Promising Practices in Gifted Students from Underserved Populations

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Equity ?
• Students of Poverty
• Black, Latinx, and American Indian
• English Learners
• Underachievers
  • 2e
Almost $\frac{1}{2}$ of low-income students classified as high achieving when they enter first grade are no longer classified as such by fifth grade (Wyner, Bridgeland, & Dilulio, 2009).
Excellence Gaps

Students from families in the top quartile of socioeconomic status are 5 times more likely to be in a gifted program than those in the bottom quartile (Borland, 2005).
High-achieving, lower-income students drop out of high school as often as high-achieving, higher-income students (Wyner et al., 2009).
Gifted students of poverty are less likely to attend prestigious colleges, graduate from college, and receive graduate degrees (Hoxby & Avery, 2013; Wyner et al., 2009).
Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Act asserts that “outstanding talents are present in children and youth from all cultural groups, across all economic strata, and in all areas of human endeavor” (United States Department of Education, 1993, p. 3).
Participate in Javits Funded Research at UCONN
For more than a quarter century, the field of gifted education has wrestled with two separate, but related issues:

1) a widespread failure to identify and serve underrepresented populations and
2) limited data documenting “what works” in gifted education.
Gifted Mandate

States Responding

28/4

Identify and Serve

Only Identify
Connecticut Definition of Gifted and Talented (Section 10-76a-2)

1. “Extraordinary learning ability” means a child identified by the planning and placement team as gifted and talented on the basis of either performance on relevant standardized measuring instruments, or demonstrated or potential achievement or intellectual creativity, or both.

2. “Gifted and talented” means a child identified by the planning and placement team as (A) possessing demonstrated or potential abilities that give evidence of very superior intellectual, creative or specific academic capability and (B) needing differentiated instruction or services beyond those being provided in the general education program in order to realize the child’s intellectual, creative or specific academic potential. The term shall include children with extraordinary learning ability and children with outstanding talent in the creative arts.

3. “Outstanding talent in the creative arts” means a child identified by the planning and placement team as gifted and talented on the basis of demonstrated or potential achievement in music, the visual arts or the performing arts.

IS THERE A GIFTED GAP?

GIFTED EDUCATION IN HIGH-POVERTY SCHOOLS

BY CHRISTOPHER B. YALUMA AND ADAM TYNER

FOREWORD BY CHESTER E. FINN, JR. AND AMBER M. NORTHERN
FIGURE 1: AVAILABILITY OF GIFTED PROGRAMMING BY SCHOOL POVERTY LEVEL

- **Connecticut**
  - Low: 41.6%
  - Middle: 35.9%
  - High: 24.8%
  - Total: 36.9%

- **National**
  - Low: 64.5%
  - Middle: 69.2%
  - High: 69.1%
  - Total: 68.3%
FIGURE 2:
GIFTED PARTICIPATION BY SCHOOL POVERTY LEVEL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Poverty Level</th>
<th>Connecticut</th>
<th>National</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FIGURE 3: SCHOOL COMPOSITION AND GIFTED PARTICIPATION BY RACE IN HIGH-POVERTY SCHOOLS WITH GIFTED PROGRAMS

Student Race / Ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Gifted</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>16.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>44.3</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Subgroup Percentage of Gifted and Overall Enrollment

School N= 28

Relative Risk Ratio (data from three states – not Connecticut)
(Greater than 1 means over-representation,
Less than 1 means underrepresentation)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>State 1</th>
<th>State 2</th>
<th>State 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FRL students</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>0.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African Americans</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanics</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELs</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whites</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>1.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asians</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>2.47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• Establish Preparation Programs Prior to Screening
• Consider Expanded Definitions of Gifted
• Offer Professional Development
• Use Universal Screening
• Consider Nonverbal Measures
• Use Checklist that Reflects Characteristics of Underserved Populations
• Conduct Periodic Assessments
• Assess Students Using Performance Tasks
• Understand that Multiple Criteria is OR not AND
• Consider Excellence in Outside School Activities
• Use Native Language
• Be Aware of Stereotype Threat
• Avoid Deficit Thinking
• Value EL Interpreters
• Offer Culturally Relevant Curriculum
• Offer Support Systems
• Be Aware—Who Approaches Parent or Guardian
Project SPARK: Supporting and Promoting Advanced Readiness in Kids

• Focus on early awareness/identification/intervention to support high potential

• Emphasis at grades K-2 in schools with high populations from underserved groups

• Application/scaling up of the Young Scholars Model (Horn, 2015) in 4 Connecticut school districts
  • Access to advanced learning opportunities
  • Affirmation of high academic potential
  • Advocates for students

This project is supported under the Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Grant Program, PR/Award Number S206A140017, as administered by the OESE, U.S. Department of Education.
Guiding Principles

• Advanced potential exists across demographic groups.
• Early attention to high potential is critical for engaging student growth and academic success.
• Teacher opportunity to observe behaviors in the classroom is important for guiding recognition of high potential across diverse groups.
• Curriculum and instruction designed to yield and develop high potential behaviors are valuable tools for identification and programming.
Major Elements of SPARK

• Working with teachers to recognize advanced potential in diverse populations
  • Goal to support recognition and increased response
• Conducting assessments to follow students referred by their teachers to the project
• Providing summer program access in treatment schools
• Comparing treatment and comparison schools on achievement data and later identification for gifted programs
Enrolled 139 students in SPARK summer program 2015 and over 200 in 2016, 2017, and 2018

100-200 Response Lessons per year conducted in K-2 classrooms

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Sample Lesson: Colorful Categories
Gifted Behaviors Rating Scale

Contains 4 categories:

- Exceptional Ability to Learn
- Exceptional Application of Knowledge
- Exceptional Creative/Productive Thinking
- Exceptional Motivation to Succeed

Ratings

Each category is assigned a rating based on how often behaviors are observed:

1. Rarely
2. Occasionally
3. Frequently
4. Consistently
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Comparison n (%)</th>
<th>Treatment n (%)</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>140 (41)</td>
<td>200 (59)</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>103 (30)</td>
<td>237 (70)</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>104 (38)</td>
<td>169 (62)</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>84 (39)</td>
<td>133 (61)</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Demographics of Students in the Project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic</th>
<th>Comparison n (%)</th>
<th>Treatment n (%)</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>207 (52)</td>
<td>353 (50)</td>
<td>.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or Hispanic</td>
<td>166 (43)</td>
<td>334 (49)</td>
<td>.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELL</td>
<td>35 (10)</td>
<td>48 (8)</td>
<td>.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRL</td>
<td>141 (40)</td>
<td>260 (47)</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education</td>
<td>5 (1)</td>
<td>16 (3)</td>
<td>.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identified gifted</td>
<td>28 (28)</td>
<td>44 (22)</td>
<td>.31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Demographics of Students Later Identified as Gifted

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic</th>
<th>Comparison n (%)</th>
<th>Treatment n (%)</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>16 (57)</td>
<td>27 (61)</td>
<td>.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or Hispanic</td>
<td>6 (21)</td>
<td>23 (52)</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELL</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2 (5)</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRL</td>
<td>4 (17)</td>
<td>13 (48)</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results and Discussion

• Aspects of the project positively influenced the diversity of students considered for and formally identified for gifted programs
• Larger pool
  • Served students
  • Students later identified gifted
  • More students from diverse backgrounds
• More diverse pool
  • Students later identified gifted
• Suggests value in focused attention on professional learning including classroom-based applications
Follow-Up Work

• Project LIFT: Learning Informs Focused Teaching
• Extending Response Lesson component of Young Scholars/Project SPARK to engage regular practice
• Examining linkages between how teachers perceive academic potential and their instructional decision making
• 38 teachers across 5 Connecticut districts to date

This project is supported under the Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Grant Program, PR/Award Number S206A170030, as administered by the OESE, U.S. Department of Education.
Teacher Reflections on Project Lessons

• I was surprised at how the students were able to come up with the questions. Although I had to help them turn them into questions, they had great ideas about what they needed to focus on when they come to a word they don't know.

• All of work around generating and reflecting on questions was highly engaging for students and yielded great responses. Students not only generated great questions, but they were also able to reflect on which ones worked best and highlight those from their list.

• It was very difficult to let go of some of the control when it came to allowing them to explore...I was happy to see the students engaged and they appeared to feel good about how hard they worked. For the whole 90 minutes, no student complained about what they were doing.

This project is supported under the Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Grant Program, PR/Award Number S206A170030, as administered by the OESE, U.S. Department of Education.
Best practices involve a fair and equitable nomination process. This requires a paradigm shift where the focus changes from identifying and remediating weaknesses to identifying strengths and giftedness through multiple lenses (Esquierdo & Arreguin-Anderson, 2012).

The National Center for Research on Gifted Education (NCRGE – http://ncrge.uconn.edu) is funded by the Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education PR/Award # R305C140018.
Model for Improving Identification of Underserved Students

National Center for Research on Gifted Education (http://ncrge.uconn.edu)
Four Phases for Improving Identification of Underserved Learners for Gifted and Talented Programs

Pre-Identification
• Targeted Subgroups
• Broadened Definition of Giftedness
• Informal Data Sources to Identify Giftedness
• Parent Awareness

Preparation
• Staffing/Human Resources
• Material Resources

Identification
• Universal Screening
• Broadened Definition With Alternative Identification Pathways
• Cultural Awareness/Sensitivity Through Professional Development
• Frequent Screening
• Culturally Appropriate Assessments
• Web of Communication
• Talent Scouts

Acceptance of Placement
• Parent Awareness
• Accessibility of Location/Scheduling
• Trustworthiness of the Communicator
• Cultural Awareness/Sensitivity to Being Labeled as Gifted
• Support Services to Ensure Student Success

National Center for Research on Gifted Education
(http://ncrge.uconn.edu)
Talent Development is a Two Step Process—
1. We must provide opportunities for talent to surface
2. Then we must provide programs that develop students’ talents
“Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.”

- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
The only way our state and country will reach their potential is if we help all our children reach their potential.
Our 100% online graduate certificate program can be completed in one year.

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15 Tips for EL Students
from the National Center for Research on Gifted Education

Adopt Universal Screening Procedures
1. Adopt a policy of universal screening of all students in one or more grade levels for the identification process.
2. Select assessment instruments that are culturally sensitive and account for language differences.
3. Assess the speed of English language acquisition and monitor the rate of mastering reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills in English.
4. Consider including reliable and valid nonverbal ability assessments as part of the overall identification process.
5. Use other identification tools to supplement results of universal screening.

Create Alternative Pathways to Identification
6. Use native language ability and achievement assessments as indicators of potential giftedness, when available.
7. Maintain a list of multilingual school psychologists who are qualified to administer assessments in the student’s native language.
8. Establish a preparation program prior to formal identification procedures that provides students with learning opportunities to enhance knowledge and academic skills necessary for a student to be recognized.
9. Create a talent pool list of students who exhibit high potential but are not yet enrolled in gifted and talented programs. Observations, daily interactions between teachers and students, informal assessments, and formal assessments provide multiple opportunities to gauge students’ learning progress. Make identification of giftedness an ongoing process rather than a single event.

Establish a Web of Communication
10. Establish an identification committee that includes representatives who have key responsibilities in various roles and departments.
11. Develop and implement intentional outreach to the school community, particularly parents/guardians/caretakers. This process should utilize multiple pathways in languages appropriate to the population.
12. Emphasize collaboration within and across specialization/departments (e.g., general education, English as a second language [ESL], special education, gifted education) so people view themselves as talent scouts.

View Professional Development as a Lever for Change
13. Provide professional development opportunities for school personnel about effective policies and practices to support equitable representation of ESLs in gifted and talented programs.
14. Develop a systematic approach to analyzing district and school demographics and the status of students identified/not identified for gifted and talented programs.
15. Promote efforts to diversify the teaching corps so that the adult community of a school reflects the student population.

Visit http://ncrge.uconn.edu for more information

This research was sponsored by the National Center for Research on Gifted Education (Grant No. H164M110006) and the National Science Foundation under grant No. DRL-1020234. Researchers and writers suppress the names of gifted students on the information gathered from schools to protect the identities of students. No reasonable effort was made to protect the identities of adults. The project was funded by the Department of Education’s Office of Gifted and Talented Education. The information presented in this report is based on data collected through a national survey of school districts. The findings and conclusions in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official positions or policies of the Department. The referral of any commercial products is for reader information only and does not imply endorsement by the Department. The opinions expressed in this publication reflect those of the authors or their organizations and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department.
English learners (ELs) are the fastest growing population of learners in the United States. However, despite the growing numbers of ELs, their representation in gifted identification and programming continues to lag behind not only traditional populations of learners from advantaged communities, but also other underserved populations of learners. The United States Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights indicates that 2% of ELs are enrolled in gifted and talented programs, as compared to 7% of non-ELs. Historically, there is an under-representation of students from culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse communities in gifted and talented programs. Identification procedures and policies have been cited as the crux of the problem.

Improving identification of EL students, as well as students from other underserved populations, for gifted programs requires a new paradigm that centers around identifying students’ strengths, rather than focusing on their weaknesses. Under this paradigm, every stakeholder, from EL service providers to school psychologists to classroom teachers to parents/guardians/caregivers, form a web of communication and serve as talent scouts.

Professional development creates an opportunity to improve school personnel’s awareness of EL issues related to identification. This increased awareness results in changes in identification practices, the evolution of a web of communication among all stakeholders, and modifications in program services.

Changes in identification practices include providing pre-identification opportunities to encourage emergence of talents, using universal screening to avoid overlooking talented students, setting alternative pathways to identification to increase opportunities for talents to be recognized, frequently screening students to identify students whose talents manifest later, and using culturally appropriate assessments, such as testing in the student’s native language.

Each of these practices has the potential to increase the number of ELs identified for gifted services. The evolution of a web of communication promotes awareness of EL talent among all stakeholders (e.g., administrators, district gifted coordinators; gifted specialists; parents/guardians/caregivers; EL specialists, classroom teachers, school psychologists, or counselors). This encourages the practice of stakeholders serving as talent scouts. It also increases the trustworthiness of communications among the stakeholders about opportunities for talent development.

Improved awareness of EL identification issues results in modifications to program services that involve inclusion of culturally responsive curriculum and adding support services to ensure ELs are successful in gifted and talented programs. These modifications increase trustworthiness in communication among stakeholders and improve acceptance rates and placement of ELs in the gifted and talented program.