (Goldenberg & Rutherford-Quach, 2012). The Home Language Survey asks several questions about the language used in the child's home, the student's comfort level with English, and the primary language the student uses in daily conversation (Harris, 2009). Usually, if a student responds to one or more of the questions with a language other than English, the school will provide the student with an oral or written English proficiency exam to further understand the student's English abilities. These scores will determine the student's placement and possible educational services (Mahoney & MacSwan, 2005). Students who test as bilingual traditionally begin learning in a mainstream classroom along with other students fluent in English; whereas students with a less sufficient understanding of English, and possibly their native language as wELs, classify as an ELs and should receive linguistic support. If a school or district disregards laws relating to providing ELs services, then the district faces consequences such as withdrawal of federal or state funding (Goldenberg & Rutherford-Quach, 2012).

Although the procedure in each school district is different, many schools will then administer individual or school-wide assessments to ensure the proper placement of students. Typically schools will only administer individual assessments if a referral for a student to be tested is provided by a teacher, school psychologist, or parent (Snyder, 2014). These assessments may measure ability, achievement, aptitude, or IQ, but regardless of what is being measured

these tests are typically nonverbal, timed, and originally written in English. Several researchers

suggest that these assessments do not accurately measure the strengths and weaknesses of ELs

for different reasons. First, because ELs come from many different cultures and experiences,

some enter the United States without having had any formal education. If a student is expected to

complete a lengthy standardized assessment without any familiarity with this form of evaluation,

then it is unlikely for the student to perform at grade level or to the best of his or her ability

(Carter et al, 2005). Although immigrant students with a formal education background typically

performed better on assessments than students without formal education, researchers noticed that

students without formal education often had strong capabilities due to their daily life

experiences. For example, Brazilian children who spent time sELsing items in street markets

with their families were able to think quickly and perform mathematical problems easily in real

life situations, but these children typically had poor test results in mathematics (Carter et al,

2005). Some districts have attempted to eliminate the issues associated with language differences

by allowing the student to answer questions verbally in their native language when evaluated by

an adult who speaks the same language as the student. Those using these verbal tests also ran

into obstacles such as children of certain cultures feeling uncomfortable interacting with an

unfamiliar adult, and therefore refusing to make eye contact or directly respond to the assessment

questions (Carter et al, 2005). Also, students who were raised speaking a language other than

English typically interpret words, pictures, or hypothetical situations in different ways than most

American children (Carter et al, 2005). After better understanding the shortcomings of verbal

testing, many states returned to nonverbal assessments, but insisted that these assessments be

administered in the native language of the ELs in order to provide better understanding of the

child's overall ability rather than English proficiency. Although this form of testing recognizes and attends to the linguistic needs of the child, the translated tests are often still influenced by cultural differences and may assess the child's native-language ability more than his or her knowledge of academic subjects (Mahoney & MacSwan, 2005).

As a possible solution to the issues involving verbal and nonverbal standardized testing, researchers have suggested shifting to alternate assessments. Researchers find the most popular types of alternate assessment as multidimensional as wELs as more multiculturally accommodating than traditional achievement tests (Taylor, 2006). Three assessments are widely used and promote a holistic review of a student's abilities and achievements: observational assessment, portfolio assessment, and dynamic assessment. Observational assessments can be classified as either formal or informal, but typically observational assessments are considered informal and simply involve one or two people observing the child in a natural environment. One limitation of observation involves the concept of reactivity which occurs when a child behaves differently due to the presence of an adult observer. Because reactivity causes biased results, researchers have found methods to eliminate reactivity such as the analogue assessment which has the observer watch from a disclosed location where the child cannot see him or her (Taylor, 2006). Although observational assessment is informal, observers must still provide reliable data in the form of operational definitions and proper identification of the child's behavior (Taylor, 2006). The portfolio assessment includes a collection of student work and achievements through a period of time and chosen by the student or the instructor. Portfolios demonstrate holistic assessment and allows for a more realistic view of a student's strengths and weaknesses. Portfolio assessments are recommended for identifying minority children as qualified for gifted

and talented programs which other standardized tests may not recognize (Taylor, 2006). Dynamic

assessment has gained the most attention when discussing the potential for improvement in

testing of gifted students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (Taylor, 2006).

The most recognizable method used in dynamic assessment is the test-train-retest model which

focuses on the process of learning and the student's potential rather than performance. This form

of assessment also helps identify barriers to more effective teaching methods and conditions with

culturally diverse students (Taylor, 2006).

Referral and screening of the student is the initial step in procedures for identifying an

ELs for gifted and talented education. Typically, procedures for identifying students for gifted

and talented programs include:

• Initial screening (e.g., school-wide screening, group achievement assessments)

• Individually administered assessments may determine eligibility for gifted and talented

services if the student's scores are high enough (e.g., individually administered IQ,

achievement, or ability tests)

• Alternate assessments administered to ELs to provide additional support since standardized

assessments may not show true potential of student (e.g., portfolio, observational, or dynamic

assessment)

Methods

For this Honors Thesis, there are two research questions explored in depth.

• Research Question 1: Overall, what assessment strategies, procedures, and instruments are

more effective in identifying ELs for gifted programs?

• Research Question 2: Once identified for these programs, what instructional and assessment

strategies appear to be more effective?

The methodology for this study will include the development of a survey instrument designed for

evaluating the effectiveness of schools districts' or individual schools' EL services. Five

interviews with Miami Valley experts will also be conducted to receive feedback for the

instrument and data about different school districts with significant EL populations.

V. TIMELINE: Provide a detailed monthly timeline of project milestones as needed for the

completion of the Honors Thesis Project.

2015

APRIL   Make initial contact with EL experts in five different school districts in the Miami

               Valley area.

               Finalize survey instrument with advisor

MAY   Send instrument to various subjects to receive data about school districts and

               feedback concerning strengths and weaknesses of the instrument.

JUNE   Analyze data received from sent instruments.

               Make any necessary revisions to the instrument for future use.

JULY   Write Methodology section of thesis which includes

               -participants (who was chosen for the methodology and why?)

--assessment and instrumentation

-data collection

-data analysis

-findings

AUGUST Schedule regular in-person meetings with advisor to discuss progress and next steps

FALL TBD Attend required Senior Thesis Workshop

SEPTEMBER Interview subjects who had taken survey instrument in the Spring in order to ask further questions about data or the environment of Miami Valley schools districts for ELs

OCTOBER Finish Methodology and Conclusion chapters of thesis

NOVEMBER Continue to meet with advisor to rewrite and revise chapters of thesis

DECEMBER Have thesis ready for publication by the end of the Fall 2016 semester

2016

JANUARY 31 Complete the Symposium Registration Form to register thesis information for the Honors Students Symposium

FEBRUARY

MARCH 20 Oral presentation of thesis at the Honors Students Symposium (HSS15)

APRIL 8 Submit electronic copy all Word documents of the thesis to Ramona Speranza

April 15   Present thesis project at a poster session of the Stander Symposium

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VII. BUDGET

Itemized Budget:

Materials/Supplies:	
Item	Estimated Cost
Travel: (If required for Thesis Project)	

Automobile Mileage	X miles X ($0.55/mile) = $165.00
200 miles	*The current UD rate for mileage reimbursement will be used.
Other:	
Item	Estimated Cost
Book for interview participants (5)	$150.00
Other Source(s) of Funding	
Source	*Pending/Secured*

Total Amount Requested: $ _315.00____

<u>Narrative Budget Justification</u>:

For my methodology I will be traveling to five different school districts at least two times each. Most of these school districts are 20-30 minutes away which will require a significant amount of driving of my own personal vehicle. I also understand that my participants are busy with their own jobs and therefore do not have much incentive to help me with my data collection. Because of this, I would like to present each of them with a book related to their field in order to show my appreciation and gratitude for taking the time to further my research.

VIII. LETTER OF SUPPORT

Advisor should submit the electronic letter of support directly to Ramona Speranza by April 1.

IX. APPENDICES (if necessary)

IRB approval letter