

Systems Newsletter

Center for Gifted Education

Spring 2004

The College of William and Mary

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A Report on Findings and Implications of Project STAR Follow-up Study

Introduction

In the spring of the 1999-2000 and the fall of the 2000-2001 school years, the State of South Carolina conducted the first statewide implementation of the newly developed Performance Tasks for Gifted Identification, also known as the Project STAR tests. Across both administrations of the instruments, a total of 9,034 students were tested and 2,206 (24.4%) qualified as eligible for the gifted program. Eighty school districts participated in the testing and seventy-four districts had at least one student who qualified for the gifted program.

One of the interesting outcomes of this process involved the percentages of students from low-income socio-economic status (SES) homes that qualified for gifted programs. During the spring implementation, 15% of the students who were from free- or reduced-lunch homes qualified for the gifted program; in the fall implementation, 18% of these students qualified. Overall, of all the students who

qualified in the spring and fall, respectively, 21.6% and 23.6% were from free-or reduced-lunch homes. This expanded access to eligibility for students who are typically underrepresented in gifted programs may or may not impact the nature of the services that are provided.

A Brief Review of the Literature

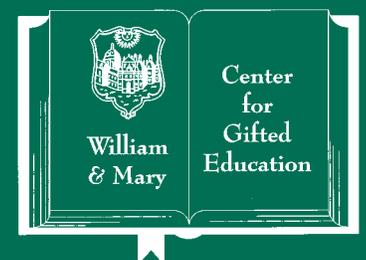
Disadvantaged Gifted Learners

Research reviews suggest that traditional assessment methods, including standardized IQ tests, teacher recommendations, and parent questionnaires, are inadequate in identifying gifted minorities (Amodeo & Flores, 1981; Frasier, 1984; Masten, 1985). Problems in current identification methods include neglect of subcultural values and abilities; middle-class mainstream bases of measurement instruments; tests standardized without sufficient numbers of minorities; lack of knowledge about or identification of culturally valued talents; and negative consequences of adverse

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From the Executive Director

Dr. Joyce VanTassel-Baska

The Center continues to be engaged in interesting and important work on several fronts. Work at national and international levels defines major priorities for research and development activities as well as professional development.

Our federal Project Athena is in full implementation at all seven district sites, causing our doctoral students and staff major scheduling problems to handle the post observation phase. A follow-up training for teachers and coordinators is planned to coincide with the National Curriculum Network conference this March. Emphasis will be on results from first year implementation, a sharing session among teachers of what worked and what didn't, and why, and an opportunity to present a new program on reading comprehension just developed by the Athena staff. A new task force group is also busy at work on a professional development questionnaire that will allow us to assess teacher attitudes toward the Athena training events that are upcoming. Headed by Dr. Bruce Bracken, this group hopes to pilot an instrument this spring. We look forward to continuing the agenda of this important research and development study over the remaining four years of the project.

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An on-going effort in South Carolina to track the profiles and performance of gifted students identified under Dimension C in their state regulations which comprises performance tasks



developed by our Center in 1998 has been funded through that state's new Javits grant. The new research study will have five major thrusts:

- 1) What are the demographic patterns and performance trends of Project STAR students over the years of 2000-2005?
- 2) How do the profiles and patterns of performance of Project STAR students compare to traditionally identified gifted students and Project STAR-nominated but nonidentified students?
- 3) What individual student prototypes of giftedness exist within the Project STAR data set? What unique characteristics and educational needs typify them?
- 4) What are the patterns of identification and performance of low-income African-American students who were identified through Project STAR in comparison to those nominated but not identified?
- 5) To what extent are there similarities and differences for Hispanic and Asian minority groups in respect to identification and performance? What are the special issues in nurturing Hispanic students identified through the Spanish version of the Project STAR performance tasks?

As principal investigator of the study, I will be involving Annie Feng, Kim Chandler, and Chwee Quek from the Center and Julie Swanson from The College of Charleston as the research team to implement the two-year project.

Again, this project allows us to continue our collaboration with educators of the gifted in South Carolina in a meaningful

way as we move forward in better understanding the needs of and how to serve economically disadvantaged and minority students effectively within state-funded programs.

Another new collaborative research study involves my work with Rena Subotnik on a longitudinal study of Biology Olympiad winners. Sponsored by the Research Education Institute, this study will involve survey and interview protocol development for use with students, parents, and targeted teachers to uncover the prospective pattern of talent development for this specific area of science compared to talented science students not selected and in relationship to practicing award-winning scientists. The study will be ongoing for four years and involve a cross-cultural component in Year 3.

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The Center has an American Educational Research Association Fellow in residence this year. Her name is Fran Spielhagen, and she is officially ensconced in the Young House to do her work when she is in Williamsburg. Her study is focused on mathematics course-taking patterns of middle school students who have been given early access to algebra and the surrounding issues faced by a school district in implementing such a policy equitably. Fran is working in collaboration with Chesterfield County Schools to carry out her research. As her official mentor on the project, I have enjoyed having conversations with Fran about her preliminary findings, helping her draft interview protocol questions,

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Executive Director

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and reviewing her draft manuscript for publication. It is pleasant indeed to have another postdoctoral student in the Center whose work is quite different from our ongoing emphasis on gifted students.

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Most of the Center staff have been very actively involved in the development of manuscripts over the past several months, based on the completion of three research and evaluation projects from last year. To date, we have developed four manuscripts for peer review journals that capture the findings from Project Star, our three year follow-up study of disadvantaged gifted students, from the Ohio policy study, and from the two year Greenwich curriculum study. Peer review presentations will also be done on these projects at American Educational Research Association (AERA), Wallace Research Symposium, American Psychological Association (APA), and National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) in the coming year. Brown-bag research presentations on two of the studies have been held for graduate students and faculty in the School of Education during fall and winter.

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On the international front, we have also been busy. This fall we signed a collaborative research agreement with the University of Incheon in Seoul, South Korea to begin a crosscultural exchange of scholars and a cross cultural research program. This university has a strong interest in science, math, and technology education of the gifted and sponsors a special Saturday program for precollegiate learners around their region of Korea. A delegation from Korea visited us in November to finalize the agreement. Beyond the research collaborative, Korea has begun a dialogue about a tailored teacher training program grant that would be administered by the Center next fall. We would train 30

teachers for a week on the rudiments of gifted education, then arrange their viewing of gifted programs in math and science for another week in this area. We are working out details on this exciting new venture with the Reves Center.

Work in England continues as a result of educators visiting us last year. In May, I will be working with a group of teachers from the Richmond School District around West London, training them on the Integrated Curriculum Model (ICM) and collaborating with colleagues at Brunel University on a related study. Elissa Brown worked with teachers near Oxford University in September as another aspect of our exchange follow-up. Penny Hollander, one of the teacher-supervisors on the visit has also written up a review of impressions from the visit to Williamsburg, noting the group's pleasure in seeing the school district gifted programs and the College-based ones as well. A complete copy of her report will be published in the next *Gifted and Talented International*.

A special delegation of educators from Singapore's premiere secondary institutions, Raffles Girls' and Boys' Schools will be visiting the United States in March as a follow-up to my work with them last year. One team will be visiting schools on the east coast such as Thomas Jefferson School for Math and Science in Fairfax County, Virginia and Blair School for Math and Science in Montgomery County, Maryland. Another team will head for the Midwest to view the Illinois Math Science Academy and the Indiana Academy among other sites. Each visit will begin with a structured overview session at William and Mary's Washington office on March 15, featuring representatives from the United States Department of Education, National Science Foundation, and the American Psychological Association. This session will focus on math and science policy initiatives for gifted students in this country and the ways in which talent development has been defined and

operationalized. My students from EPPL 712 (Administration and Policy Issues in Gifted Education) have been invited to attend the day as well to have a first hand view of how different agencies think about policy for gifted students.

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On another front, my work as President-elect of the National Association for Gifted Children is just beginning, with planning for the 2004 national conference in Salt Lake City underway. It is an exciting time for the organization as we are hiring a new executive director, holding a strategic planning retreat, and moving on important initiatives for university programs and state policy in the field. Hopefully my work with the national organization will prove beneficial to our Center as well in terms of new collaborations and opportunities for growth. I look forward to the challenge over the next six years!

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For those of you looking for great books to read, try the following short list:

Donald Kegan's *In Over Our Heads* chronicles the challenges of modern life by viewing it from a cognitive-developmental perspective that suggests that individuals now must function at the level of consciousness only required of communities in the past. Postmodernism, according to Kegan, may well be beyond the capacity of most adults to integrate into their mental schema. Highlighting the realities of individual differences trapped in a group mentality of societal change, Kegan explores the various roles we perform and the demands of them in the areas of marriage, parenting, and work life. His antidote to existential confusion is to acknowledge our own limitations and seek support structures within the society to help us cope with unrealistic

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From the Editors



We would like to welcome you to the first in a series of *Systems* that address themes in gifted education from multiple perspectives. This spring issue focuses on the identification of underrepresented populations for gifted and talented programs.

The first article shares findings and implications from *Project Star*, a study conducted by Joyce VanTassel-Baska and Annie Feng, regarding alternative measures for identification of and the impact of these measures on students from low socioeconomic levels or minority cultures. The second article, by Jeanne Struck, addresses early identification of minority and low socioeconomic status learners and implications for practice. The third article shares the insights of Dr. Barbara McGonagill, the Principle Specialist for Governor's Schools and Gifted Education in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

There are a few new features in the theme-based *Systems*. The first is an annotated bibliography and list of recommended readings centered on the theme of the current issue. The purpose of the bibliography is to serve as a resource of research-based and theory-related publications related to the issue of identifying underrepresented populations for gifted programs. Another new feature is a book review on a recent publication that relates to the theme of each issue. Finally, information about current events and the current status of the various foci of the Center for Gifted Education at the College of William and Mary is still included.

We hope that you are enriched and enlightened by the new format of *Systems*. We strive to continue the high level of content provided by this publication as well as the depth of information and insights that our readers have come to expect.

Executive Director

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expectations. This book is a must read for educators who work with the gifted for the insights it provides about variability in adolescence and adulthood and the implications for effective guidance and counseling.

Steven Pinker's *Blank Slate* provides another interesting read on the current understanding of the role of genetics in human development. Tackling the arguments on both sides and the relevant current research in this area, Pinker puts to rest any lingering doubts that genetics will fade away as a major explanation of human characteristics and behavior. Rather, he suggests that current research will continue to show how powerful genetic potential is in interaction with environmental influences. This book is a critical work for educators of the gifted who want to be adequately informed on the nature-nurture debate by a first-rate neurobiologist.

convinced she can solve the mystery of her brother's death eight years earlier when she was but a toddler. It is a fascinating inner portrait of a gifted child's thought processes, her relationship with peers and adults, and all the private terrors she feels, both real and imagined. This book would be great for a bibliotherapy session with middle school gifted students on the key issues of developing relationships, feeling alienated, being different, and perfectionism. Harriet's character is a prototype for each of these problems.



My third book selection is fiction, a book called *The Little Friend* by Donna Tartt. This highly readable text chronicles the life of a gifted child who is in middle childhood and

Project STAR Follow-up Study

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environmental factors (Masten, 1981).

Cultural norms may also hinder the identification of minority gifted students. Lindstrom and VanSant (1986) have identified several issues as critical to minority students: (a) low cultural expectations for achievement, manifested in little encouragement or support; (b) peer rejection, particularly for young Black men; (c) conflict generated by developing one's potential and succeeding in the "majority" culture and leaving one's own cultural community to do so; (d) lack of long-range planning; and (e) career development. Although low socioeconomic status (SES) is frequently entangled with cultural group membership, it seems to have a powerful influence in its own right on academic and personality development of gifted individuals. In an ethnographic study of successful gifted disadvantaged students, VanTassel-Baska (1989) found the role of family members, including extended family, to be a critical support structure through stressing the value of education, modeling the importance of a work ethic, and monitoring the child's education. Other studies have also suggested that social support through the home is a critical variable in the development of low income students (VanTassel-Baska, Olszewski-Kubilius, & Scott, 1992).

Alternative Tools to Identify Low Socioeconomic and Minority Gifted

An increasingly popular way of evaluating students for gifted programs is to use multiple or multidimensional assessments (Hadaway & Marek-Schroer, 1992). Part of the process of non-traditional assessment involves trying to tap into fluid rather than crystallized abilities. Dynamic assessment including performance tasks is one such non-traditional approach used to assess cognitive abilities that are often not apparent when most forms of standardized tests are used. This type of assessment usually consists of a test-intervention-retest format, with the focus on the improvement students make after an intervention, based on learning

cognitive strategies related to mastery of the testing task (Feuerstein, 1986; Kirschenbaum, 1998).

Based on our current understanding of the problem of underrepresentation of low-income and minority students in gifted programs, the use of performance-based assessment as a non-traditional tool for enhancing the possibility of greater representation of such students in these programs appears to be a promising development. Studies have not really focused yet, however, on the comparative efficacy of this approach in relation to more traditional models of identification; this was the purpose of this study.

"Project Star students overall perceive their gifted program experiences positively in all areas, with special benefits in self-esteem and confidence."

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the identification and performance profiles of Project STAR-identified gifted students after three years of statewide implementation of the performance tasks as alternatives for identification. Specifically, there were main four objectives:

- 1) To analyze Project STAR student profiles,
- 2) To examine 2-year performance of Project STAR students on the Palmetto Achievement Challenge Test (PACT, South Carolina's statewide standardized achievement test),
- 3) To compare Project STAR profiles and performance with traditionally identified students, and
- 4) To investigate the impact of Project STAR on gifted

programs, teachers, and students.

Methods

Sample Selection

Thirty-three districts had 50 or more students identified through Project STAR performance tasks during the three years of implementation. These 33 districts were the nucleus from which the sample was drawn. Twenty percent of these districts (N=7) were then selected for site visits, based on geography, size, and demographic profiles.

Instruments

Researchers developed and implemented teacher, student, and coordinator survey instruments as well as interview and focus group protocols for on-site visits. In addition, a state-wide GIFT data set, documenting South Carolina gifted students' identification information, was merged with PACT state files, a data set recording students' performance on PACT for the academic year 2001 and 2002, with the cooperation of all participating districts and the State Department of Education.

Data Collection and Analysis

Both quantitative and qualitative approaches were used to investigate the questions of interest. Descriptive statistics, Chi Squares and ANOVAs were used to analyze GIFT data set and stakeholder survey data where appropriate. Content analyses were used to analyze individual and group interview data. Triangulation across qualitative data sources was done to elicit key themes.

Findings

The analysis of identification profile data and PACT outcome data over two years for South Carolina gifted students showed that the broadened identification model has increased the number and percentage of African American and

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Project STAR Follow-up Study

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economically disadvantaged students being identified for gifted services. More girls are also being identified through this alternative method. In higher socio-economic districts, more white students are being identified through the protocols.

Using PACT score data as an outcome measure across two years, Project STAR-identified students as a group performed less well in Year 1 (2001) than did students identified through traditional measures, although the differences were not educationally significant. In Year 2 (2002) Project STAR-identified students outperformed traditionally identified students in the relevant domain of their giftedness, particularly in mathematics.

Stakeholders view the Project STAR-identified protocols in mixed delight; while the majority of teachers and administrators are positive, a sizable minority find the administration cumbersome and the results not helpful in promoting diversity at the district level. Stakeholders view Project STAR student strengths as being creative, spatial, and strong in problem-solving while they view their weaknesses as verbal skills, organization skills, and time management. Project Star students overall perceive their gifted program experiences positively in all areas, with special benefits in self-esteem and confidence.

Implications for Practice

This study continues to demonstrate the importance of using nontraditional assessments in tandem with traditional ones to find and serve underrepresented gifted students. It also challenges practitioners to match program intervention to ability and aptitude information in order to achieve an optimal match for students in their programs.

The findings suggest

an important subtext for analyzing gifted student performance, especially those students whose level of functioning may be atypical. Adjustment to higher expectations and performance takes time; it is not automatic and may require real effort and struggle for these students to be successful. However, long-term talent development is the goal, not short term success. Thus, practitioners may need to adjust their own expectations for student success, plan more customized programs, and employ more longitudinal assessments of student progress.

This study also raises several issues to consider in working with underrepresented groups in gifted programs. All programs using nonverbal assessment data for identification need to use the testing information available to construct appropriate interventions. Differentiation within gifted programs for individual students appears essential to their success. A staff development model with a focus on differentiation practices for more diversified gifted learners would be beneficial to promote such differentiation.

by Drs. Joyce VanTassel-Baska and
Annie Xuemei Feng

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Dr. Annie Feng, Research and Evaluation Coordinator, Center for Gifted Education.



Early Identification for Gifted African American and Low Socioeconomic Status Learners: It Does Make A Difference

The most recent data from the Office of Civil Rights (1998) concur with the findings of prominent researchers that culturally diverse and low socioeconomic status (SES) students throughout the United States are underrepresented in gifted programs (Ford, 1996; Mills & Tissot, 1995; National Research Council, 2002). The most popular speculation about the cause of this situation is that many school districts still implement only traditional measures of intelligence that are biased against certain diverse populations (Mills & Tissot, 1995). Therefore, strong proponents of early intervention with children of poverty and culturally diverse students suggest early identification of gifted learners (Coleman & Cross, 2001). They believe that by the time students reach the third grade “they may have surrendered their creativity and creative positives” (Torrance & Sisk, 1998, pg. 240). Creative positives are often used as indicators of giftedness in school-wide identification for gifted programs. Research studies by Karnes and Johnson (1991) and Sisk (1993) have shown that students of poverty and culturally diverse students have been identified as potentially gifted at an early age. Furthermore, their gifted and talented behaviors are enhanced through curriculum that teaches students how to learn by developing their thinking abilities, including attention, memory, comparison/contrast judgment, problem-solving, and cause-effect reasoning.

Recently, a study was conducted in an urban school district where minority and low SES kindergartners were liberally identified as potentially gifted and placed in a self-contained gifted classroom in first grade. This meant that the students were ability grouped in a classroom throughout the school day and received instruction in core subjects with the same teacher or team of teachers. The students identified as potentially gifted were placed in an educational environment in grades one through eight that nurtured the learning, training, and practice of

latent abilities to encourage their development into academic talents. Overall responses on the *Student Perceptions of Influences on Academic Talent Development (SPIATD)* survey of those who were in the special gifted program indicated perceptions of the district’s commitment to a program that included the three fundamental ideas that should be part of any statement of curriculum philosophy for gifted learners:

1. Gifted students have a right to an appropriate education, one grounded in the recognition of individual differences and unique learning needs;
2. Gifted students need a curriculum responsive to their individual learning rate, style, and complexity; and
3. Gifted students learn best in an instructional environment that encourages and nurtures inquiry, flexibility, and divergent thinking (VanTassel-Baska, 1992, p. 63.).

Three to eight years in a self-contained gifted classroom appeared to make a difference in academic achievement at all grade levels for participants in the special gifted program. These students had higher test scores on high stakes assessments and received a larger number of awards than learners not in the program. Most of the students in the gifted program took advantage of the opportunities afforded them; they had pre-Algebra in grade six and completed Algebra I before grade nine. It appeared that upon entering high school these students expected a rigorous curriculum. The high number of Advanced Placement courses taken by these students is indicative of wanting to sustain a high level of challenge.

The self-contained environment and teachers who had an understanding of giftedness seemed to make a difference in the self-perception of these learners about their past learning environments. The learners perceived their elementary and

sixth grade teachers as being dedicated to developing intellectual abilities and using techniques and curriculum that enhanced learning. These teachers established environments whereby students encountered an accelerated curriculum, in-depth learning, and higher level thinking processes. Results of the survey and focus group discussions with learners who participated in the special gifted program suggested that these students were autonomous learners, possessing positive self-concepts. They acknowledged their intelligence and were motivated to heighten their own learning.

It appeared that being in the program for three to eight years did not differentially impact on affiliations with friends. Responses on the *SPIATD* survey indicated there may be an implicit influence by peers of like ability. Underlying influences of being in a classroom full-time with peers of like intellectual ability did concur with existing research. In one study on African American adolescents, more effort to achieve came forth from students who had friends with high academic value (Patchen, 1982). Another study on low SES gifted learners showed that these students looked to peers for support in doing well in school and as confidantes who would listen to their problems (VanTassel-Baska, 1989).

The group associated their academic success with the teachers they had and the environment in which they were educated. It was apparent from the *SPIATD* survey responses that the group’s middle school and high school experiences were not as challenging and supportive of their giftedness as their elementary school experience.

Overall, the conclusions one can make from the results of this study are that African American and/or low SES potentially gifted learners benefited from

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Early Identification

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early identification and sustained gifted services. Over time, the teaching techniques and curriculum of the program appeared to instill mastery-oriented behavior patterns in the learners and helped these individuals maximize their academic talent development, as indicated by their high stakes assessment scores.

Implications

From the study, there were strong implications that elementary, middle, and high school teachers who are working with gifted students should have sustained staff development regarding gifted education and should be cognizant of the academic and affective needs of African American and low SES children. In addition, they should be trained in using higher level processing techniques and accelerative curriculum that enhance academic talent development and intrinsic motivation.

Implications include:

- Differences in indicators of success, such as high stakes test scores, grade point averages, number of awards, and Advanced Placement classes, may warrant a closer look at gifted program policies for African American and low SES students.
- Based on research on the impact of

early intervention on potentially gifted minority students (Robinson, Weinberg, Redden, Ramey, and Ramey, 1998; Schweinhart, 1994) divisions with high percentages of African American and low SES learners should consider early identification that includes multiple criteria.

- Identification policies should be more liberal in considering low SES and minority students for programming. Students selected for the program described above were not two standard deviations above the mean in ability to be classified as academically gifted but still performed at high levels on high stakes assessments at the end of high school.
- Since research has shown that ability grouping is most effective when the curriculum is accelerated and enriched (Kulik & Kulik, 1992; Rogers, 1998), special consideration should be given to teaching techniques and curriculum that challenge and accelerate students' learning within a self-contained grouping model, used consistently across the elementary years.

In conclusion, this study supported existing literature on ability grouping and confirms the benefits of educating

potentially gifted African American and/or low SES learners in a full-time, self-contained, ability-grouped environment over a sustained amount of time. The study also suggests the importance of teacher training in strategies and curriculum appropriate for gifted learners. It is imperative that policy-makers and practitioners use research on this topic for decision-making in schools so that these bright minds do not "fall through the cracks."

by Dr. Jeanne Struck

Note: References for this article can be retrieved from
<http://cfge.wm.edu/publications.php>

Upcoming CFGE Events

SUMMER INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATORS OF THE GIFTED

June 21-23, 2004

SUMMER ENRICHMENT PROGRAM

JULY 12-16, 2004 (SESSION I)

JULY 19-30, 2004 (SESSION II)

ADVANCED PLACEMENT INSTITUTE

August 2-6, 2004

Announcement

The Center's website address has changed to officially be <http://cfge.wm.edu>. Please make a note of this and come visit our newly redesigned website.

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An Interview with Dr. Barbara McGonagill, Virginia Department of Education's Principal Specialist for Governor's Schools and Gifted Education

Dr. Barbara McGonagill, the Principal Specialist for Governor's Schools and Gifted Education in the Commonwealth of Virginia, offered her insights related to identification of underrepresented populations through answering the following questions via email in January 2004.

Question One: What are the key issues related to identifying students from underrepresented populations for gifted education programs in Virginia?

Dr. McGonagill identified four key issues. The first issue centered around "understanding the characteristics and behaviors of gifted students from the different groups that are underrepresented in gifted programs." Related to this was identifying how "different behaviors in disaggregated groups of learners" correlate to the "learning characteristics that are considered fundamental in gifted students." In other words, there is a need for identifying how the characteristics and behavior of gifted students from non-mainstream populations correlate to mainstream understandings and expectations of the learning characteristics of the gifted.

The second issue addressed by Dr. McGonagill linked to the first: professional development opportunities that promote awareness to and training in identifying "the behaviors and characteristics of students from underrepresented populations" for classroom teachers, especially at the early childhood level. This training should be ongoing, with "continuous follow-up," and address the various levels of experience with gifted students.

The third issue that Dr. McGonagill identified elaborates on the previous two by highlighting a specific need for "alternative assessment instruments"

that are appropriate and valid (i.e. identify what they are supposed to identify). Dr. McGonagill also stressed the need for "effective behavior/characteristics checklists, observation guides, or screening devices that have been validated through research" specifically for underrepresented populations.

Dr. McGonagill identified the fourth issue as related to the identification process within individual school divisions and the relationship of processes between school divisions. Specifically, she highlighted a need for "school divisions to share information regarding transient students, which will limit the duplication

"Every meeting I attend, every piece of literature in the field that I read lists the appropriate identification of students from underrepresented populations as the number one concern in gifted education," states Dr. McGonagill.

of testing and the loss of time in the assessment process." Within school divisions, policy needs to maintain "balance among the multiple criteria within the division's identification process" and "flexibility in the identification process that allows different behaviors and characteristics to be observed."

Question Two: Are these issues similar to those faced by other states or at the national level?

"Every meeting I attend, every piece of literature in the field that I read lists the appropriate identification of students from underrepresented populations as

the number one concern in gifted education," states Dr. McGonagill. She added that "all states continue to seek effective, inclusive identification measures and procedures."

Question Three: Describe potential stumbling blocks for educators seeking to increase the representation of underrepresented populations in their district's gifted education program.

Dr. McGonagill identified four potential stumbling blocks that may be faced by educators seeking more inclusive identification procedures. The first was identified as the time, expense, and availability of quality, research-based professional development methods and materials, and the requisite follow-up, that guarantees that behaviors and skills of teachers demonstrate the content and goals of the targeted professional development opportunities, specifically those related to identification of students for gifted programs.

The second potential barrier to increasing representation of non-mainstream populations in gifted programs indicates a need to know how to disseminate information to parents of children from underrepresented populations and to solicit information from them. Parents' previous experiences and comfort or discomfort with governmental structures and language may limit school division personnel from acquiring information about prospective students.

A third potential stumbling block again related to professional development and the turnover rates of both teachers and administrators of gifted programs. A high turnover rate effects continuity and consistency in the development and implementation of identification procedures.

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An Interview with Dr. Barbara McGonagill

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The final potential barrier relates to systemic change. Dr. McGonagill stated that educators should be wary of believing that changing one test or incorporating one new measure can solve the problem or that change can be made effectively in one year. This insight highlights a need for understanding the change process and the interconnectedness of various policies and procedures in education.

The effect of the current federal legislation and mandates under No Child Left Behind requires division personnel to seek ways to collaborate within the guidelines of the legislation. This highlights another factor for educators to consider when implementing new policy: existing local, state, and federal policy and guidelines.

Question Four: What suggestions can you offer to overcome these potential barriers at the state and local levels?

Dr. McGonagill stresses a need for continued collaboration and cooperation between state and local educators and officials. She states, "I have been so impressed by the work of the Administrative Consortium for Gifted Education and the Virginia Association for the Gifted to share information, to sponsor quality professional development, and to promote networking around major research endeavors. Research from the Center for Gifted Education at the College of William & Mary and the National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented at the University of Connecticut, and its affiliates like the University of Virginia, is accessible to most coordinators in the state. It is gratifying to see the number of universities and colleges in the Commonwealth that offer a gifted endorsement. Praise should be given to the work of the Department of Education's Division of Teacher Education

and Licensure, which ensures that the competencies established in its standards are monitored and makes it possible to note the gifted education endorsement on the certificates of guidance counselors."

She also recommends ongoing efforts to "seek out and test new methods of screening and assessment. The Jacob K. Javits program has provided the nation with important information that needs to be incorporated into identification and eligibility processes." She continues to "urge all coordinators to become consumers of the research and to select one but not more than two methods that they believe have potential to open up new perspectives on identification for their underrepresented populations, and to spend at least three years introducing, monitoring, fine tuning, and incorporating any new process or processes into their identification process. Real change and improvement take time to be accepted."

Question Five: Do you have any other insights or advice to offer related to this issue?

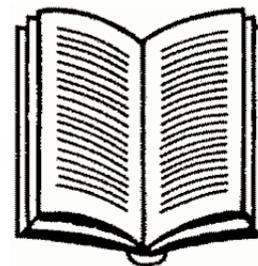
Finally, Dr. McGonagill states that "quality identification in gifted education will continue to be an issue until all parents feel as though their children have an equal opportunity to be considered. That consideration must include looking at children's learning behaviors in the most appropriate way possible and in a way that most directly relates to the kind of giftedness displayed by the child. While the Regulations Governing Educational Services for Gifted Students require the presence of either a general intellectual ability or specific academic aptitude ability program, many divisions have recognized that program integrity and appropriateness require them to provide visual and performing arts and practical and technical arts programs as well."

The insights provided by Dr. McGonagill provide a state-level perspective on the

issue of identifying underrepresented populations for gifted program services. Several themes and needs emerge from her comments: (a) articulation of characteristics and behaviors of the target populations as they relate to conceptions of giftedness; (b) identification measures that are valid and reliable to assess the identified characteristics; (c) extensive and long-term professional development opportunities, (d) dissemination of information related to services for parents; (e) policies and procedures related to the identification process; and (f) ongoing collaboration between educators at all levels. Much appreciation is expressed to Dr. McGonagill for her time in the consideration of and answering the above questions and for the insights that she contributes from her perspective and experiences in the field of gifted education.

For more information on the Virginia Plan for the Gifted and Virginia Governor's Schools, visit <http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Instruction/Gifted/gifted.htm>

by Bess B. Worley II



Research and Resources on Identification of Underrepresented Populations for Gifted Education Programs

Identifying students from traditionally underrepresented populations (i.e. low income, ethnic minority, twice exceptional) for service in gifted education programs continues to be a central issue in the field of gifted education. Many theories have been presented to explain why some populations are underrepresented in the population of students identified as gifted. Ford, Harris, Tyson, and Trotman (2002) argue that educators hold a deficit orientation regarding abilities and interests, where differences are interpreted as deficits, that hinders access to gifted programs for diverse students. Siegle (2001) suggests that another possible reason why teachers tend to focus on weakness rather than strengths could be based on a fear of misidentifying students for gifted programs and therefore causing harm to their intellectual development.

Several studies published in the previous five years have addressed this issue. The purpose of this annotated bibliography is to summarize the methods, results, and recommendations that are presented by the authors of the studies. The following studies were selected because they address the identification of a variety of students who are included in the definition of underrepresented populations in gifted programs: rural, ethnic or cultural minority, twice exceptional, and underachieving. All of the articles included in this bibliography were published in peer-reviewed journals and are empirical research studies. This selection is not meant to be exhaustive but instead to serve as a resource for practitioners addressing this issue. Other studies and surveys of the literature on this issue are included at the end as suggested readings.

Han, K.-S., & Marvin, C. (2000). A five year follow-up study of the Nebraska Project: Still a long way to go. . . *Roeper Review*, 23, 25-33.

This pilot follow-up study examined the

current status of students identified as potentially gifted during the 1992 Javits-sponsored Nebraska Project, a study that developed a protocol to provide classroom teachers at the K-2 level with a way to identify able and creative students in small, rural schools and minority cultural groups. While limited by sample size and representation of the original project, the study indicates that non-traditional identification procedures should be examined in follow-up studies to examine their effectiveness and impact upon program practices because many of the students included in the study continued to be unrecognized as potentially gifted. The authors also recommend that changes in identification procedures should be accompanied by professional development for classroom teachers and classroom practices that will recognize nontraditional traits of giftedness.

Mantzicopoulos, P. (2000). Can the Brigance K & 1 Screen detect cognitive/academic giftedness when used with preschoolers from economically disadvantaged backgrounds? *Roeper Review*, 23, 185-191.

This study explores the predictive value of the *Brigance K & 1*, an instrument which has been used as an identification measure of educationally at-risk students. This study used 134 Head Start preschoolers with a mean age of 61.6 months and an equal number of boys and girls. Racial and ethnic background information is also included. Students were assessed by the *Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children (K-ABC)*, *Teachers' Ratings of Academic Competence Scale*, and the *Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test* as well as the *Brigance K & 1*. The first set of analyses examined the extent to which participants' scores on the *Brigance's* twelve subtests differed between two groups identified by their scores on the Mental Processing Component of the K-ABC (above or below 115); this analysis also focused on the concurrent and predictive accuracy of the *Brigance* in

identifying academic giftedness. Another set of analyses were executed to determine the level of accuracy with which the test could detect the Head Start children who were possibly gifted. Results indicated support for the use of the *Brigance K & 1* test for early identification of gifted children from disadvantaged backgrounds but more empirical data is needed to establish its efficacy.

Masten, W. & Plata, M. (2000). Acculturation and teacher ratings of Hispanic and Anglo-American students. *Roeper Review*, 23, 45-46.

Behavioral checklists and rating scales such as the *Scales for Rating Behavior Characteristics of Superior Students (SRBCSS)* have been suggested as effective methods of identification to correct the underrepresentation of Hispanic students in gifted programs. Masten and Plata proposed their study to determine the differences between teacher ratings of Hispanic and Anglo-American students based on the student's acculturation level. The sample consisted of 150 fifth grade students of either Hispanic or Anglo-American background, 49% of which reported speaking Spanish at least part of the time. The participants' teachers completed four scales of the SRBCSS while each participant completed the Children's Hispanic Background Scale (CHBS). The results indicate that Anglo-American students were rated significantly higher on the Learning, Motivational, Creativity and Leadership scales. Analysis of variance conducted on two subgroups based on the CHBS scores indicated that there were significant differences between teacher ratings of both groups based on the levels of student acculturation. Highly acculturated Hispanic students received significantly higher ratings from teachers than did low acculturated Hispanics. The authors suggest that the results indicate that some

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teachers' judgment of students may be confounded by attitudes toward the race and socio-economic status of the student. These results also highlight that higher Hispanic student acculturation leads to a greater likelihood of being referred for assessment. The authors indicate that more research is needed on the factor of acculturation as a variable of assessment.

Ried, C., Romanoff, B., Algozzine, B., & Udall, A. (2000). An evaluation of alternative screening procedures. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 23, 378-396.

The basic purpose of this study was to describe and analyze the performance of elementary school students on multiple screening measures for identification. Participants were selected from 19 schools which were considered representative of a large and diverse district and were eligible for Title 1 services. Participants engaged in both the *Problem-Solving Assessment* (PSA, a traditional assessment) and the *Matrix Analogies Test* (MAT, an alternative assessment) and were observed by teachers and personnel who had participated in both the PSA and MAT training as well as training in the characteristics of the gifted and multiple intelligences. The authors indicate that placement and identification recommendations were better predicted by PSA scores but that they also found support for moderate concurrent validity between both test measures. The authors warn against strict interpretations of Gardner's theory by educators who might conclude a child is gifted in one area of intelligence but not another, but believe that Gardner's theory allows students to experience assessment materials in their own ways using their different intelligences. Based on their findings, the authors conclude that when alternative assessment measures based on a multiple intelligences theory

are utilized, educators cast a broader net enabling them to identify gifted students who would traditionally go unnoticed.

Sarouphim, K. (2000). Internal structure of DISCOVER: A performance-based assessment. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 23, 314-327.

Sarouphim's study attempted to use traditional quantitative criteria to assess the internal structure of a nontraditional performance assessment. In this study, Sarouphim examined the relationship between observer's ratings of students engaged in the various activities structured into the assessment measure called *Discovering Intellectual Strengths and Capabilities through Observation while allowing for Varied Ethnic Responses* (DISCOVER) in order to investigate the test's internal structure. The 257 participants were predominately from either Mexican American or Navajo Indian backgrounds in Kindergarten, second, fourth, or fifth grade from the southern parts of Arizona. Most participants were eligible for free lunch programs. DISCOVER had five primary activities: Tangrams (spatial-mathematical), Math, Storytelling, Storywriting, and Pablo (spatial). Each activity aligned with the various multiple intelligences. Trained observers rotated in observing children working in groups of five in each of the different activities. Non-parametric correlations were used to examine observer ratings in each of the activities. Most correlations were low and nonsignificant, except for the correlation between Storywriting and Storytelling. Sarouphim proposes multiple hypotheses to explain the results including bias factor, consistency of interrater observations, similarities in criteria in some of the activities, and the possibility of tight congruence between intelligence and activity supporting Gardner's theory, but concludes that further research on the test is warranted.

VanTassel-Baska, J., Johnson, D., & Avery, L. D. (2002). Using performance

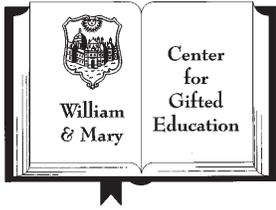
tasks in the identification of economically disadvantaged and minority gifted learners: Findings from project STAR. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 46, 110-123.

The purpose of the study was to develop authentic assessments to better identify underrepresented academically gifted student populations. Considerations in the literature for underrepresented groups suggest creating domain-specific performance tasks, contextual performance tasks, and emphasizing fluid versus crystallized intelligence. Performance task assessments and rubrics were created keeping in mind the characteristics of minority and economically disadvantaged students, including the capacity for fluency and complexity without time limits, open-ended activities, hands-on activities, pre-teaching (due to possible lack of environmental experiences outside of school), ways to demonstrate real-work skills, and preferences for expressive activities and modes of learning that allow for reflection. Off-level/advanced tasks were also considered. Tasks were created for identification of students in grades 2-5 and piloted twice for technical adequacy, yielding composite reliability from .83 to .89 using the Cronbach alpha. Ceiling effect was also examined and considered appropriate as very few students scored at the top of the test. Outcomes of testing yielded an additional group of students identified as gifted with 12% African American and 14% low socio-economic. Further implications were discussed, based on the findings, including programming considerations after identifying specific groups, teacher training for serving specific groups, and the time-intensiveness of performance-based tasks.

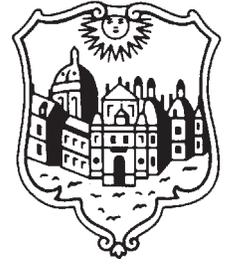
by Susannah Wood, Bess B. Worley II, Chwee Quek, and Tamra Stambaugh



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Curriculum development and dissemination represent one of the Center for Gifted Education's five main goals, and projects related to curriculum support all of the goals and the central mission of the Center. We are pleased to provide an update on our progress and to introduce some of our new efforts.

Dissemination of Center materials through Kendall/Hunt and through the Center continues. Various professional development workshops related to the curriculum have been conducted at conferences and in school systems throughout the nation. A new three-year plan for curriculum development has been adopted, with implementation of various components beginning in the summer of 2004. The publication of math mini-units, the revision of some existing Center materials, and the development of additional *Navigators* are some of the activities included as part of this plan.

The William and Mary National Curriculum Consultant Network has been established to develop a nationwide network of consultants, such that each state or region will have local experts who can provide professional development and support on implementation of the Center's curriculum. Information on consultant expertise will be disseminated to schools through several avenues, including listings and contact information on the Center's web site and individualized brochures that each consultant will distribute to relevant audiences. In addition, the Center is sharing the contact information about the consultants with Kendall/Hunt, so that our representatives there can assist people purchasing the units with access to professional development possibilities.

Further planning is underway to enhance networking possibilities among the consultants and other curriculum users. Contact Kimberley Chandler for additional information about this program or to obtain contact information.

Efforts are underway to provide more resources regarding curriculum on the Center's web site. Check out <http://cfge.wm.edu/> for information about the curriculum materials and their use. The William and Mary Teaching Models are available on the site, as well as ordering information and other resources related to the Center's curriculum.

We are pleased with the possibilities that all of these projects represent for strengthening curriculum and instruction for gifted learners. Contact the Center with your questions or inquiries regarding training opportunities for teachers and administrators.

Ancient Egypt: Gift of the Nile

Ancient Egypt
Gift of the Nile



Winner of a 2003
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Research and Resources on Identification

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Book Review

Johnsen, S. K. (Ed.). (2004). *Identifying gifted students: A practical guide*. Waco, TX: Prufrock Press.

The book is intended to be a resource for teachers, counselors, administrators, and psychologists who are involved in screening and selecting gifted and talented students. As the basis for selecting necessary content for inclusion in the text, the editor considered a sequential identification process that begins with identifying characteristics of gifted and talented students and various program options, and ends with an evaluation of the assessment procedures.

The first chapter addresses definitions and characteristics of gifted and talented students, specifically the federal definition from 1993, and focuses on the developmentally based models of Gagné and Tannenbaum because of their emphasis on potential that is echoed in the federal definition. The chapter also includes lists of characteristics for the areas of talent development identified by the two models that are based on multiple texts, assessment instruments, and research. The author of the first chapter emphasizes characteristics of “hard-to-find” gifted and talented students, including “culturally different,” twice exceptional, and low income, thereby encouraging a broader screening process and definition of giftedness. In addition, the author stresses that students must be given an opportunity to demonstrate their gifts and talents, something that is less likely to occur in a classroom that does not provide differentiated instruction, as well as underlining that gifted and talented students will demonstrate many but not all of the characteristics in a given domain. This chapter summarizes the basic information about giftedness and characteristics of the various domains of giftedness in concise language and with multiple citations in support of the conclusions drawn.

Chapter Two discusses types of assessments, both quantitative and qualitative, as well as the nature of the different assessments, including validity and reliability issues. Chapter Three continues discussing the various types of assessments in relation to bias and cultural fairness. This chapter identifies typical barriers that exclude economically disadvantaged and culturally/linguistically diverse gifted students from programs for the gifted and talented. The author then presents several strategies that can be implemented to overcome the barriers.

Chapter Four contains technical information for more than 40 assessments that are frequently used in screening for gifted education programs. Aspects included for each assessment relate to test purpose, validity, reliability, when the assessment was developed, norm information, type of scoring, and administration guidelines. This is an invaluable resource of information for educators seeking reliable and valid instruments to use in the identification of students for gifted programs.

The fifth chapter discusses how assessment information can be used to make decisions about placement in a program and emphasizes the importance of using multiple criteria to allow students to demonstrate performance in a variety of settings and in various situations (e.g. with parents, teachers, other students). Three sample forms for organizing and interpreting data are provided at the end of the chapter.

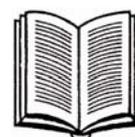
The final chapter provides a brief overview of the evaluation process with a specific emphasis on evaluating identification procedures used in a gifted and talented education program. This chapter is another valuable resource included in this text. The author discusses six components of the evaluation process and suggests contracting with an outside evaluator to provide objectivity in the evaluation process.

This text is a wonderful resource for anyone interested in understanding the basic process of identifying students for gifted and talented programs. Although the text often references the requirements of the Texas State Plan for the Gifted/Talented (the text is a joint publication with the Texas Association for Gifted and Talented), the standards mentioned represent the best practices in the field through citations of relevant research. This publication benefits the field of gifted education through its clear presentation of a complex issue and the practical advice given by all of the authors to address the issue. The broader education community will also benefit from the text’s approach to aligning identification criteria for gifted and talented programs with assessment instruments, intended services, and evaluation of identification procedures.

The three appendices included at the back of the text present a Checklist for Assessment of Gifted Programs from the Office for Civil Rights, information for converting raw scores to standard scores, and instructions for calculating the Standard Error of Measurement (SEM) for an assessment instrument.

The only piece of information that is lacking from this publication is an alphabetical index of subjects and authors cited. This text does include a list of references. *Identifying Gifted Students: A Practical Guide* is highly recommended for any educator involved with the identification of or services for gifted and talented students.

Reviewed by
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