



# Riverside Insights<sup>®</sup>

## Examining the impact of DeKalb County's 2024-25 Gifted Program referral process

DeKalb County School District

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Date Prepared: August 26, 2025



## Executive Summary

In the 2024–25 school year, DeKalb County School District broadened its gifted referral process by lowering the MAP score threshold and adding the Iowa Assessment, with the goal of improving fair access to gifted eligibility testing. As a result, more than twice as many students completed the *CogAT* assessment compared to prior years. The number of students identified for gifted education increased significantly, and the racial/ethnic distribution of newly identified students more closely resembled the overall student population. While the representation of Black and Hispanic students increased significantly after the policy change, these groups—along with economically disadvantaged and English learner students—remain underrepresented. The findings support the continued use of expanded referral criteria – including broader access to *CogAT* testing – as a meaningful step toward more equitable gifted identification in DeKalb County Schools.



## A note about data sources used for this analysis

The analyses reported in this slide deck are based on a data set received from the district in May 2025. The number of students newly eligible for gifted services in our analyses are lower than those included in the state report largely due to:

1. Timing of data pull
2. Different student populations (state data include all students active at any point)
3. Fluctuations in enrollment

DeKalb County School District		
2021-2025 Gifted Student Eligibility, by School Year		
Source: Georgia Department of Education, Student Record		
School Year	Total Number of Students Eligible for Gifted Program (% one-year change)	Total Number of Students Newly Eligible in Year (% one-year change)
2024 - 2025	10,789 (+10%)	2,092 (+47%)
2023 - 2024	9,817 (-2%)	1,424 (-5%)
2022 - 2023	9,953 (-4%)	1,497 (+7%)
2021 - 2022	10,334 (-6%)	1,402 (+70%)
2020 - 2021	10,913	823



# New Gifted Identified Students by Subgroup

**Table 1.** DeKalb County School District data reporting the number and percentage change in newly gifted identified students by subgroup.

	2022-23	2023-24		2024-25	
	Number	Number	% one year change	Number	% one year change
Black	431	386	-10%	662	+72%
White	538	522	-3%	651	+25%
Latino	140	155	+10%	248	+60%
Asian	223	224	No change	279	+25%
Multiracial	94	104	+10%	150	+44%
Economically Disadvantaged	483	484	No change	679	+40%
English Learners	21	51	+142%	92	+80%
Students with Disabilities	51	52	+2%	87	+67%



# Gifted Referral Methods

## School Years 2022-23; 2023-24

Students were referred for gifted eligibility testing if:

- MAP scores  $\geq$  90<sup>th</sup> percentile

Eligibility testing included:

- Students complete *CogAT*

## School Year 2024-25

Students were referred for gifted eligibility testing if:

- MAP scores  $\geq$  75<sup>th</sup> percentile

Eligibility testing included:

- Students complete Iowa Assessments and *CogAT*



# Data Analysis

To determine the impact of the change in gifted referral policy, we examined a dataset drawn in May 2025 that included scores on the MAP, CogAT, and the Iowa Assessments for students in grades K-11. The table below provides the number of students taking each test by semester. Figure 1 on the next slide provides a visual display of the data.

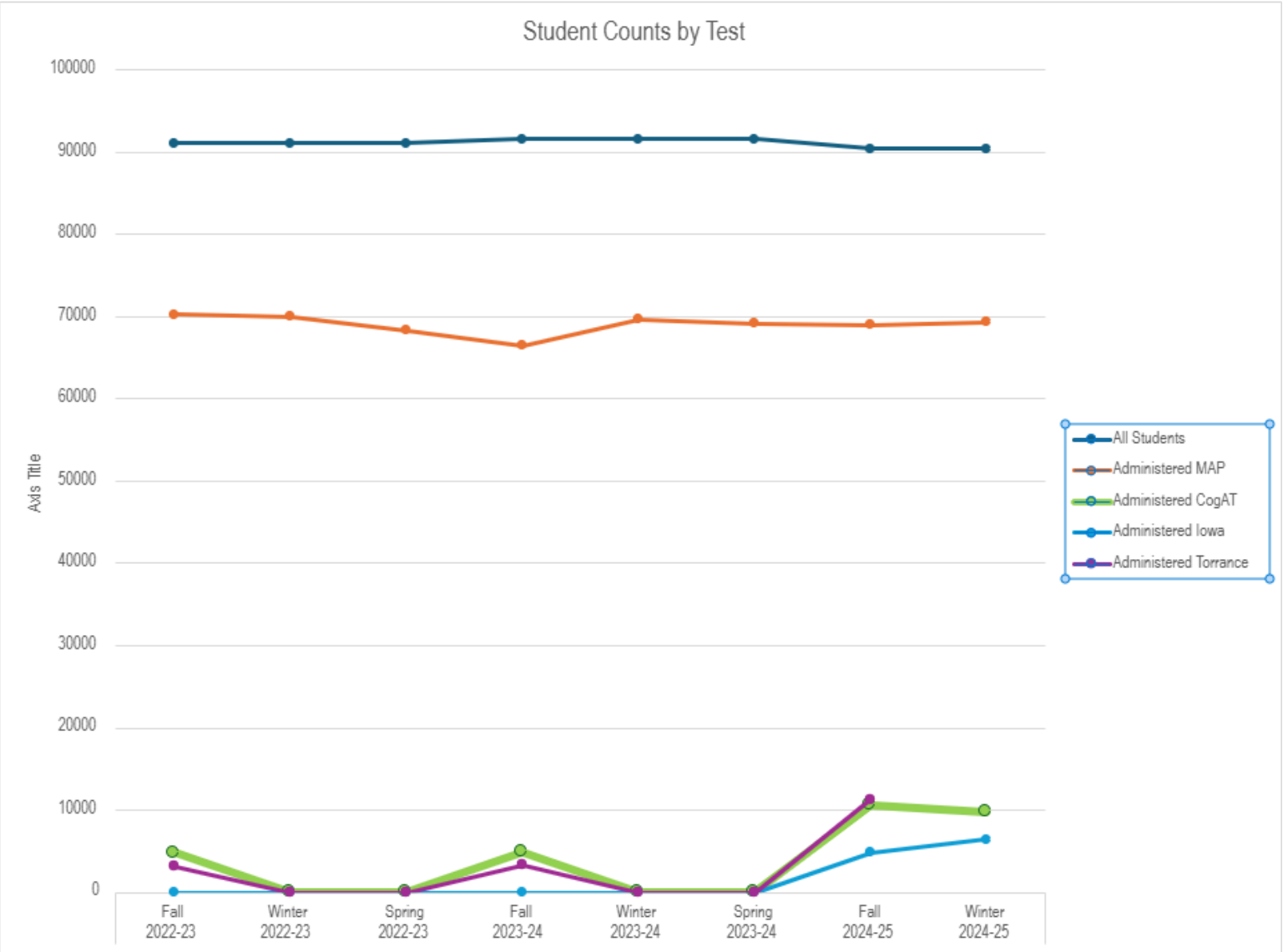
**Table 2.** Number of Students by Semester Taking MAP, CogAT, and Iowa Assessments

	Student N Counts (and Percentages) by Semester							
	Fall 2022-23	Winter 2022-23	Spring 2022-23	Fall 2023-24	Winter 2023-24	Spring 2023-24	Fall 2024-25	Winter 2024-25
Students	91087 (100%)	91087 (100%)	91087 (100%)	91627 (100%)	91627 (100%)	91627 (100%)	90433 (100%)	90433 (100%)
MAP	70264 (77.1%)	69993 (76.8%)	68322 (75.0%)	66510 (72.6%)	69727 (76.0%)	69217 (75.5%)	69063 (76.4%)	69398 (76.7%)
CogAT	4719 (5.2%)	-	-	4763 (5.2%)	-	-	10583 (11.7%)	9747 (10.8%)
Iowa	-	-	-	-	-	-	4791 (5.3%)	6391 (7.1%)
Torrance*	3185 (3.5%)			3345 (3.7%)			11306 (12.5%)	

*Note.* The percentage of students administered the CogAT more than doubled, and Torrance more than tripled following the change in referral criteria

\*The Torrance is administered once per year. Students newly eligible for gifted as a result of Spring 2025 Torrance assessments not included in this analysis.

**Figure 1.** Number of Students by Semester Taking MAP, CogAT, or Iowa Assessments





# New Gifted Eligibility Summary by Ethnicity

**Table 3.** Demographic breakdown of students by school year as a percentage of the total population and as a percentage of the newly gifted eligible population

	2022-23		2023-24		2024-25	
	Total	Gifted	Total	Gifted	Total	Gifted
White	10.3	37.7	10.5	37.5	10.8	32.7
Black	58.3	30.2	56.1	27.7	54.9	33.3
Hispanic	21.6	9.8	23.4	11.1	23.5	12.5
Asian/PI/AI/AN*	6.7	15.6	7.0	16.1	7.5	14.0
Multiracial	3.0	6.6	3.1	7.5	3.3	7.5
<b>Total N New Gifted</b>	<b>1426</b>		<b>1391</b>		<b>1990</b>	

\*Note. Includes students who are Asian, Pacific Islander, American Indian, and Alaska Native. These groups were combined due to small sample sizes.

Green line indicates beginning of gifted referral policy change. Students newly eligible for gifted as a result of Spring 2025 Torrance assessments not included in this analysis.



## Summary of Findings Reported in Table 3

- The total percentage of students found newly eligible for gifted services (both within and across ethnicities) increased substantially between the 2023-24 and 2024-25 school years, due to the change in DeKalb's GT referral criteria.
- In the 2022-23 and 2023-24 school years, only 1.57% and 1.52% were identified for gifted education\*.
- However, in the 2024-25 school year, these percentages increased to 2.18% and 2.07% of students\*.

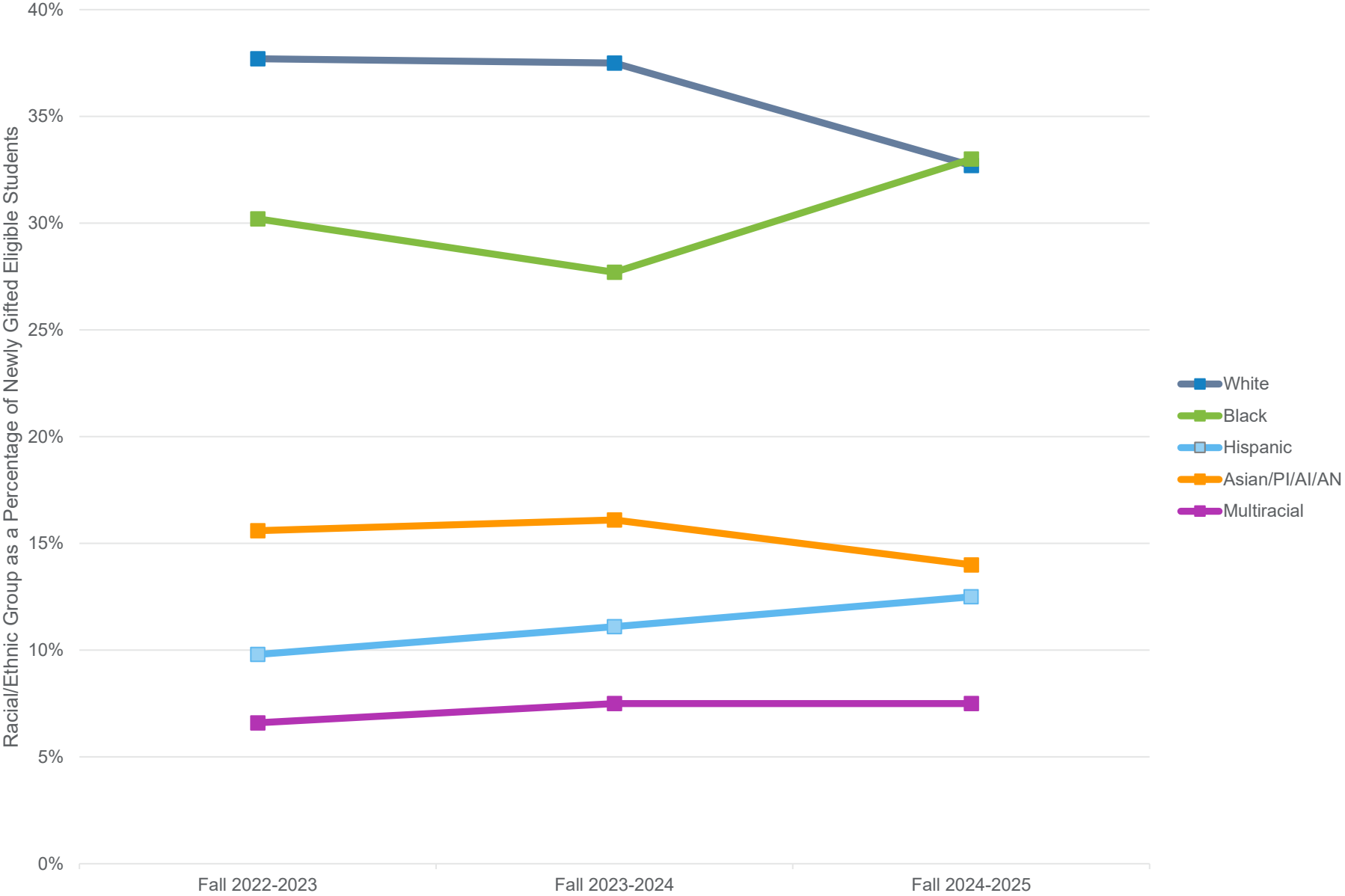
*\*See values in the "Total" row of Table 2 (Slide 6) for the values used for these calculations.*



## Summary of Findings Reported in Table 3 continued

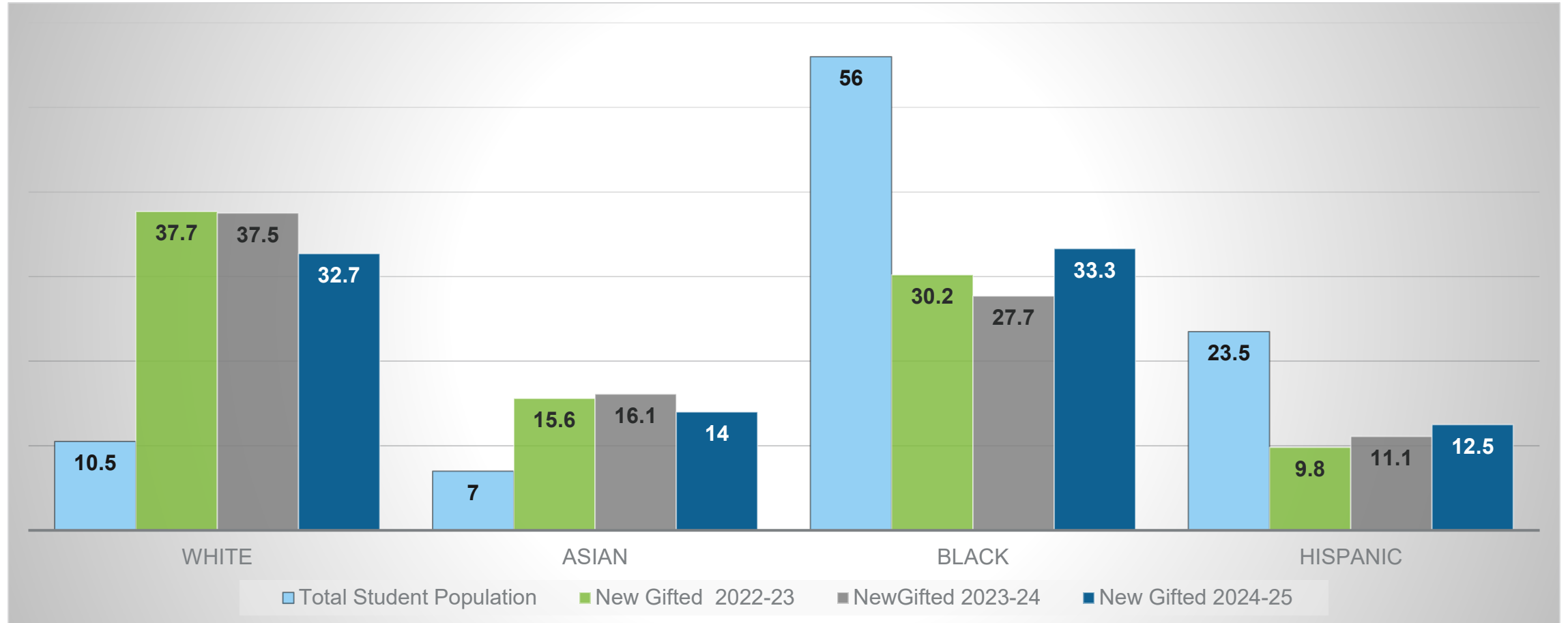
- Despite representing approximately 80% of the overall student population, **Black and Hispanic** students consistently account for only 40–45% of students identified for gifted education each semester. This persistent gap highlights a pattern of **underrepresentation** that warrants attention.
- In contrast, **White and Asian** students have been **overrepresented** among the students identified for gifted education. Despite making up less than 20% of the student population combined, these groups tend to make up 45-55% of the students gifted eligible.
- These trends have improved following the changes to gifted referral criteria. Figures 2 through 4 provide additional visual displays of the data.

**Figure 2.** Percentage of students by race/ethnicity found newly eligible for gifted education by year.





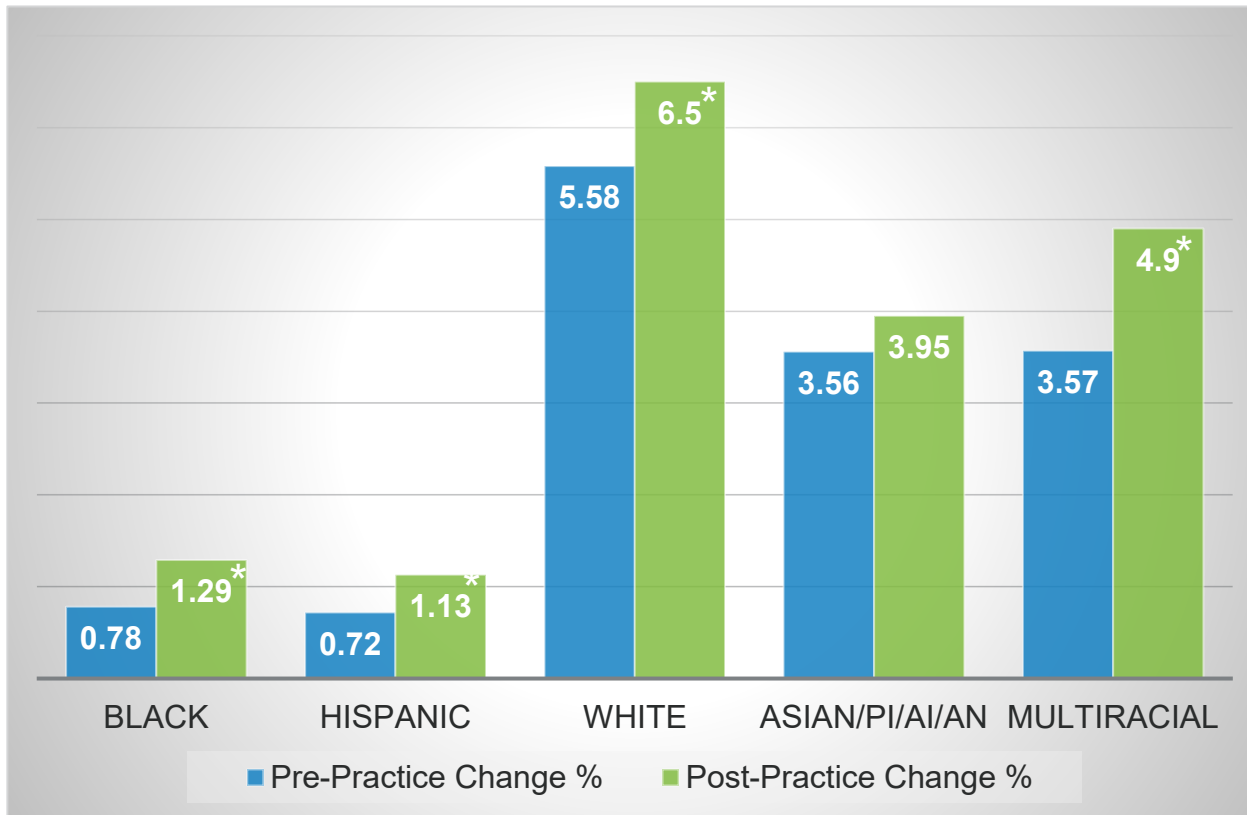
**Figure 3. Race/Ethnicity Makeup of DeKalb Student Population and Newly Gifted Eligible Students by School Year.**





# Gains in Gifted ID Rates Across Racial/Ethnic Groups

Figure 4. Proportion Z-Test Results Pre and Post Changes, \* $p < .001$



We tested whether the proportion of students in each racial/ethnic group identified for gifted education changed significantly following DeKalb's change in referral practice.

- **Black, Hispanic, Multiracial, and White students saw statistically significant increases** in the proportion identified as gifted due to the change in practice.
- **Asian/PI/AI/AN students did not show a significant change**, suggesting stability in identification rates.



# Newly Gifted Eligibility Summary by Lunch Status

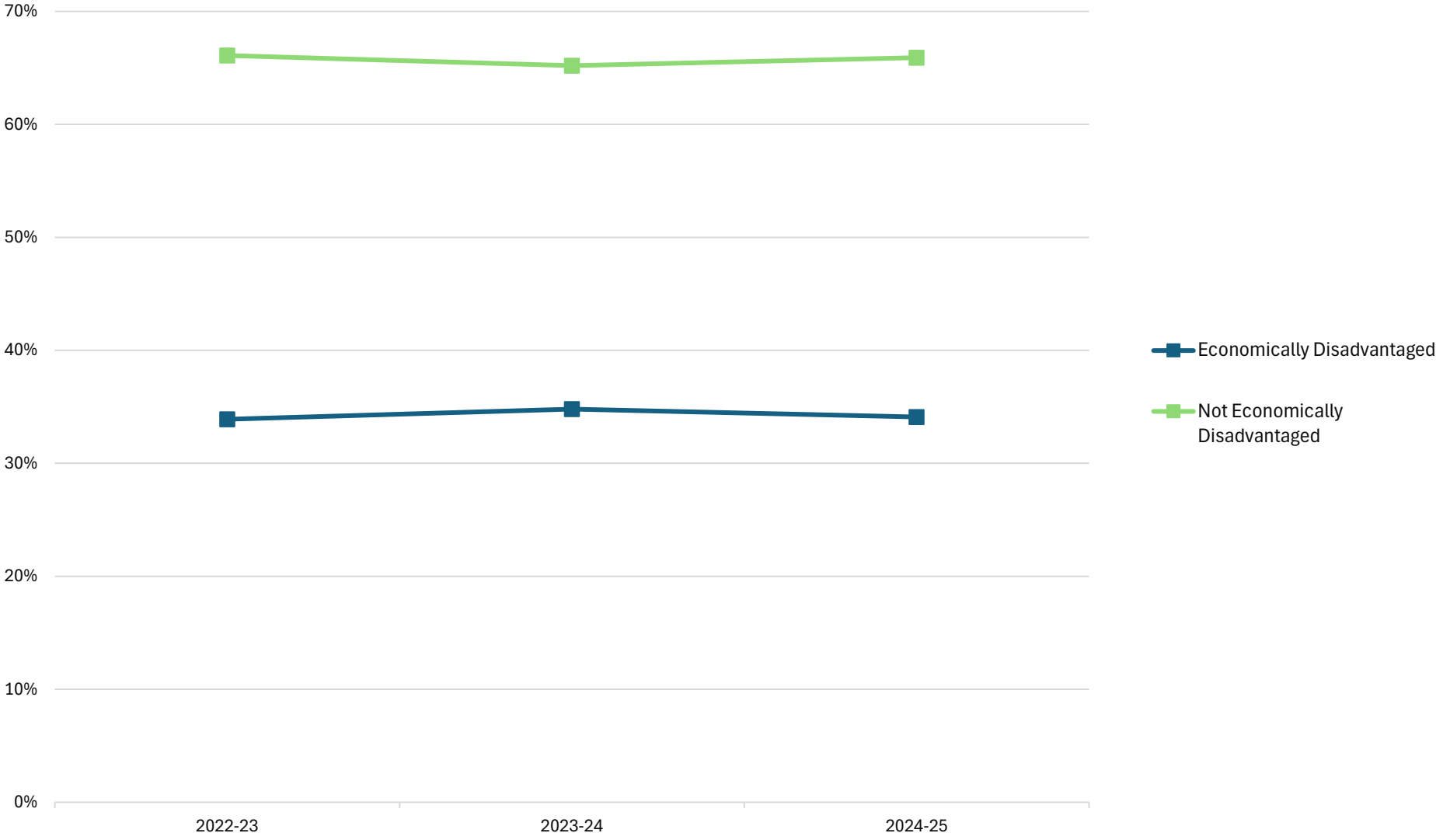
Table 4 summarizes results by lunch status (i.e., whether a student was economically disadvantaged). Approximately two-thirds of students are economically disadvantaged in this district. However, only about one-third of the gifted eligible students are economically disadvantaged, making this group highly underrepresented. This trend has persisted across school years (regardless of which Gifted referral method was used).

**Table 4.** Percentage of students from the total population by semester eligible for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch (FRL) and as a percentage of the newly gifted eligible population

	2022-23		2023-24		2024-25	
	Total	Gifted	Total	Gifted	Total	Gifted
FRL Eligible	74.6	33.9	71.8	34.8	65.3	34.1
Not Eligible	25.4	66.1	28.2	65.2	34.7	65.9
<b>Total N Gifted</b>	<b>1426</b>		<b>1391</b>		<b>1990</b>	

Note. Green line indicates beginning of gifted referral practice change

**Figure 5.** Percentage of students by economic status found newly eligible for gifted education by year.





# Newly Gifted Eligible Summary by English Learner (EL) Status

Table 5 summarizes results by EL status. Approximately 20% of students are ELs. However, less than 5% of the newly gifted eligible students are ELs, making this group highly underrepresented. This trend was persistent across school years (regardless of which Gifted referral method was used), though it has improved slightly in the 2024-25 school year.

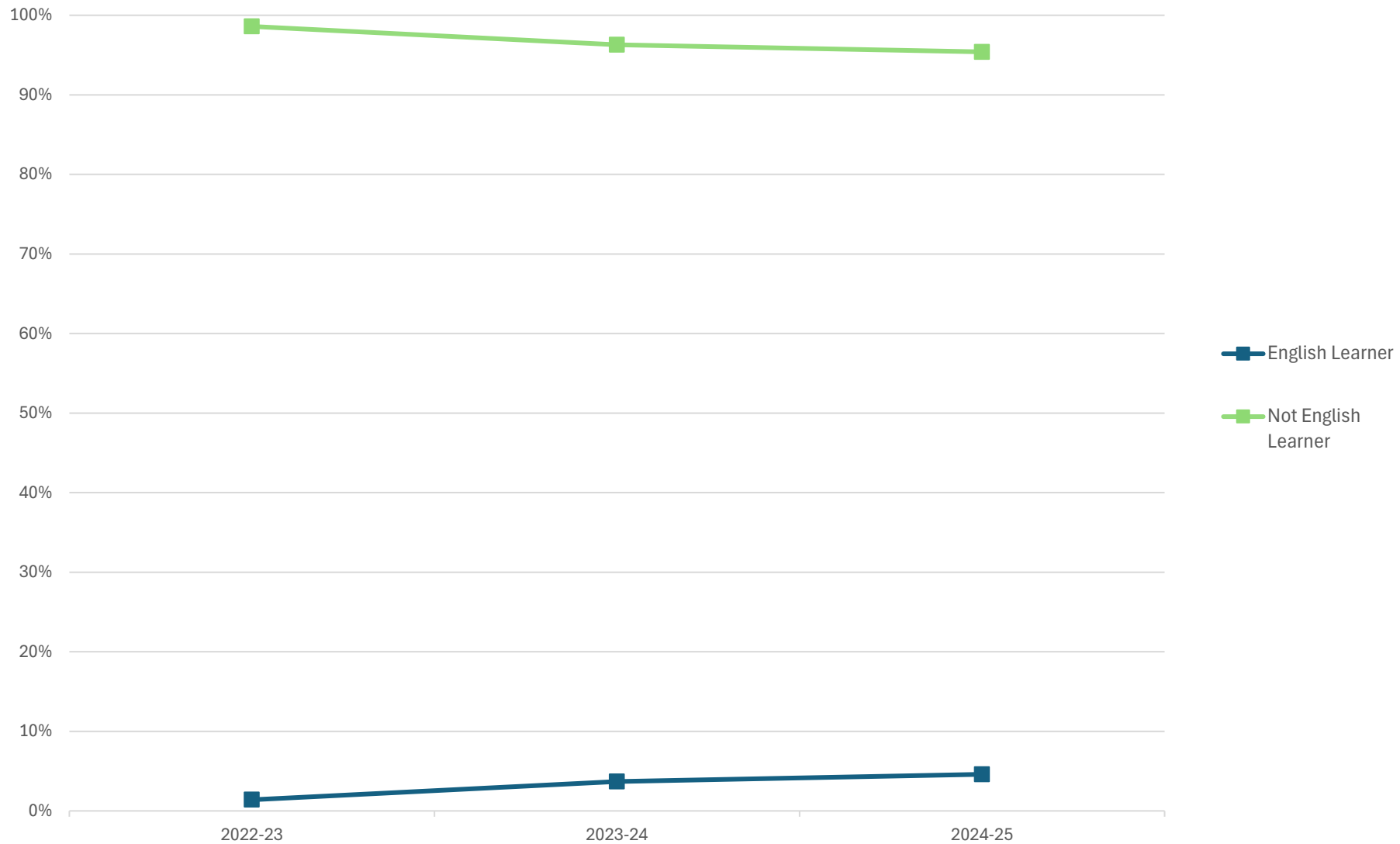
**Research we have conducted with other datasets suggests that expanding CogAT testing to all students may help improve eligibility rates for ELs since language can prevent some English Learners from demonstrating their full potential on achievement tests.**

**Table 5.** Percentage of English Learners from the total population by school year and as a percentage of the newly gifted eligible population

	2022-23		2023-24		2024-25	
	Total	Gifted	Total	Gifted	Total	Gifted
English Learner	16.7	1.4	20.2	3.7	22.0	4.6
Not English Learner	83.3	98.6	79.8	96.3	78.0	95.4
<b>Total N Gifted</b>	<b>1426</b>		<b>1391</b>		<b>1990</b>	

Note. Green line indicates beginning of gifted referral practice change

**Figure 6.** Percentage of students by EL status found newly eligible for gifted education by year.





# Newly Gifted Eligible Summary by Disability Status

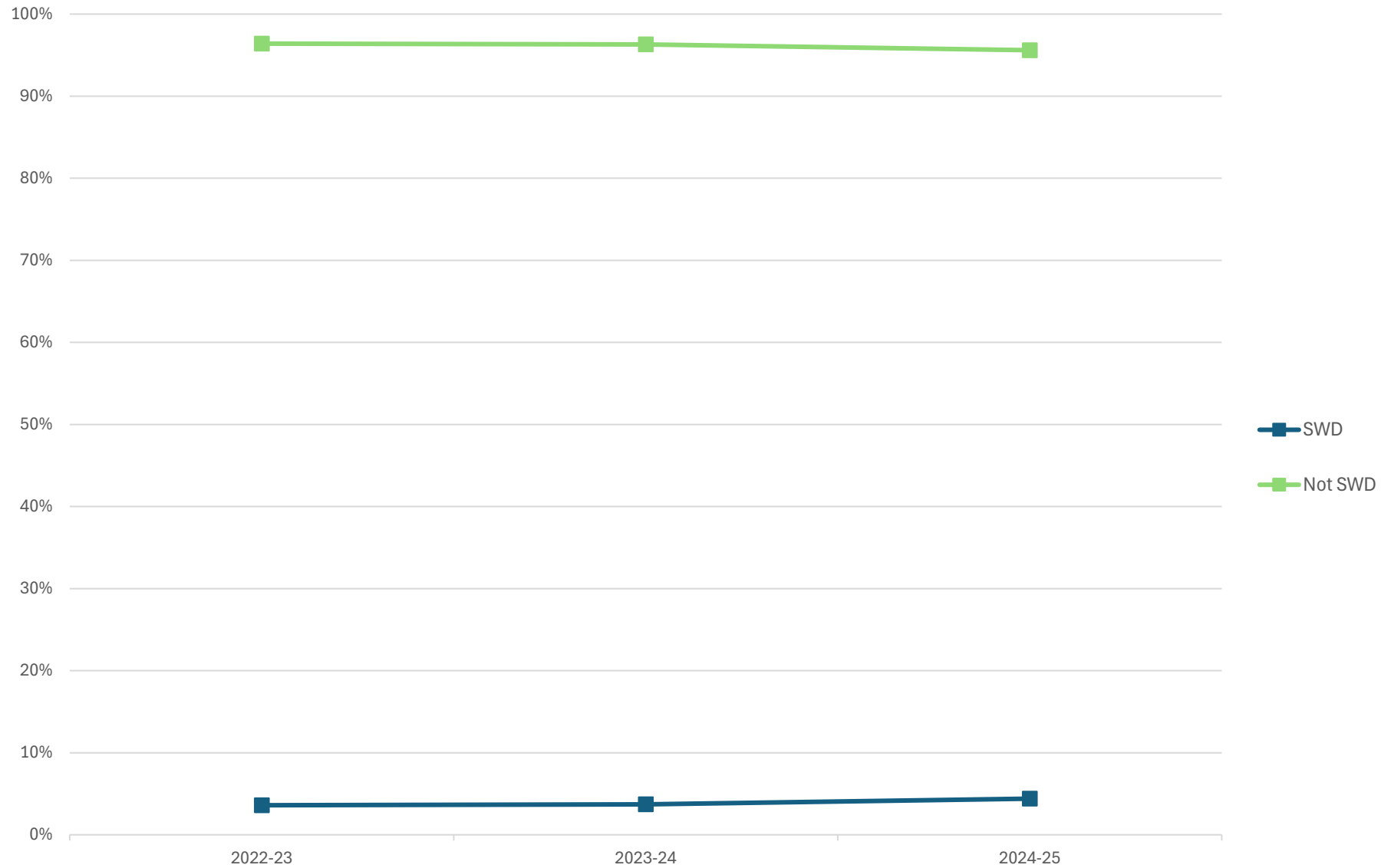
Table 6 summarizes results by disability status. Approximately 12% of students have a disability (SWD). However, less than 5% of the gifted eligible students are SWDs, making this group underrepresented. This trend was persistent across school years (regardless of which Gifted referral method was used), though it has improved slightly in the 2024-25 school year.

**Table 6.** Percentage of students with disabilities (SWD) from the total population by year and as a percentage of the newly gifted eligible population

	2022-23		2023-24		2024-25	
	Total	Gifted	Total	Gifted	Total	Gifted
SWD	11.5	3.6	11.7	3.7	12.0	4.4
Not SWD	88.5	96.4	88.3	96.3	88.0	95.6
<b>Total N Gifted</b>	<b>1426</b>		<b>1391</b>		<b>1990</b>	

Note. Green line indicates beginning of gifted referral practice change

**Figure 7.** Percentage of students by disability status found newly eligible for gifted education by year.





## Discussion

- These results show that the changes to DeKalb's Gifted Education referral method resulted in the demographic makeup of newly gifted identified students better resembling the student population, with proportionally more Black, Hispanic, and Multiracial students being identified in the 2024-25 school year relative to previous years.
- Although this is an improvement relative to previous results, Black and Hispanic students are still largely underrepresented.
- There was an increase in the number of students with disabilities and students who are English Learners identified for gifted education. However, these results should be interpreted with caution given the smaller sample sizes. The district should consider using Alt-Verbal scores for English Learners in grades K-2 to reduce language load.
- **The results of these analyses support the expanded referral criteria for determining which students are referred for gifted identification.**



Questions? Please contact:

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