LESSONS LEARNED FROM EVALUATING PROGRAMS FOR THE GIFTED

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Distinguishing Successful from Unsuccessful Programs?

• Criteria for Success
  – Held in high esteem by the community
  – Students and parents judge them to be challenging and beneficial
  – Some evidence of success beyond what would be expected if no program or services existed
PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY

• Development of quality programming for gifted students based on a sound philosophy and articulated beliefs about who gifted students are and the types of services that they should be provided.
A Sound Philosophy

- Serves as a touchstone or reference point for all other aspects of the program
- Reflects current theory and research in gifted education
- Clearly identifies reasons why there is a need for special educational services for the gifted learner
- Is consistent with general philosophy of education in the school system
- Reflects community values
- Clearly delineates beliefs about the characteristics of gifted learners
- Articulates the expected goals of services for gifted learners
Effective Philosophy

• Is derived from consensus among key stakeholders
• Is a living document known and understood by key “actors” in the delivery of services
• Is acted on through the other decisions of key “actors”
• Serves as the basis for deriving a definition of giftedness for the community
THE EDUCATION OF GIFTED LEARNERS

- Theory, Ideal “Best Case Scenario”
- Program Design (Service Delivery Options)
- Student Screening and Identification
- Community Values History
- School culture and climate: Leadership, $, Personnel
- Student Population Demographics

- District Realities Funding
- Program Services (C, I, A)
- Evaluation: Learners’ Progress and Program Outcomes
- Professional Development Based on Data
- Program Goals and Objectives
- Operational Definition

Created By: Catharine Brighton (2010)
Operational Definition of Giftedness

• Quality programs have a definition of giftedness that reflects the philosophy

• Provides guide for the development of student identification and placement decisions
High IQ/High Achieving

Verbal/Linguistic Intelligence
Mathematical Intelligence
Spatial Intelligence
Logical Intelligence
Musical
Intrapersonal
Interpersonal

General Intellectual Ability
Specific Academic Ability
Creativity
Ability in the Fine and Performing Arts

Above Average Ability
Task Commitment
Creativity

Analytic Intelligence
Synthetic Intelligence
Practical Intelligence
Student Identification and Placement

• Reflect **philosophy** and **definition**

• Instruments selected are **valid and reliable** (2.5.1)
  – Not a matter of the most convenient, available, or inexpensive instruments

• **Use a process that informs decision-making around the type of curriculum, instruction, service delivery model that will provide the most appropriate education** (2.2.4; 2.4.4)

• Do not use matrices for identification

• Use multiple indicators (do not establish multiple hurdles)
  – Multiple indicators does NOT mean multiple tests (2.2.1; 2.2.3)

• Collect data to determine whether the process is effective and efficient

• Reflect strategies for identifying twice-exceptional, underachievers, traditionally underserved (2.2.5; 2.3.1)
Student Identification and Placement

- Talent development and talent identification are both recognized as part of the identification process (2.1.1)
- Use assessments that are both quantitative and qualitative from a variety of sources (2.2.3)
- Use non-biased and equitable approaches which should include local norms, assessment tools in the student’s native language, etc. (2.3.1)
Gifted students should be assessed more than just identified. With identification you answer one question:

Is the child gifted or not?

You get a yes/no answer.

-Donna Ford, The Ohio State University
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SERVICE DELIVERY MODELS

A Preview of Karen Rogers’ Presentation
Program Design/ Service Delivery Options

• Quality programs do not focus on offering “a program” but a *continuum of services* (1.3.1)

• Quality programs reflect the philosophy established for gifted programs and also the philosophy of education in the school district

• Quality services are integrated into the school day
Program Organization and Operation

• Administrative responsibility
• Financial allocation
  – Overall
  – To particular components of the program
    • Only a small proportion of overall funding should be devoted to identification
• Functional adequacy of the organization
THE EDUCATION OF GIFTED LEARNERS

Theory, Ideal
“Best Case Scenario”

Program Design
(Service Delivery Options)

Student
Screening and
Identification

District
Realities
Funding

Program
Services
(C, I, A)

Community
Values
History

Evaluation:
Learners’
Progress and
Program
Outcomes

Program
Goals and
Objectives

Professional
Development
Based on
Data

Operational
Definition

School culture
and climate:
Leadership, $,
Personnel

Student
Population
Demographics

Philosophy of
giftedness

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Program Goals and Objectives

- Clearly specified
- Can be operationalized
- Lead us to a clear answer to the question: “If students are successful in this program what will they know, understand, and be able to do that they would not have known, understood or been able to do had they not been in the program?”
- Can be translated into measurable outcome statements
- Should reflect cognitive, affective, and maybe even psychomotor outcomes
• If you don’t know where you are going, how will you know when you get there?
The Weak Link in Most State Guidelines!
THE EDUCATION OF GIFTED LEARNERS

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Philosophy of giftedness

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• Curriculum

• Instruction

• Assessment
The Curriculum

• Most frequent shortcoming of gifted programs and services

• Too often the curricular offerings are
  – Different but not differentiated
  – More fun and games than substantive
  – Not tied to the characteristics specified in the definition or to the assessment carried out in the identification process
  – Tied more to teacher interest than sound curricular modification
  – Not tied to clear goals either for the immediate or long term
Harry Passow

• Is this something other students could do, would do or should do?
• If so, then the teachers need to re-visit and revise their lessons
Quality Curriculum for the Gifted

• Higher level of abstractness (3.1.4)
• Greater depth and complexity of content, process, and or product (3.1.4)
• More rapid pace of learning or task completion (5.1.1)
• Problems with many facets; products or outcomes from ill-formed and open-ended problems (3.3.3; 3.4.1; 3.4.2; 3.4.3))
• Mastery of content that requires greater leaps of insight or more indirect applications or transfer of learning (3.4.4)
• Use of more advanced and sophisticated resources
• Match to each student’s developmental level and culture-based learning needs (1.2.1)
Questions Which Receive “Yes” Answers in Quality Programs

- Is this content lasting and enduring?
- Will these lessons have meaning for my students and teach them concepts, principles, and generalizations that will serve them throughout their lives?
- Am I teaching the critical and core concepts in the disciplines?
- Do these instructional activities require them to transform rather than reproduce knowledge?
- Do these activities require the depth and complexity of thinking of which gifted students are capable.

**Do these activities tie to a clear model of curriculum and instructional planning with clearly specified goals and objectives? (3.1.2)**

- Is there a scope and sequence to the learning activities? (3.1.2)
Questions Which Receive “Yes” Answers in Quality Programs

• Are curricular and instructional plans aligned with and extensions of local, state and national goals? (3.1.1)

• Does the curriculum reflect deep explorations of cultures, languages and social issues related to diversity? (3.5.1)

• Is the curriculum culturally responsive in order to engage all students? (3.4.4)
• Curriculum is developmentally appropriate
• Creativity and problem solving are integrated into the disciplines rather than taught as isolated skills or only as part of competitions
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Curriculum differentiated within the service delivery option
GIFTED STUDENTS MARCH TO THE BEAT OF A DIFFERENT DRUMMER
BUT THEY DON’T
ALL MARCH TO THE
SAME BEAT OF THE
SAME DIFFERENT
DRUMMER
• Affective dimension to the curriculum (1.6.1)
Balanced approach to meeting the social and emotional needs of gifted students
The Assessment of Learning

- Clearly established benchmarks for student learning and achievement are assessed.
- Evaluations provided to students and parents reflect progress toward program goals and objectives (2.5.2).
- Evaluated goals reflect progress toward adult performance in the discipline:
  - Reflect stages in making progress toward that goal (novice to expert).
- Communicate the value of learning over grades.
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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (PD)

Target Groups

- Administrators - General Education
- Administrator(s) - G/T
- Teachers - G/T Specialists
- Teachers - General Education
- Counselors
General Principles for All PD (6.1)

• Systematic, on-going, research supported
• Foundations of gifted education, characteristics of gifted students, assessment, curriculum planning and instruction, learning environments, and programming, social development and emotional needs
• Address issues such as anti-intellectualism and trends in gifted education such as equity and access
• Multi-modal and differentiated
ADMINISTRATORS-General Education

• Basic Understanding of Characteristics of Gifted Students

• Basic Understanding of Appropriate Curriculum and Instructional Practice
  – Unless responsible for evaluation teachers of the gifted. Requires more in-depth understanding

• Disabuse of “Myths”
  – E.g., “We should not accelerate our students because it will result in social difficulties and emotional trauma.”
ADMINISTRATOR-G/T PROGRAM

• Continual involvement in most recent developments through professional associations, research reviews, etc.

• Development of leadership skills/change agent orientation
Teacher Selection and Professional Development

• Clear criteria for selecting teachers of the gifted
  – Based on skill and will
    • Knowledge of the discipline(s) and the steps to achieving excellence in the discipline
    • Knowledge of gifted students’ characteristics
    • Knowledge of a variety of instructional strategies
    • Knowledge of appropriate curricular modifications
    • Willingness to grow and change
  – Ability to translate knowledge into practice
• Professional development in line with goals and objectives of the program
  – Not the latest conference; not reliant on conference presentations
  – Not the “available” consultant
  – Based on research on what works rather than charismatic presentation of a model
  – Includes skills in development of cognitive, affective and behavioral outcomes

• Staff development should be differentiated
TEACHERS-GENERAL EDUCATION

• Characteristics beyond the traditional manifestations of giftedness
• Development of curriculum and instructional practice that will develop talent in students who do not have the same opportunity for talent development
COUNSELORS

• TWO REALMS
  – SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND ADJUSTMENT
  – CAREER COUNSELING AND COLLEGE ADVISING
PROGRAM EVALUATION
In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

And God saw everything that He made. “Behold,” God said, “it is very good.” And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

And on the seventh day God rested from all his work. His archangel came unto Him asking: “God, how do you know that what you have created is ‘very good’? What are your criteria? On what data do you base your judgment? Aren’t you a little too close to the situation to make a fair and unbiased evaluation?”
God thought about these questions all that day and His rest was greatly disturbed. On the eighth day God said, “Lucifer, go to hell.”

Thus was evaluation born in a blaze of glory. Ever since the status of the profession has been somewhat in doubt: The road to salvation or a sure ticket to damnation?

From Halcom’s The Real Story of Paradise Lost
It is written simply in the great book:

To evaluate is to do unto others what you would not have them do unto you.

Holcomb’s Universal Encyclopedia
Dictionary of Evaluations
Characteristics of Effective Evaluations

- Evaluation is part of the planning process
  - Systematic process with clear timelines
  - Commitment by gifted program staff
  - Commitment by school district to using evaluation data for program improvement
Based on Clear Program Descriptions and Goals

• Goals are specific, focused, and clear
Based on goals such as:

• Ensure that every student is challenged at an appropriate level with no students spending time relearning already mastered knowledge, skills and understandings or spending time on unnecessary review of quickly learned new material.

• Integrate the special program with the regular classroom and develop cooperative relationships between classroom teachers and personnel assigned to the gifted program.

• Students increase skill in the areas of critical and creative thinking, advanced research, and creative productivity.
Goals and outcome assessment cover the full range of process and product outcomes-examples of range

- Identification process and procedures are fair and provide for the nomination and selection of students from all populations of students (2.5.1)
- *The number of students enrolled in AP courses and earning scores of 3 or greater on AP exams are greater than without the participation in the gifted program*
- Students have access to advanced, abstract, inter-disciplinary subject matter
- Students explore of areas of interest
- Students develop problem-solving skills
- Students have access to appropriate academic acceleration
QUALITY EVALUATIONS

• Evaluation is systematic and regular
• Evaluation of gifted program is part of overall school/district evaluation plans
• Data warehousing is established to allow for attribution of outcomes to 1) identification, 2) program services, 3) curriculum, 4) counseling and guidance programs, 5) teacher qualifications and professional development, parent/care giver involvement, 6) resources
• Data on gifted students is disaggregated from overall school data for analysis
Allocation of Sufficient Funding for Evaluation

- Funds for evaluation are part of the budget!
Expertise for Evaluation

• Expertise in Evaluation
• Expertise in Gifted Education
INVOLVES KEY STAKEHOLDERS IN THE EVALUATION PROCESS

- Identifying prime interest groups and stakeholders
- Gathering input data
- Analyzing input data
PRIME INTEREST GROUPS/STAKEHOLDERS

• Those people in the school and community who have some vested interest in ensuring that the gifted students are appropriately identified and that the educational program for these students is of the highest quality possible
Well focused questions

- Structured to provide information about student outcomes, program processes/procedures, and structures
- Structured to aid in making program improvements and for documenting program outcomes
POTENTIAL EVALUATION QUESTIONS: INSTRUCTIONAL COMPONENT

• To what degree are
  – students engaged in learning?
  – demonstrating increased achievement?
  – students exhibiting more positive attitudes toward school and learning?
  – more students enrolled in AP courses and earning grades of 3 or more on the AP exam?
  – instructional activities based on needs identified during the identification and placement process?
  – do the curriculum and instructional practices reflect “state of the art” practices in gifted education?
  – students demonstrating greater ability to engage in abstract thinking?
  – students demonstrating greater knowledge and understanding of interdisciplinary subject matter focusing on major concepts and issues?
  – students demonstrating increased creativity, leadership, problem solving skills
Use designs which address the important evaluation questions

- Use designs with complexity that match questions and measurement issues
- Address process and product outcomes
- Use quantitative and qualitative designs as appropriate
- Caution in using standardized instruments that will not measure growth
- Use designs that allow for attribution of effects
Variety of data gathering strategies using appropriate instruments

• Examples for student outcomes
  – Out of level testing
  – Performance assessment
  – Portfolio assessment
  – Product ratings
Multiple data sources
Evidence of the Use of Results to Modify Program
• Says he to she: “Evaluators make better lovers because they are constantly assessing their performance to improve it.”

• Says she to he: “Being aware of a thing and being able to do something about it are two quite different things.”
WHO SHOULD BE INVOLVED IN PROGRAM DESIGN, IMPLEMENTATION, DEVELOPMENT/MODIFICATION?
Many States Recommend an Advisory Board Comprised of Representatives From:

**ROLES**
- School Administration
  - Central Office (Curriculum and Instruction; Budget)
  - Building Level (Principal)
  - G/T Program
- Teachers
  - G/T Program
  - General Education
- Parents
- Community
  - E.g. University experts, business leaders
- School Board

**GROUPS**
- Minority Groups
- Socio-economic Groups
RESPONSIVENESS TO AND ROLES OF PARENT/CARETAKER/FAMILY

• Provide information to parents/caregivers regarding characteristics and behaviors associated with giftedness and how to deal with them appropriately (2.1.2)
• Inform parents/caregivers of id process and program options and providing all information in native language (2.3.3)
• Assessment information is communicated to and interpreted for parents /caregivers(2.4.5)
• Collaboration with families in accessing resources to develop talents (1.5.1)
• Not standing in the way of talent development (Bloom’s findings)
ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE STATE
ESTABLISH REGULATIONS/PROVIDE GUIDELINES
MONITOR IMPLEMENTATION

- Establish Process for Reporting What is Planned
  - Process for approval
    - Virginia Example Modified
- Establish Monitoring Process
  - Maryland Example
- Develop Interventions/Sanctions
- Act as Appellate Group
ESTABLISH STATE LEVEL GOALS AND EVALUATE PROGRESS TOWARD ACHIEVING THOSE GOALS

Establish Measureable State-level Outcomes
Establish Data Gathering Strategies
Work to Ensure State-Wide Assessments and Data Gathering Strategies Include Opportunity for Measuring Those Outcomes