

# Addressing Under- representation of Student Populations in Gifted Programs

**Best Practices for Student Selection,  
Service Delivery Models, and Support  
Structures**



**Randy I. Dorn**  
Superintendent of  
Public Instruction

**March 2009**

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# **Addressing Under- representation of Student Populations in Gifted Programs**

**Best Practices for Student Selection, Service Delivery Models,  
and Support Structures**

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## **Abbreviations**

**HC** Highly Capable

**HCP** Highly Capable Program

**OSPI** Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction



## Section I. Introduction

### Populations Traditionally Under-represented in Gifted Programs

In the literature on gifted programs, two groups emerge as typically under-represented in gifted programs. The first group is comprised of children from ethnic minority groups and children of poverty. The second category includes the underachiever, gifted females in advanced science and mathematics courses, and gifted students with handicapping conditions. The focus of this guide will be those whose ethnic origins or current socio-economic conditions have resulted in either lower than expected rates of identification or high drop-out rates. The National Research Council examined the under-representation based on data from the Office of Civil Rights. While about 7.5 White and 10 out of 100 Asian/Pacific Islander children are identified as gifted, only 3 out of 100 African American, 3.5 Hispanic, and 5 out of 100 American Indian/Alaska Native children are identified as gifted (National Research Council, 2002). According to Castellano (2004), while the overall Hispanic population rose from 6.8 percent to 14.3 percent between 1978 and 1997, nationally, the identified gifted Hispanic population only rose from 5.2 percent to 8.6 percent.

In the 2006–2007 report on *Gifted Programs in Washington* (Pauley & Johnstone, 2008), the participation pattern reflects national trends. A total of 49,130 students were identified as gifted in kindergarten through Grade 12. Of those reporting ethnic identity, there were 37,260 White, 1,147 Black, 5,332 Asian, 4,680 Hispanic, and 711 American Indian/Alaskan Native children. As the table below reflects, White students represent a greater proportionate enrollment in gifted and talented programs than in the total school population.

**Student Enrollment by Ethnicity/Race, 2006–07**

	% of Total State Enrollment	% of Total HCP Enrollment
White	66.2 %	75.8 %
Black	5.5 %	2.3 %
Asian	7.8 %	10.9 %
Hispanic	14.7 %	9.5 %
American-Indian/ Alaskan Native	2.7 %	1.4 %

Data on family income and participation in gifted and talented programs indicate that nationally, only 9 percent of students in those programs came from families in the bottom quartile of family income, while 47 percent were from families in the top quartile (U.S. Department of Education, 1993). The interaction of poverty with ethnicity is notable when we consider that typically the rates of childhood poverty among children of African American, Hispanic, and Native American ancestry and some Latino groups are typically two to three times higher than rates of

poverty in non-Latino, White populations (McLoyd, 1998). Ten percent of White children live in poverty, while 34.5 percent of African American; and 28.3 percent of Hispanic children live in poverty according to the latest census figures (<http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/histpov/hstpov3.html>, retrieved February 24, 2007). The poverty rate for American Indian/Alaskan Native was 24.5 percent (a three-year average across 1999-2001)<sup>1</sup> ([http://www.policyalmanac.org/social\\_welfare/archive/poverty\\_statistics2001.shtml](http://www.policyalmanac.org/social_welfare/archive/poverty_statistics2001.shtml), retrieved February 24, 2007). Other factors that characterized high poverty environments that should be considered in the identification process center on lack of opportunity that stem from school environments that are characterized by a lack of resources, materials, and opportunities; deteriorated physical plants; less experienced teachers; teachers with less discipline expertise; and lowered expectations for student success.

### Common Reasons for Under-representation

The underlying causes for under-representation lie in the processes and procedures most commonly used in the identification of gifted students, in issues of grouping, in the curriculum and instruction of gifted programs, and in the school programs that prepare children from minority groups and poverty during the early years of school (e.g., Castellano, 2004; Ford, Grantham, & Milner, 2004; Klug, 2004). It is most common to start and end discussions of the problems on the topic of identification and ignore the critical issues of the poor educational preparation that is provided to ethnic minorities and children of poverty and the issues associated with programming and curricular options. However, a very important consideration in addressing the issue of under-representation is the degree to which the very early years provide for the adequate talent development in underserved populations and the ways we provide appropriate services and differentiate the curriculum and instructional program.

The current underlying philosophy in many gifted programs is that it is the responsibility of parents and community to develop giftedness and the duty of the school to “find” or “identify” that talent. Working from such assumptions, belies the data that clearly indicate that students in predominantly minority schools and from schools that are in impoverished communities are not provided the same quality of instruction. It is thus critical in addressing this issue to consider the implementation of talent development programs in the early years that will focus on the provision of instructional activities that focus on the thinking skills and curricular challenge which will later be considered in the assessment of giftedness and the evaluation of student potential (Callahan, Tomlinson, & Pizzat, 1994).

The second, and most commonly noted factor regarding under-representation, is the cultural bias underlying the practices of identification. The identification

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<sup>1</sup> An average is presented by the Census Bureau because of the relatively small size of the American Indian and Alaska Native population.

processes, as currently implemented, may be biased because of the (1) narrow, exclusive rather than inclusive, definitions of giftedness, (2) choice of biased testing instruments and/or narrow interpretation of data, (3) use of teacher nomination forms or checklists that fail to reflect ways in which students from minority populations or students of poverty may manifest the characteristics of giftedness and the underlying racial biases present in society at large and, perhaps, in the education profession as well, (4) inadequate preparation of screening and placement committees in judging the data presented from tests, (5) failure to consider effects of stereotype threat on student test performance (Steele & Aronson, 1995), and (6) failure to use appropriate alternative assessment strategies such as dynamic assessment, performance assessment, portfolios, and other alternative assessment tools (Callahan, Tomlinson, & Pizzat, 1994; Castellano, 2004; Ford, Grantham, & Milner, 2004; Klug, 2004; National Research Council, 2002).

Finally, the gifted programs may themselves discourage participation by minorities. A study by Moore, Ford, & Milner (2005) identifies that attrition is common among minority students in gifted programs. Factors such as: (1) isolation that results from being one of a very few from a sub-population identified and served through a particular service delivery model, particularly if joining the served group requires separation from peers, (2) curriculum that is not relevant to the students, (3) instructional practices that are based on competition or on methods of instruction that are culturally mismatched to the learning practices of the students' communities, (4) the inattention to social relationship building, and (5) emotional distress that may come from the feelings of responsibility or the stress of representing a particular group may all contribute to either lack of success or dropping out of the program service offered.

### Addressing Under-representation

While many strategies have been offered in the literature for addressing the problem of under-representation, each one offers only a partial solution. Educators should be cautious in examining these solutions and keep in mind the danger of stereotyping any group or individual, realize the danger of using only one lens to examine students (the traditional approach to identification and/or traditional approaches to serving gifted students with minor tweaking will simply not solve the problem), and avoid looking for the Band-Aid or "The Solution" to the problem. The complexity of the issues requires a multifaceted and comprehensive response.

The literature suggests that there are multiple aspects of gifted programming that must be modified in order to succeed in identifying and successfully providing services to students not traditionally included in our gifted programs. The first step that has been noted as key to success is to consider the operational definition of giftedness. Is it broad and multi-faceted in conception *and* in translation into practices of identification and programming? (Callahan, Tomlinson, & Pizzat, 1994; Frasier & Passow, 1994). Second, in those school divisions that have been successful in increasing the number and proportion of

traditionally underserved students, the identification process—from the first step of nomination and screening through the final step of placement—has been carefully examined to ensure that potentially biased practices have been addressed. The use of a talent development program has been shown to be successful at enhancing and bringing forth potential (Callahan, Tomlinson, Moon, Tomchin, & Plucker, 1995; Kornhaber, 2004). Third, developers of program services and those who develop curriculum and instructional practices who are aware of and responsive in ensuring appropriate matches between identified talents and the services (including mentorships) to the identified students, have been able to sustain involvement and success (Borland, & Wright, 1994; Klug, 2004; Pewewardy & Bushey, 1992). At the secondary level, specific and targeted support structures, coupled with a rigorous commitment to providing scaffolding, were critical to the success of minority and low-income learners in Advanced Placement classes and International Baccalaureate programs (Kyburg, Hertberg-Davis, & Callahan, in press).

## Section II. Determining Under-representation in Order to Develop a Representative Community of Bright Learners

These recommendations focus on identifying under-representation among ethnic, socioeconomic, and linguistic groups.

As a beginning point for determining under-representation in Highly Capable (HC) programs, conduct a review of district demographic data. Then compare this data to the demographic data of the district HC program. Examining data on Washington’s Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction School Report Card may be helpful in capturing a district’s student enrollment disaggregated by ethnicity, socio-economic status (free or reduced price lunch percentage), and English language learners. For a comprehensive analysis of the students served by the HC program, identical statistics for the district HC program must also be collected.

The following spreadsheet may assist districts in measuring under-representation in HC programs as well as providing insight for modification of program policies and procedures for increasing representation in HC programs.

### How Does District and HCP Demographic Data Compare?

Demographic Groups		District	HCP	Nominated	Assessed	Identified	Served	Exited
Ethnic	American Indian							
	Asian							
	Black							
	Hispanic							
	White							
	Other							
Socio-economic	Free/ Reduced Lunch Support							
Linguistic	Transitional Bilingual							
	Migrant							
Special Education	Learning Disabled							

To complete the spreadsheet, first insert the real number for each demographic group enrolled in the district and then the real number enrolled in the HC program. Next, record the real number of students nominated, tested, identified, served, and exited from each demographic group. Once the spreadsheet is completed, districts may make comparisons, analyze data, draw conclusions, and plan for change. When comparing district and HC program demographic data, it may be helpful to pose the following questions to analyze representation within the district and the HC program:

- Is the HC program enrollment reflective of district demographic populations? If not, what populations are under-represented and how great is the disparity?
  - Calculate the percentage of American Indian/Alaskan Native, Black, and Hispanic students who are enrolled in the HC program. How do these percentages compare to the overall percentages in the district?
  - Calculate the percentage of students receiving subsidized school lunches who are enrolled in the HC program. How do these percentages compare to the overall percentages within the district?
  - Calculate the percentage of transitional bilingual and/or students receiving migrant services who are enrolled in the HC program. How do these percentages compare to the overall percentages within the district?
  - Calculate the percentage of students receiving special education who are enrolled services in the HC program. How do these percentages compare to the overall percentages within the district?
- Are all demographic populations represented in nomination, assessment, identification, service, and exiting?
- How does demographic population representation in nomination, assessment, identification, service, and exiting compare to district enrollment data? Where are the biggest discrepancies occurring? In the nomination stage, in the identification stage? In services?

By posing the above questions, districts are able to collect data that may point to issues that contribute to under-representation. As research is conducted, it is important to note that any over-arching category can mask important differences within that category, so avoid using terms such as “minority” as a category and if there are vast differences in socio-economic levels within a group in your community, it may be useful to examine those separately. (Asian populations, for example, may be poor, recent immigrants, or high social-economic status (SES) established families.) For example, the apparent proportionate representation of a demographic population in HC programs may obscure what is actually high participation by specific subgroup(s) of that population and low participation by others.

After collecting and conducting the analysis of district and program demographic data, the next step is to consider district procedures for nomination, identification, selection, and placement process that may contribute to under-representation. As the district examines these procedures, the following questions may reveal patterns that contribute to underserved student populations in HC programs:

- Are students from ethnic, socio-economic, transitional bilingual, migrant, and special education populations included in the nomination process? Are they represented in numbers proportionate to the population in the school district?
- Are students from ethnic, socio-economic, transitional bilingual, migrant, and special education populations included in the assessment process? Are they represented in numbers proportionate to the population in the school district?
- Are students from ethnic, socio-economic, transitional bilingual, migrant, and special education populations given equal consideration in the selection process? Are they represented in numbers proportionate to the population in the school district?
- If found eligible to receive HC program services, are students from ethnic, socio-economic, transitional bilingual, migrant, and special education populations choosing to participate? Are they represented in numbers proportionate to the population in the school district?
- If found ineligible to receive HC program services, are students from ethnic, socio-economic, transitional bilingual, migrant, and special education populations utilizing the appeals process?
- Once placed in the HC program, are students from ethnic, socio-economic, transitional bilingual, migrant, and special education populations succeeding/thriving in the program? Are they succeeding in numbers proportionate to the population in the school district?
- Is the HC program meeting the academic needs of the students from ethnic, socio-economic, transitional bilingual, migrant, and special education populations?
- Is the HC program meeting the social and emotional needs of the students from ethnic, socio-economic, transitional bilingual, migrant, and special education populations?
- Do students from ethnic, socio-economic, transitional bilingual, migrant, and special education populations groups choose to remain in the HC program? Are they remaining in the program in numbers proportionate to the population in the school district?

As districts begin the process of analyzing the equity of access to traditionally under-represented student populations in HC programs, the ongoing evaluation of district policies and procedures will show growth and reveal patterns of

concern and areas for improvement. Collecting data that reveals a district's current status allows the district to develop strategies for revising and/or developing procedures and policies to increase representation by traditionally underserved student populations. Section III of this report is aimed at providing strategies for selection processes, service delivery models, and support structures designed to increase representation of underserved student populations in HC programs.

### Section III. Strategies for Addressing Under-representation

#### Part 1. Student Selection

“I was fortunate recently to have the opportunity to work with a science museum on the creation of an exhibition of African American inventiveness. As I toured the final showcasing, I couldn't help but feel an incredible sense of pride in the men and women whose work was on display. This was true genius! We were aware, of course, that we had touched the surface of the vast area called ‘inventiveness,’ but let's face it, we had limited space. Then, I didn't realize how much of the story there was left to tell, but now I know that inventiveness goes way beyond the *Webster's Dictionary* definition of ‘originating a product out of individual ingenuity.’ I strongly feel that inventiveness can also include the resourcefulness of a people. I think it's that very resourcefulness, the ability to make do and get it done, that we celebrate at each and every family reunion.”

*Just Plain Folks: Original Tales of Living, Loving, Longing, and Learning as Told by a Perfectly Ordinary, Quite Commonly Sensible, and Absolutely Awe-inspiring Colored Woman*

Lorraine Johnson-Coleman

Publisher: Little, Brown and Company, 1998

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“Our nation's problems, historically, have not only included extremely discriminatory practices against some minorities, such as legally, but also a deeply enforced school desegregation ingrained belief among many members of the majority population that some minorities are less able to succeed in school for either innate or cultural reasons”

Reaching the Top: A Report of the National Task Force on Minority High Achievement, Page 14.

The policies and procedures that guide selection of students from underserved populations must first parallel good practice in student nomination (referral), identification, and placement (services/interventions). Then consideration should be given to the specific issues that affect the process in identifying underserved populations. Callahan, Tomlinson, & Pizzat (1994), Callahan (2005), and Frasier & Passow (1994) developed guidelines based on research on the issues surrounding this process and on the success of selected school districts in increasing representation of students from minority populations and low-income environments. Research-based identification procedures are also identified by Stambaugh (2007). A summary of these findings suggests that the following guidelines should be followed in establishing identification procedures for low-income and minority gifted learners:

- Develop and embrace new constructs of giftedness that are multi-faceted, multi-cultural and multi-dimensional. Further, develop a philosophy of giftedness that is inclusive rather than exclusive.
- Define giftedness dynamically. That is, conceive of the traits that define giftedness as traits, behaviors, and aptitudes that are to be nurtured rather than assessed by static test performance.
- Recognize that there may be multiple ways in which the traits, behaviors, and aptitudes that define giftedness may be displayed or manifested. This will necessitate the development of identification tools that are appropriate to specific populations in specific contexts or to the interpretation of test scores within the context of the child. Frasier and Passow note that there are “*absolute attributes of giftedness*—traits, aptitudes, and behaviors that are universally associated with talent potential and performance—and *specific behaviors* that represent different manifestations of gifted potential and performance as a consequence of the social and cultural contexts in which they occur” (1994, p. xvii). Stress expanding sources of evidence and the existence of giftedness in all cultural and socioeconomic groups.
- To argue that the concepts of giftedness should not be limited to high intelligence and high achievement *does not mean* that academic achievement is not important. In all modern societies, formal education that often includes postsecondary and graduate education is crucial to the development of specialized talents that are valued. Thus, identification and encouragement of what is sometimes called “school-house giftedness” constitutes an integral component of nurturing talent potential of many kinds and levels.
- Use varied and authentic assessment tools that reflect opportunities for observation of students over time and in action rather than in a static testing environment alone. Include use of performance assessment strategies. See also VanTassel-Baska, Feng, & Evans, in press and VanTassel-Baska, Johnson, & Avery (2002).
- Use nomination forms that have been modified to reflect socioeconomic ends and cultural differences.
- However, take care not to make multiple sources of evidence be multiple hurdles that students must overcome. Do not use matrices in which various data points are assigned scores and added together in a mistaken attempt to create a score representing “giftedness.”
- As a corollary to the use of authentic assessment, initiate a system that allows for identification through learning opportunities. Create opportunities for students in enriched environments where it is possible to

learn and display the behaviors associated with giftedness.

- Create strong links between the identification process and instruction. The purpose for identification is to locate students who can be provided with appropriate differentiated instructional opportunities.
- Hence, the use of non-verbal intelligence tests that are unrelated to curriculum or instruction used in the programming and curricular options should be discouraged. Rather, it is more appropriate to use measures such as standardized achievement tests and consider lower cut-off scores. Use of local norms on achievement and intelligence tests for the population being considered will be more likely to yield sound predictive validity. (See Lohman, 2003; 2005)
- Provide staff development that addresses cultural differences, stereotypes and prejudices. The use of teacher nomination or rating without adequate staff development has been documented to reflect teacher bias, prejudice, and discrimination. Consider alternative sources of nomination: Community Center personnel, ministers, coaches, etc.
- Use parent information only for placement or curricular decisions. The relative “knowledge of the system” across parental groups, makes reliance on parent nomination or evaluation uncertain.
- Be sure the procedures for identification are ongoing. Students from impoverished environments are often transient and more likely to be absent from school, and therefore, may miss key assessment opportunities if screening assessment occurs only at one fixed time.

### **Research Based Strategies**

*The following are some research-based strategies that may provide inspiration and ideas for implementing change.*

### **Emerging Scholars Program**

Virginia Beach, Virginia

Using collaborative efforts with Title I services, curricular intervention with collaboration, gifted resource teachers developing and presenting lessons in the primary grades, and dynamic assessment, the Virginia Beach City Public Schools have increased the identification of gifted learners from minority groups and students living in poverty. Teachers are provided activities that cover the development of traits that are used in rating students for eligibility for gifted programs and both the resource teacher and the gifted specialist use a chart to record outstanding student performance in the classroom over time. That data is reviewed in conjunction with traditional test data and checklists in determining final placement.

Reference:

Given, D., & Hedrick, K. A. (2006, November). Shifting perspectives: Identification and programming in Title I schools. Presentation at the annual meeting of the National Association for Gifted Children, Charlotte, NC.

**The Gifted Model Program and PADI (Program of Assessment, Diagnosis, and Instruction)**

Montgomery County Public Schools  
Rockville, Maryland

The gifted program in the Montgomery County Public Schools relies heavily on the concept of assessment through teaching, but uses a multi-layered identification model using both subjective and objective information to identify gifted young children from low-income, limited English-speaking populations, and minority groups. The process begins with teacher lessons based on the development of critical and creative thinking, but also includes standard or traditional data from tests (Cartoon Conservation Scale, Draw-A-Person, Raven's Progressive Matrices, and the Test of Cognitive Skills), teacher ratings (Scales for Rating the Behavioral Characteristics of Superior Students and a locally developed scale, Checklist for Identifying Learning Strengths), parent or community nominations, teacher recommendations, and performance on a battery of assessments developed for assessment of Multiple Intelligences strengths. Some students are also assessed on the Stanford-Binet or the Woodcock-Johnson battery. Further, one teacher provides instruction in Spanish and English.

References:

- Starnes, W. T. (1994). A model program for identifying young underserved gifted students. In C.M. Callahan, C.A. Tomlinson, & P.M. Pizzat (Eds.), *Contexts for promise: Practices and innovations in the identification of gifted students* (pp.43-61). Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia, National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented.
- Johnson, S. Starnes, W., Gregory, D, & Blaylock, A, (1985). Program assessment, diagnosis, and instruction (PADI): Identifying and nurturing potentially gifted minority students. *Journal of Negro Education, 54*, 416-430.

**Problem Solving Assessment**

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools  
Charlotte, North Carolina

The process of identification is three-fold. First, teachers are provided staff development in the provision of curriculum that is high level, hands on, and multicultural. Then pre-assessment occurs during which gifted resource teachers visit the classroom to provide activities that draw on multiple intelligences concepts of spatial, linguistic, and logical-mathematical. During this phase the teacher takes notes on student performance using special checklists. Then nine

specific activities are used to assess strengths in spatial, linguistic and logical-mathematical areas of performance (some are based on DISCOVER activities (Maker, Nielson, & Rogers, 1994; Maker, Rogers, & Nielson, 1995). The data from all sources is used to determine eligibility for gifted services.

References:

- Callahan, C.M., Tomlinson, C.A., Moon, T.R., Tomchin, E.M., & Plucker, J.A. (1995). *Project START: Using a Multiple Intelligences model in identifying and promoting talent in high-risk students*. (Research Monograph # 95136). Storrs, CT: University of Connecticut, National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented.
- Kornhaber, M.L. (2004). Using multiple intelligences to overcome cultural barriers to identification for gifted education. In D. Booth & J. C. Stanley (Eds.), *In the eyes of the beholder: Critical issues for diversity in gifted education* (pp. 215-225). Waco, TX: Prufrock.
- Reid, C., Ramanoff, B., Algozzine, B., & Udall, A. (2000). An evaluation of alternative screening measures. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 23, 378-396.
- Tomlinson, C. A., Callahan, C.M., & Lelli, K.M. (1997). Challenging expectations: Case studies of high-potential culturally diverse young children. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 41, 5-17.

**Project LEAP**

The Osage County Interlocal Cooperative  
Hominy, Oklahoma

“Project LEAP: Leadership Excellence Achievement and/or Performance is a cooperative effort seeking to identify and meet the special educational needs of gifted and talented secondary students in four rural districts in northeastern Oklahoma.... Project LEAP will allow these students the opportunity to fully develop their intellectual, creative, artistic and/or leadership abilities; provide individualized instruction and specially developed study units incorporating the child’s culture. Project LEAP will address six main components: Identification, Instructional/Curriculum, Parental Awareness/Training, Professional Development, Dissemination and Evaluation that develop and advance both theory and knowledge in gifted talented education.”

References:

- Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Program Awards (1996-2001). 9 Sep. 2005. U.S. Department of Education. 9 April 2007.  
<<http://www.ed.gov/programs/javits/awards.html>>
- Montgomery, Diane. (2001). “Educational Practices: Increasing Native American Indian Involvement in Gifted Programs in Rural Schools.” *Psychology in the Schools*, 38, 467-475.

## **Project STREAM: Support, Training, and Resources for Educating Able Minorities**

University of Wisconsin-Whitewater  
Whitewater, Wisconsin

In this Javits project, the use of contextual performance assessments developed specifically for the context of the minority and low-income middle school population were combined with teacher nominations reflecting specifically defined traits and other assessment tools, including peer nominations and interviews, to address a broadened definition of giftedness (general intellectual aptitude, general academic potential, specific academic potential, creative ability, talent in the visual or performing arts, and interpersonal skills such as leadership or adaptation). The process resulted in greater percentages of minority and low-income students being identified.

### Reference:

Clausen, D. R. (1994), Project STREAM: Support, Training, and Resources for Educating Able Minorities. In C.M. Callahan, C.A. Tomlinson, & P.M. Pizzat (Eds.), *Contexts for promise: Practice innovations in the identification of gifted students* (pp.1-21). Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia, National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented.

### **Related Articles**

Bernal, E. (2002). Three ways to achieve a more equitable representation of culturally and linguistically different students in GT programs. *Roeper Review*, 24, 82-88.

“This article posits that increasing minority teachers in gifted and talented (GT) programs will lead to an increase of minority students in GT programs. Ways to recruit and prepare minority teachers are discussed, as are multicultural and bilingual options for GT programs. The need for evaluation data is stressed.”

Callahan, C.M., & McIntire, J. A. (1994). Identifying outstanding talent in American Indian and Alaska Native Students. (Eric Document Reproduction Service No. ED367127). Retrieved 30 March 2007 at <http://www.eric.ed.gov/>.

“This report reviews and synthesizes the most promising practices used to identify exceptionally talented students from the Native American population. Preliminary information includes an Indian Student Bill of Rights, discussion of the problem of talent identification, and discussion of special issues including diversity within the Native American population and cultural assimilation versus accommodation. Eight principles of identification are then presented. These include, among others, using assessments that go beyond a narrow conception of talent; using appropriate instruments with underserved populations; and using a multiple-measure/multiple-criteria approach to identification. Specific practices

are then considered, which address: balancing the ideal and the practical; deciding on a concept of talent; recognizing the issues of a particular school; identifying traits that may influence manifestations of talent; recognizing behaviors that distinguish some Native American students from the general population; looking for manifestations of talent potential, alternative behaviors, situations, and interpretations; selecting and constructing appropriate assessment tools; and using the collected student data to make decisions. Recommendations address technical assistance, professional development, assessment portfolios, experimental programs, and program funding. Five appendices include technical information concerning evaluation measures, two sample case studies, and a list of assessment instruments.”

De Wet, C. F. (2005 Winter). The challenge of bilingual and limited English proficient students. *Newsletter of The National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented*, 9-15.

The article presents a thorough, concise discussion of finding, identifying, and addressing the educational needs of English Language Learners (ELL). The author discusses the need for ELL gifted student identification and placement, and maps the basic steps for school districts, including a list of “Indicators of Superior Ability” as well as “Suggested Best Practices in Curriculum for High Ability English Language Learners.” The article also describes in both quantitative and qualitative measures the realities of students who are from all cultural groups across all economic strata and the complexity of finding and then placing them in gifted programs. The suggestion is made to begin by noting the strengths and weaknesses of students and creating a program(s) or services that best serve them. Additionally, the author identifies four earmarks of successful programs.

Ford, D.Y., Harris, J. III, Tyson, C., & Trotman, M. (2002). Beyond deficit thinking: Providing access to African American students. *Roeper Review*, 24, 52-58.

“This article reviews factors affecting the persistent underrepresentation of black students in gifted education and offers suggestions for recruiting and retaining these students. It is argued that a deficit orientation held by educators hinders access to gifted programs for diverse students, and that too often educators interpret differences as deficits.”

Frasier, M. M., García, J. H., & Passow, A. H. (1995). *A review of assessment issues in gifted education and their implications for identifying gifted minority students* (RM95204). Storrs, CT: The National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented, University of Connecticut.

“This review provides background information concerning the issues that affect the identification of gifted minority students, suggests implications for developing more effective identification procedures, and proposes directions for formulating a new approach to the resolution of the problems of identifying gifted minority

students—a population that is seriously underrepresented in programs for the gifted.”

Harris, C. R. (1993). Identifying and serving recent immigrant children who are gifted. ERIC Digests. #E520. Education Resources Information Center No. ED358676. Retrieved 30 March 2007.

“This information sheet summarizes challenges and strategies for identifying and serving gifted children who are recent immigrants. Both challenges and strategies are identified for linguistic, cultural, economic, attitudinal, sociocultural, peer, cross-cultural, intergenerational, and school system aspects. A total of 28 strategies are offered, including: provide enrichment activities to students perceived as ‘not ready’ for gifted programs; explain the concept of gifted programs to parents in their native language; consider aspirations of the immigrant group as well as parents’ occupation and education; provide opportunities for a peer support counseling group; use various approaches to model conflict resolution; increase motivation for children to identify themselves as candidates for gifted programs; use nonverbal expressive arts to involve the family; and assess from the perspective of individual learning styles. (Includes 16 references.)”

Raborn, J. (2002, Fall). Challenging schools’ expectations of Native American students. *Newsletter of the National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented*, 9-11.

The article addresses the challenge that “recent research continues to document the wide disparity between the ethnic group representation of Native Americans in the general public school student population and the significantly lower percentages represented in programs for the gifted and talented.” It continues by showing a solution delivered through an elementary school program “to address the needs of Native American and already identified gifted students.” The article presents the program design, program participants, and results.

VanTassel-Baska, J. & Stambaugh, T. (Eds.). (2007). *Overlooked gems: A national perspective on low-income promising learners*. Washington, D.C.: National Association for Gifted Children.

“This monograph brings together the work of national stakeholders in gifted education and beyond gifted education on the critical issue of child poverty among students who show academic and intellectual promise for positive contributions in various areas of study. It has been compiled in order to provide the field of gifted education with a blueprint for working in schools with children of poverty, for activating community-based opportunities for them, and for forging new partnerships and collaboratives with universities and other agencies to deliver relevant services.”

## Part 2. Service Delivery Models

The consideration of program service models rests on assumptions that the program service model is important, but that it cannot be considered in isolation from the curriculum or the instructional practices that are implemented within the models selected. These two excerpts illustrate the importance of this notion. The first reflects curriculum and the second, instructional practice.

“In 12 years of school I never studied anything about myself.” (African-American senior reporting in Shortchanging Girls: Shortchanging America)

“I was trying to explain a concept in my government class, and the students were not getting it. One of my Indian students in the class decided to explain it. Not only did he understand the concept and explain it well, but the other students finally understood, also. I thanked him and praised his abilities. That was the last time he ever spoke up in class. From then on, he got 60% on all his tests. Do you know how hard it is to always get 60%? I wish I had known more about his culture so this would not have happened to him.” S. Jackson (personal communication) From Klug, B. J. (2004). Children of the starry cope: Gifted and talented Native American students. In D. Booth & J. C. Stanley (Eds.), *In the eyes of the beholder: Critical issues for diversity in gifted education* (pp. 49-72). Waco, TX: Prufrock.

Further, as in any consideration of programming, it is important to consider offering a continuum of services whenever possible. In fact, in the consideration of underserved populations where removing a student from his or her peer group may cause considerable uneasiness and may result in the decision to refuse the services offered, alternative options should be available. For example, the designers of Project LEAP (a program for American Indian students) found that opening many activities to all interested students—reducing the demarcation between identified and non-identified students—was effective in sustaining student involvement. It was quite common for LEAP students to bring a friend to the scheduled activity.

The first and foremost recommendation is to begin programming early. Research on the brain and data from Head Start clearly support the importance of early presentation of high level and challenging curriculum, early identification, and intensive intervention for the full development of potential.

Second, programming leaders and curriculum developers must consider scaffolding the curriculum. The child who is identified from an under-represented group who has not had the same learning opportunities, exposure to the types of learning and strategies used, may quickly feel like a failure or out of place in the new environment or when faced with new challenges. The results of research on Advanced Placement courses and International Baccalaureate programs clearly documented the need for appropriate scaffolding of the curriculum (Kyburg, Hertberg-Davis, & Callahan, in press).

In addition, the curriculum should be constructed to address culturally relevant experiences, give ample opportunity for students to engage in the types of learning experiences that are dominant in their culture, reflect the values of the culture, and provide opportunity to engage in learning activities and product production that reflect preferred learning styles (Callahan, Tomlinson, Moon, Tomchin, & Plucker, 1995; Ford, Grantham, & Milner, 2004; Klug, 2004; Project LEAP, and others). (This is ***not*** to suggest that students are not to be exposed to and be expected to achieve in the valued modes of expression that will lead to success in later educational endeavors.)

Mentorships have also been identified as an appropriate programming strategy for at-risk gifted learners (Callahan & Kyburg, 2005; Callahan, Tomlinson, Moon, Tomchin, & Plucker, 1995; Ford & Harris, 1999; Wright & Borland, 1992).

### **Advanced Placement**

National Program

“The Advanced Placement Program® is a cooperative educational endeavor between secondary schools and colleges and universities. Since its inception in 1955, the Program has provided motivated high school students with the opportunity to take college-level courses in a high school setting. Students who participate in the Program not only gain college-level skills, but in many cases they also earn college credit while they are still in high school. AP courses are taught by dedicated and enthusiastic high school teachers who follow course guidelines developed and published by the College Board.”

Adelman, C. (2006). *The toolbox revisited: Paths to degree completion from high school through college*. Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Education.

### **Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID)**

National Program

AVID is an educational acceleration program for Grades 5-12 that is not designed specifically for gifted learners, but focuses on moving students through a rigorous curriculum with ongoing structured tutorials for at-risk students with the goal of preparing students for college. AVID sends one third more students to colleges than the national average and “African American AVID students, whether they participate in AVID for one or three years, are enrolling in college at rates that are considerably higher than the local and national averages” (p. 70).

Gira, R. (2006). The challenge: Preparing low-income students for college. In J. VanTassel-Baska & T. Stambaugh (Eds.), *Overlooked gems: A national perspective on low-income promising learners* (pp. 69-74). Washington, DC: National Association for Gifted Children.

## **International Baccalaureate**

### International Program

“International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) offers three programmes of international education for students aged 3 to 19. The Primary Years Programme (PYP) for pupils aged 3 to 12 focuses on the development of the whole child in the classroom and in the world outside. The Middle Years Programme (MYP) for students aged 11 to 16 provides a framework of academic challenge and life skills through embracing and transcending traditional school subjects. The Diploma Programme for students aged 16 to 19 is a demanding two-year curriculum that meets the needs of highly motivated students, and leads to a qualification that is recognized by leading universities around the world.”

Adelman, C. (2006). *The toolbox revisited: Paths to degree completion from high school through college*. Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Education.

## **Project Athena**

### College of William and Mary

Project Athena is a federally funded Javits grant using a language arts curriculum serving diverse middle school students in diverse settings that produced significant differences on measures of reading and critical thinking between experimental and control groups, but not large effect sizes.

Bracken, B.A., Brown, E.F., & Feng, A. (2006). Project Athena: A tale of two studies. In J. VanTassel-Baska & T. Stambaugh (Eds.), *Overlooked gems: A national perspective on low-income promising learners* (pp. 63-67). Washington, DC: National Association for Gifted Children.

## **Project Clarion**

### Center for Gifted Education

This program is focused on low-socio economic learners for the purpose of assessment of learning in grades K-3. The purpose is to extend research-based concept curriculum with a focus on science, with overarching goals of: Patterns, Change, Cause and Effect, and Systems.

Project Clarion: An Integrative Curriculum Scale-up Project to Promote Scientific Conceptual Understanding in Promising Young Children (Ages 4-8).

Retrieved 3 April 2007 at <http://cfge.wm.edu/clarion/>.

## **Project Excite and Project LIVE**

Mathematics programs that focus on African American and Hispanic low-income students in middle school have had great success in preparing these students for algebra and more advanced mathematics.

Olszewski-Kubilius, P. (2006). Working with promising learners from poverty: Lessons learned. In J. VanTassel-Baska & T. Stambaugh (Eds.), *Overlooked gems: A national perspective on low-income promising learners* (pp. 43-51). Washington, DC: National Association for Gifted Children.

### **Project LEAP**

The Osage County Interlocal Cooperative  
Hominy, Oklahoma

“Project LEAP: Leadership Excellence Achievement and/or Performance is a cooperative effort seeking to identify and meet the special educational needs of gifted and talented secondary students in four rural districts in northeastern Oklahoma.... Project LEAP will allow these students the opportunity to fully develop their intellectual, creative, artistic and/or leadership abilities; provide individualized instruction and specially developed study units incorporating the child’s culture. Project LEAP will address six main components: Identification, Instructional/Curriculum, Parental Awareness/Training, Professional Development, Dissemination and Evaluation that develop and advance both theory and knowledge in gifted talented education.”

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### **Project U-STARS-PLUS**

FPG Child Development Institute  
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

Funded by a Jacob K. Javits grant, Project U-STARS-PLUS focuses on providing strategies for teachers to appropriately recognize potential in young children (K-3). Through recognizing and nurturing potential, Project U-STARS works to meet the needs of young gifted students from culturally/linguistically diverse and/or economically disadvantaged families and children with disabilities. The focus is to find students who are “at potential” rather than “at risk” and recognizes that the early years are critical in the development of potential. Teachers use science activities to captivate students and provide opportunities to demonstrate advanced thinking skills. Through science, teachers use the *Revised Harrison Student Observation Form* to recognize outstanding potential and gifted behaviors.

Coltrane, S. S., & Coleman, M. R. (2005, Fall/Winter). Using science as a vehicle: Searching for outstanding potential in underserved populations. *Gifted Education Communicator*, 20-23.

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