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# How do we spot potential in a new arrival?

Experience shows that without a system to identify potential in international new arrivals it can take up to two years for their language to develop to a sufficient level for this to surface in formal written English.

Many more classrooms now include learners with EAL who are relative beginners in English or recently arrived in the UK. Conventional means used to identify gifted and talented students cannot be easily applied to these students. For example, if we do not have access to information about their education and achievement, or their ability to communicate their thinking in English does not match that in their first language.

Lack of proficiency in English does not necessarily reflect lower cognitive development or academic potential. REAL has produced an initial assessment framework which will allow schools to assess whether these students are potentially gifted and to assemble sufficient evidence to support/justify a positive picture of the child, and strengthen the case for their inclusion.

No one piece of the jigsaw is enough, so the framework provides a range of instruments and information to help colleagues to look for signs of potential and to strengthen the voices around the child. Through a range of reading, writing and speaking tasks, the assessment pack focuses on building a picture of the student's past formal

educational and other learning experiences, their current knowledge of the 1,000 highest frequency words of English, and their ability in maths.

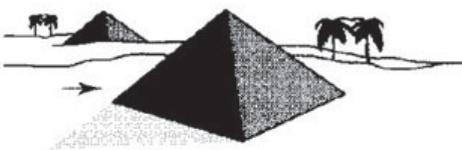
The assessments are scaled to provide opportunities for the learners from key stages 1 to 4 to demonstrate higher order skills. The student's first language is drawn upon in mother tongue interviews as a further indicator of their ability to think, reason and express ideas in complex language.



# The 1,000 word level test – beginners in English

The 1,000 most frequently occurring words in the English language are a fundamental resource for a beginner in English. Familiarity can be measured

using online tests, which use a multiple choice format and visual clues that emphasise the word with which recognition is being tested.

<p>1. This one is little.</p>  <p><input type="radio"/> T <input type="radio"/> N <input type="radio"/> X</p>	<p>2. You can find these everywhere.</p>  <p><input type="radio"/> T <input type="radio"/> N <input type="radio"/> X</p>
<p>3. Some children call their mother Mama.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> T <input type="radio"/> N <input type="radio"/> X</p>	<p>4. Show me the way to do it means 'show me how to do it.'</p> <p><input type="radio"/> T <input type="radio"/> N <input type="radio"/> X</p>

(T = true, N = not true, X = I don't understand)

The test takes about 20 minutes and is marked automatically by the website. Research shows that learners who score less than 80% require a specific intervention to support their learning of these words.

The assessment should take place over the course of four to six weeks. Reading and writing tasks are

done as soon as possible as these serve to provide an initial snapshot of the student's ability. Within two to three weeks the English department should follow up on the assessment in terms of how the student performs in lessons and responds to ongoing tasks. Other baseline measures, such as the 1,000 word level test, can be re-tested within six weeks to provide a sense of progression.



## Initial assessment process

On arrival	After 4–6 weeks
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Initial interview</li> <li>2. Initial indicators checklist (1)</li> <li>3. Reading, writing tasks</li> <li>4. Maths assessment</li> <li>5. 1,000 word level test (1)</li> <li>6. Mother tongue interview</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Initial indicators checklist (2)</li> <li>2. 1,000 word level test (2)</li> <li>3. Progress checklists for mainstream teachers</li> </ol>

All of these materials can be downloaded from [www.realproject.org.uk/newarrivals](http://www.realproject.org.uk/newarrivals).

The initial assessment framework provides a picture of the learning history and needs of all new arrivals, whilst being inclusive of gifted and talented learners. This is not a bolt-on model that requires duplication of effort. Our experience is that the framework can be adopted in its entirety where appropriate, with some elements used or tailored to suit. All the materials can be customised by the school or LA.

Two further issues need to be taken into account in developing a framework that will work in individual schools.

### **What is the pattern of new arrivals in your context in terms of the students' backgrounds?**

The REAL initial assessment framework should allow you to identify potential in those who do not have a history of formal education across the key stages, using speaking and listening assessments.

**What is the balance between September and mid-term arrivals?** In settings where there is a high volume of mid-term arrivals, there are pre-screening tools that can be used to identify those who require more detailed assessment.

## What are the classroom signs?



One of the key tasks is to provide evidence of positive behaviours that allow us to see potential. The indicators list below was developed by Hounslow schools to provide readily observable behaviours in recent arrivals, which when taken together, might indicate potential. Which of these do you see in learners new to your classroom?

### **Classroom indicators of potential**

Any new arrival with the potential to be identified as gifted and talented is likely to show some of the following readily observable characteristics:

- high level of motivation
- rapid acquisition of English (evidenced by oral/written work)
- good memory
- sustained initiative, e.g. use of dictionary
- well organised
- monitors own learning
- signs of disaffection, disruptive behaviour, withdrawn
- asks questions
- keen to do homework and ask for help
- readily applies previous learning
- problem-solving ability
- very good concentration
- demanding and anxious, wanting to learn too fast
- curious and observant
- developed interpersonal skills
- prepared to do extra-curricular activities or commit to hobbies

## What are the challenges raised by identification and the consequences of non-identification?

Identification is not an end in itself, but is central to raising positive expectations and aspirations in relation to the individual. Even with additional support they may take time to show their potential in formal written English, but once the bar has been raised it is difficult to argue that it should be lowered.

New arrivals identified as gifted and talented may require considerable support if they are to access challenge in everyday classroom learning. Providing this support is a challenge.

There are a range of classroom strategies and tactics to ease access for new arrivals to normal classroom learning, many of which can be adapted from the normal repertoire of the teacher. For gifted and talented learners there are two main questions to address:

- How do you set challenging tasks so that they are not heavily language based?
- What contextual support do you provide if they are?

