Teacher Perception of Racial Equity in Gifted and Talented Programs

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Gifted and Talented (GT) programs across the nation seek to give those who think abstractly a way to collaborate with peers and grow. In most cases, one would assume that the demographic make-up of Gifted and Talented programs would have a clear relationship with the demographic make-up of the community they serve. Still, many programs do not. This exclusion leaves demographics like African American, Hispanic, Indigenous/Native American, and Asian severely underrepresented. This study sought to find relationships between the demographic make-up of schools versus the demographic make-up of the Gifted and Talented programs by asking educators their perception of demographic makeup of their programs.
        Keywords: racial equity, gifted and talented, underrepresented, identification

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Introduction

It is no secret that the idea of an equal opportunity for an education does not necessarily equate to authentic access to opportunities, or equal representation in school curricula (Godwin, 2021). That inequity to opportunity is pronounced when considering enrollment in Gifted and Talented programs. Consider this: according to the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights (2015), Black students make up 15.4% of the total population with 48.9% of the population being identified as White. However, Black students comprise only 8.5% of the gifted population nationally compared to White students' 58.8% (Department of Education Office of Civil Rights, 2015). This disproportionate identification of GT identified students of color is concerning. Scholars have started identifying the factors that could have allowed the large gap to exist and how the education system can effectively identify more gifted and talented students in diverse populations, but further research is needed.

Identifying and Educating Underrepresented Gifted Students

Before teachers can examine how to educate the underrepresented populations, there needs to be an acknowledgement that the racial groups in question (i.e. Black, Latino, and American Indian) were, in fact, historically marginalized in the American education system and to do that, one must examine the interdependent aspects of racism that are involved for the demographics discussed (Liu and Waller, 2018). Additionally, teachers must do their due diligence to define and interpret words such as inequality, poverty, giftedness, classism, and racism.

According to Liu and Waller (2018) racism, specifically, is explored in great detail with an underlying reminder of the role educators play in understanding the stereotypes and implicit bias that exists in the classroom. After all, the curriculum in the United States was set intentionally or unintentionally to uphold previous colonial mindsets (Abela & Dague, 2020) and historically European ways of thinking (Rovito & Giles, 2013). By accepting the harm this curricular framework presents, one also must make an effort to step away from such detrimental notions while also trying to provide an extra level of continual support with detailed directions. These extra steps taken on by the educator can allow for gifted students who are normally underrepresented to find a place of belonging and acceptance in the academic world.

Because most testing for gifted programs comes from teacher and parent referral, groups such as minorities and low-income students were largely left out of the conversation of Gifted and Talented programs (Card & Giuliano, 2016). One theory to combat the lack of representation was a practice called Universal Screening. Card and Giuliano (2016) assessed all the second graders from a district in Florida that was indicated to be large and represent a variety of ethnicities and races using a test called Naglieri Non-Verbal Test (NNAT). This assessment was one that only looked at cognitive ability and did not present any emphasis on cultural or linguistic background. Card and Giuliano discovered that most of the "newly identified were disproportionately poor, Black, and Hispanic, and less likely to have parents whose primary language was English" (p. 13679). Subsequently, Card and Giuliano (2016) looked at the IQ scores of these newly identified students and formed that they had similar scores to those who normally tested for Horizons through the referral program. One differing factor that separated the newly identified students from the pack was their standardized test scores, which were lower than those who commonly tested. Their findings affirmed that contextual factors such as race and socioeconomic status have led to an underrepresentation of various groups like minorities and low-income students despite showing capabilities of a gifted student.

Grissom and Redding (2016) conducted a study done with a "nationally representative sample and analyzed the test scores they received in Math and Reading along with students assigned to the gifted and talented program throughout the duration of elementary school. There was a large emphasis placed on the teacher-student race congruence and if that had any effect on who was identified as gifted. Through the various data taken, Grissom and Redding found that "Black students are predicted to be assigned to gifted services three times more often in classrooms with Black teachers than with non-Black teachers" (2016, p. 10). The race congruence result showed that the teaching field cannot wait for more diversity in the race make-up of the teachers but should instead work to decrease "the inequitable exercise of discretion through the adoption of less biased identification and placement systems" (Grissom &Redding, 2016, p. 15).

Although most identification processes for Gifted and Talented students do not start until mid-elementary grades, Wright and Ford (2017) propose that there are characteristics that could identify students as early as preschool. Those traits, however, can be determined by culture, therefore could vary by socioeconomic status and race. As a result, "children of color who live in poverty are less likely to meet the requirements of gifted education placement" (Wright & Ford, 2017, p. 113). These researchers affirm that the administrators and teachers can work hand and hand to provide a curriculum that offers simulation and representation of diverse backgrounds along with attending professional development that focus on the underrepresented population. They also stressed an idea that school counselors and psychologists can work together to provide a "culturally response guidance curriculum" which could help support students from various

groups stated above. Though these ideas are a starting point, public education systems have a "long way toward narrowing achievement gaps and priming the gifted education pipeline", which is the end goal (Wright & Ford, 2017, p. 114).

Investigating Intersectionality

Goings and Fords (2018) have noticed the relationship between the lack of representation of students within the poverty bracket that are labeled gifted. Notably, those students were shown to intersect most frequently with races such Black, American Indian, and Hispanic. While looking at the "intersection of giftedness, race, and poverty", Goings and Ford (2018) affirmed to see what has been found on "how students with the highest academic potential succeed while coping with and/or overcoming the impact of poverty" (p. 26). Goings and Ford (2018) identified certain influences that lead to success of students of color such as positive encouragement from kin, other adults, teachers who hold them to high levels of prowess. The suggestion that differentiated ways of identifying giftedness was made including non-verbal assessment. One focus that Goings and Ford (2018) argued was lacking from the studies they reviewed was the recognizing "structures (e.g. education system, government) that have created...inequities in the first place" (p. 33). Goings and Ford recognize that looking at the cross section between race, poverty, and giftedness should be a drive piece moving forward in the discussion of change.

A Talent Development Model for Finding and Nurturing Potential in Underserved Populations

In order for teachers to become aware and learn more about how to increase diversity in gifted programs, they must be willing to take advantage of opportunities like within Professional Development. Lewis, Novak, and Weber (2018) propose that "case studies allow teachers to imagine themselves in settings they might not have encountered, have yet to encounter, or have encountered but were not sure how to proceed" (p. 52). The conversations that can be had in a space where the situations presented, while hypothetical, could be something that an educator could possibly or have already experienced in the classroom. Amid looking at these case studies, educators can collaborate strategies that have worked for them in working diverse populations in the gifted program. The hope, Lewis et al (2018) explain, is to have teachers walk away with an awareness of populations that are normally underserved and a mindset that is responsive to the variety of cultures in the classroom.

Before any kind of learning or development can happen with gifted individuals, Stambaugh and Ford (2015) find it important for "teachers and counselors [to] understand the unique characteristics of gifted individuals and collaborate to optimize student learning and school success" (p. 192). A large focus of this understanding comes from the impact of biases that could lead to deliberate or inadvertent microaggressions which are "any comment, attitude, or gesture experience as inappropriate or hurtful based on their personal history or characteristics" (Franklin, 1999; Sue, 2010). Stambaugh and Ford offer a variety of suggestions specifically for those that are counseling culturally diverse gifted students to foster relationships and make the student feel supported. One way was to "learn what intelligence means to gifted students within their lived and cultural experience" (Stambaugh & Ford, 2015, p. 198). This could vary from culture to culture, so it is imperative to understand the root of the intersection of their experiences to best rely on information and conversations. This may take time to build trust and a strong foundation with not only the student but also the families involved.

Horn (2015) investigated the Fairfax County Public School's approach for fostering students of underrepresented gifted populations and the areas in which they can improve upon. In 2005, schools that were studied were in the process of adopting a model called Young Scholars

in this effort. The focus was to increase collaboration between principals and teachers, use non-traditional assessment, provide approach professional development for teachers, and enrichment activities. Horn ran a longitudinal study of the gifted population from 2003 to 2014 found a "565% increase in the number of Black and Hispanic students receiving gifted services in high school" (2015, p. 28). The culmination of the Young Scholars program was said to be a major factor in the drastic increase.

Methods to Increase the Identification Rate of Traditionally Underrepresented Populations

Matthews and Peters (2018) state that "there seems to be a collective desire for greater proportionality of representation, and yet there is little agreement on how to go about achieving that end" (p. 317). First, they offer two approaches that have been widely discussed to meet those achievement gaps in underrepresented populations: different tests and using tests differently. While there is not one test that educators can agree would not check all the boxes, the use of non-verbal assessments like the "Comprehensive Test of Nonverbal Intelligence (Hammill, Pearson, & Wiederholt, 2009), the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test (NNAT–2; Naglieri, 2008), and the Raven's Progressive Matrices (Raven, Raven, & Court, 1938/2000)" have been highlighted for their ability to evaluate in an effective medium. This could also be supported with portfolios that reflect the work that students are completing in the classroom and identify those that show high ability. The second format would be taking the cognitive ability test and changing the way that they are used. Tests could look to norms that fit the local standards, which can be designed to "yield a gifted population that is more representative of the overall school population" (Matthews & Peters, 2018, p. 325). This, along with looking at the whole child and their abilities, could be helpful in identifying students. The method that Matthews and Peters have chosen to work from intends to focus on the underrepresented population and provide more equity in those identified through advanced academics. The rationale comes from a place of giving more students a chance to challenge themselves and, in turn, develop soft skills like diligence, drive for achievement, and self-efficacy that wouldn't normally be tested on a cognitive ability test (Matthews & Peters, 2018).

The Impact of the Nomination Stage on Gifted Program Identification

The identification process for giftedness has often been done with a two-step process. Part of the initial process involved is the teacher or parent nomination stage which McBee, Peters, and Miller (2018) describe as when "a group of potentially gifted students...is screened for further consideration" (p. 259). While a nomination is the introduction to the identification process, McBee et al studied psychometric features of this step and how factors like reliability and validity could impact how students perform. These were looked at using various nomination cutoffs ranging from 50th to 90th percentile of students who would be able to test for giftedness compared with the number who have a probability of being identified. With these variables in mind and tested through national scores, McBee et al. (2018) discovered that "unless nomination stages are carefully constructed with high validity...and low cutoffs...they are almost extremely detrimental to identification system performance" (p. 273). Their rationale was that because screenings were not using psychometric principles, they were missing students who could have been identified. The process right now, according to McBee et al, is not optimal for the growth of the gifted program and need a different framework to be effective in the future.

Parent Advocacy for Culturally Diverse GT Students

Lack of parent involvement in education can be a setback for communities such as the underrepresented population (Grantham et al, 2005). All too often those parents are not as involved nor do they know how to be advocates for their students. Grantham, Frasier, Roberts,

and Bridges (2005) compiled various steps that parents, educators, and other members can take "to become more effective advocates and reverse the patterns of underrepresentation" (p. 139) in association with a Gifted Program Advocacy Model (G-PAM). The first phase involved parents gaining an understanding of who is involved in the process of identification and culturally diverse supporters who can help answer any questions they may have. The second phase allowed for parents to create "initiatives that address equity and excellence" that encourage the targeted students (Grantham et al, 2005, p.141). These goals, Grantham et al clarify, need to be taken into action to be effective. The last phase consists of the parent advocates contemplating what they have been able to accomplish within their goals and if there needs to be any changes to move forward and progress on the foundation built. By involving the parents in a gradual way, they can grow to support the voice and ability of their student.

Equity and Excellence

Peters and Engerrand (2016) analyze the variety of options that could lead to a more diverse population in the Gifted and Talented program along with some of the reasons as to why it's not equitable thus far. One suggestion was to use a different test, as the current cognitive ability tests have been said to have bias towards minorities. However, a review of scores indicated that having a cultural neutral test would make "no difference unless the mean score differences represent real differences on achievement caused by unequal opportunity" (Peters & Engerrand, 2016, p. 162). Another idea was to use the tests differently by grouping students in a way that makes sense for that community which is said to help "reach the institution's goal of greater equity" (Peters & Engerrand, 2016, p. 163). This could be by using income-group specific or differential opportunities to learn (OTL) that vary from district to district. This is supported by data taken from the National Assessment for Educational Progress Data Explorer (2015) broken up by cognitive ability test, race, and specific norm groups. Based on this practice, Peters and Engerrand (2016) affirm that this tool would be the best capacity for gaining equity in the world of the gifted and talented program.

Equality Versus Equity Schools

Ford (2015) compared two schools who had relatively similar numbers of Black and Hispanic students in their gifted population, naming them Equality and Equity, which described their process for identification. The schools varied in the way they created and evaluated their goals as well as the level of importance placed on different criteria such as referral process and teacher input. Equity hired an outside source to help teachers and parents become advocates in learning about the labeling process which lead them to utilizing universal screening in both verbal and non-verbal tests. Equality, on the other hand, only "look[ed] at students who score an IQ of 110 on one of the three subscales… [though] schools could replace this traditional instrument with a non-verbal measure" (Ford, 2015, p. 189). Because of these factors, the number of enrollment varied between the two schools with Equity having at least a 5 to 6 higher percentage identified for both Hispanic and Black students. Ford affirms that equity was the more efficient way to gain representation in a diverse population as well as identify more students for the gifted program.

The research will be guided by the following questions:
1. Do teachers perceive that gifted students of all populations are being served at XYZ District?
2. What do teachers perceive is being done to ensure that all students are being identified and served who are gifted in XYZ district?

A lack of research on teacher perception of the identification process indicates that there is not a measurement within the process to ensure there is diverse representation in Gifted and Talented programs

Research Design

The research design for this study was a descriptive and mixed methods survey (see Appendix), recognizing both qualitative and quantitative measures to collect data. The surveys for the teachers ask three demographic questions (ethnicity, years of experience, and subject taught). Then, educators were asked five Likert scale questions, ranging from always to not sure, regarding their perception of how much participation and input they have for the district's implementation of the Gifted and Talented program. Three of the questions are related their perception on the demographics of the students labeled Gifted and Talented at their school with checkboxes in a grid of information where they were asked to identify if they felt the certain ethnicity was under-represented, over-represented, neither over nor under representation or not sure. This was supported by asking if they felt their school's demographic make-up was similar or reflected in the Gifted and Talented demographic make-up. The educators stated how involved the district was in providing an initiative to develop opportunities to focus on the traditionally underrepresented populations through a Likert scale, ranging from a large initiative to no initiative. Finally, through a short answer response, teachers could elaborate what is being done in the district currently to develop opportunities for traditionally underrepresented students to be screened or identified in the Gifted and Talented program.

Population and Participants

The target population for the study was middle school teachers from two urban schools in XYZ District located in the southeastern region of the United States who have taught at least one year and have had or currently have students that are labeled Gifted and Talented. The schools selected to answer were purposely chosen as the majority of their demographics are a part of the traditionally underrepresented populations such as Black and Hispanic students (Goings & Ford, 2018). The participants range from an assortment of ethnic backgrounds and contents taught. It is important to note that there were no connecting factors that encouraged participants to contribute to the data. The study included both male and female Gifted and Talented certified teachers.
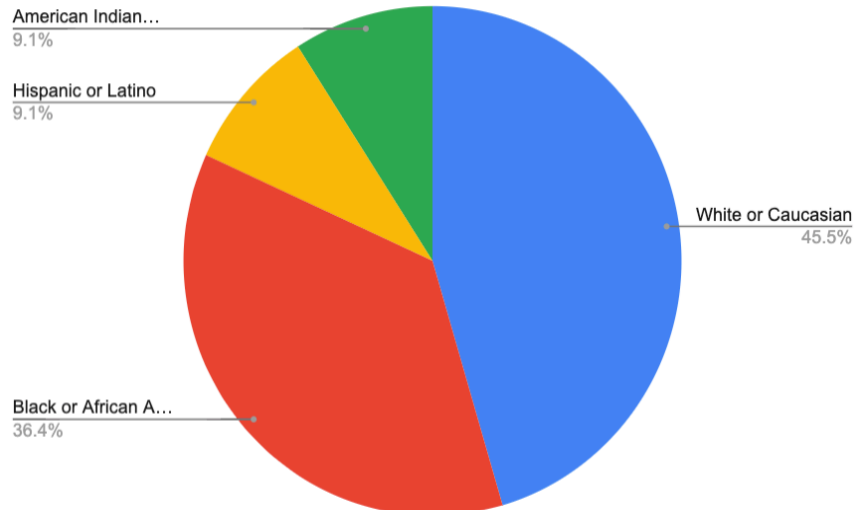
Instrument

This research used mixed method by quantitative data from school records and a qualitative survey for educators of each school. The survey had a range of questions looking at the educators' perception of the Gifted and Talented populations of their schools. The survey, which took place for three weeks in the fall of 2020 with district administration's approval, also asked educators to look at the district's involvement in growing the traditionally underrepresented populations. Most of the questions could be answered with the following "always", "sometimes", "occasionally", "never", and "not sure" for topics regarding what is being done to place students now and educator involvement in those decisions. There is a Likert scale question that highlights the measures XYZ District has identifying students should be in the program. Another Likert scale question asks educators to look at their GT populations and if it compares similarly to their school demographics. See appendix for more details about the survey
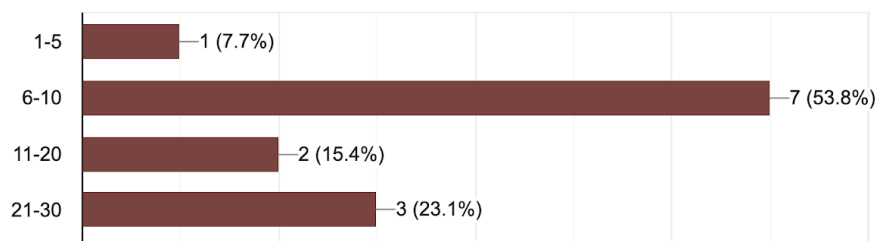
Findings

Educators in middle school.

This research surveyed educators who currently teach at the middle school level. Two schools were given the survey to be able to complete by their Research Sponsor on campus. Survey responses totaled 13 overall participants from the schools. The gender breakdown of the participants was as follows: 63.6% Female, which was 9 participants, and 36.4% Male, which was 4 participants. Age was not a consideration or option to specify in the survey. The participants were asked to answer the ethnicity they identify with on public records, which is shown in Figure 1. The four ethnicities shown were White or Caucasian, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, and American Indian. Most of the participants were reflected in the first two ethnicities. Five individuals identified as White or Caucasian, which was 45.5% of the participants, and four identified as Black or African American, which was 36.4% of the population. Hispanic or Latino and American Indian both had one individual representing that specific demographic.

Figure 1. Ethnicity of Teachers Surveyed. This figure illustrates the breakdown of the ethnicities represented by the participants.

The 13 individuals also elaborated on how many years they had been teaching overall. The average response for the educators was that they had anywhere from 6-10 years of teaching experience, which was 53.8% of the population or 7 participants. . One of the respondents was classified as a teacher within the first five years of their career. Five participants, or 38.5% of the population, had indicated that they had been teaching for more than 10 years but less than 30 years.

Figure 2. Years of teaching experience. This figure illustrates the years of teaching experience for the participants.
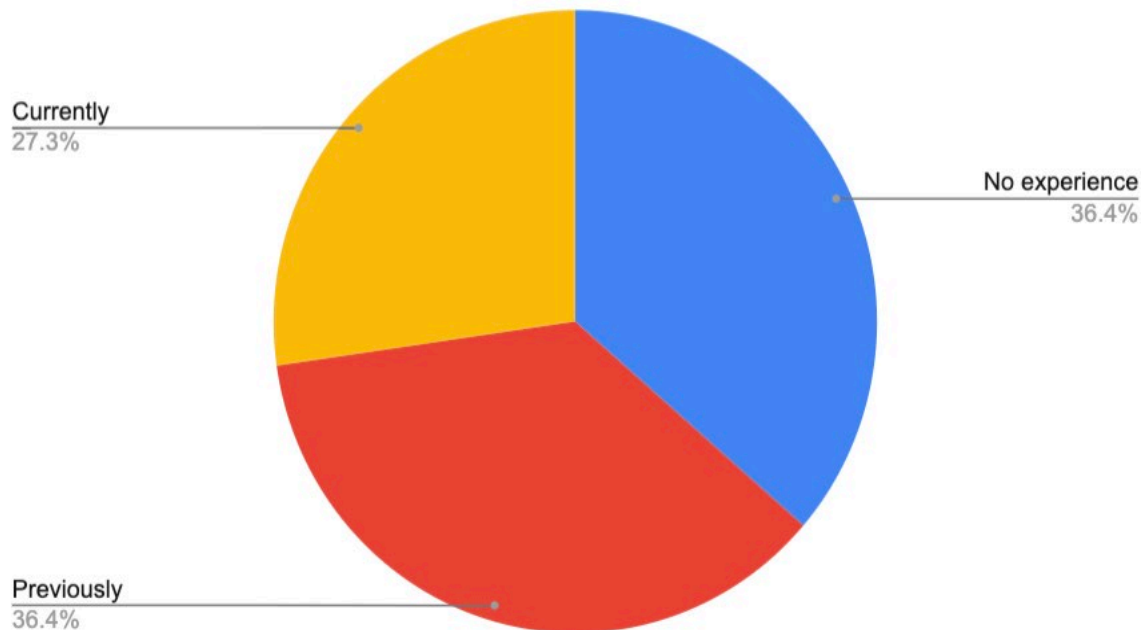
Before the educators were asked anything specific of the research questions that were being tested, they provided a response on their knowledge and exposure to teaching students that were labeled as Gifted and Talented. If they answered "no", their survey was completed without further questioning. This was the case for 6 participants, three males and three females.

This figure illustrates all 13 participants and where the survey was concluded for 6 participants. Three individuals, or 30.8% of the population, specified that they currently teach Gifted and Talented students this year. Four individuals, or 36.4% of the population, said that this year they did not teach Gifted and Talented students but that they had previously in their teaching careers.

Figure 3. Exposure to teaching students that are labeled Gifted and Talented.

Gifted and Talented Teachers

Currently
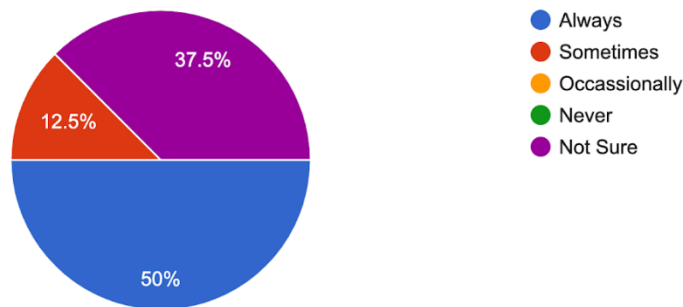27.3%

No experience
36.4%

Previously
36.4%

It was at this point that the population that is reflected in the survey have had or currently have Gifted and Talented individuals as students. The first question that regarded the newly established population was directed at the identification process of the district and how they went about obtaining referrals for the program. . Four participants, or 50% of the population, felt that on a scale from always to not sure, that the district always sought referrals from multiple sources. 37.5% of the population was not sure if the district was getting referrals from multiple sources in order to identify those individuals from the Gifted and Talented program. The smallest percentage at 12.5% of the population felt that the district was somewhat receiving referrals from a variety of sources.

Figure 4. XYZ District referral process for Gifted and Talented students.

My district seeks referrals for gifted identification from multiple sources (i.e. teachers, parents, assessments).
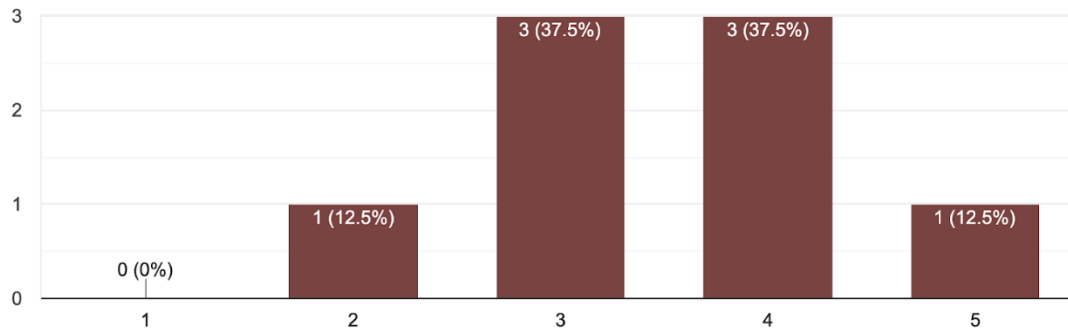8 responses

        This figure illustrates the perception that teachers had in terms of if they felt the district sought gifted identification referrals from multiple sources such as surveying teachers, asking parents, and giving assessments. The responses were varied between three categories.

           The second question focuses on how the identification process is a factor for the individuals who are subjected to being placed in the program. This also takes the teacher's perception if the process is identifying most, if not all, the students who should be labeled. One respondent, or 12.5% of the population, felt they disagreed with the statement and that the measures currently in place did not necessarily identify all or most of the students who should be in the program. 37.5% of the population, or 3 respondents, stated they neither agree nor disagreed with the statement. An additional 37.5% of respondents agreed with the statement and felt there were measures in place to identify those students who should be in the program. One respondent, the remaining 12.5% of the population, strongly agreed with the sentiment and felt the system in place was meeting the necessary criteria to identify the students who meet the qualifications for the program.

Figure 5. District measures for screening Gifted and Talented students for varying populations. This figure illustrates a Likert scale question ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree.

The measures put in place by my district for screening gifted and talented students identifies all or most the students who should be in the program.
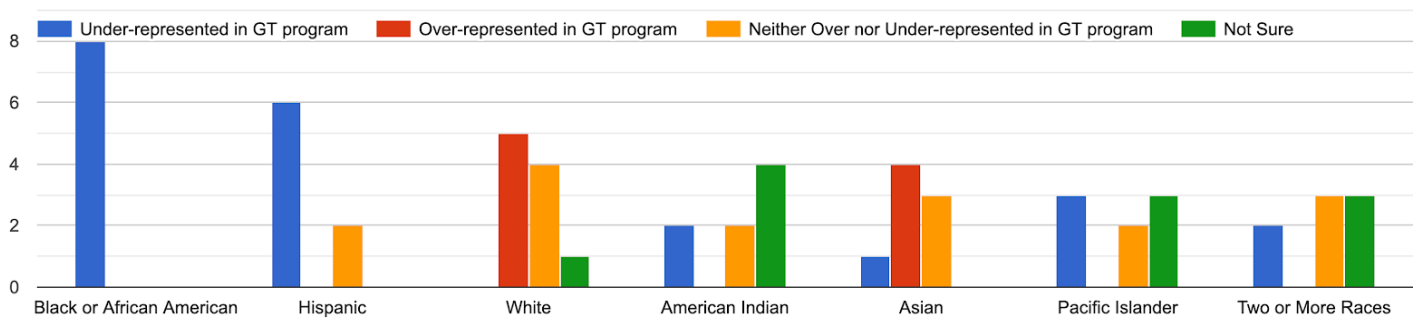8 responses

The third question spoke to the ethnicities and population breakdown of the participants' schools. Both schools surveyed have similar ethnic make-up in their general population. The participants were asked to look at the Gifted and Talented program to reflect if they felt the ethnicity was under-represented, over-represented, neither over nor under-represented, or that they were not sure what it looked like at their school. 6 participants stated the Hispanic population was also under-represented at their school in the Gifted and Talented population. Two participants felt that Hispanic was neither over nor under-represented at their schools. When it came to the White or Caucasian population, five participants felt that the ethnicity was overpopulated at their schools in the programs. Two participants stated that they felt the White population was neither over nor under-represented in the program at their schools. One participant was not sure at the breakdown of White individuals in the program. For the American Indian population, 50% of the respondents, felt that they could not answer where this ethnicity stood in terms of numbers in their Gifted and Talented program. Two participants indicated that American Indians were under-represented in their population while two other participants specified that the ethnicity was neither over nor under-represented at their school.

For the Asian population, four respondents felt that they were over-represented in the program. Three respondents expressed that the ethnicity was neither over nor under-represented at their school and identified Gifted and Talented students. One respondent indicated that the Asian population was under-represented in their school's make-up of Gifted and Talented students. When it came to the Pacific Islander demographic, three of the respondents were not sure where they lied in terms of population in the program. Three additional respondents stated that the ethnicity was under-represented at their school. Two more respondents indicated that the Pacific islanders on their campus were neither over nor under-represented in the population. The final ethnicity respondents looked at was students that made up two or more races. Three participants were not sure about how many individuals who identified as two or more races were

in the program. Three participants specified that individuals with two or more races were neither over nor under-represented at their schools. Finally, two respondents felt that this ethnicity was under-represented at their school in the program of Gifted and Talented students.

Figure 6. Demographics of student ethnicities in Gifted and Talented program (Over-represented, Under-represented, Neither over nor under-represented) This figure illustrates that all eight participants agreed that the Black or African American population was under-represented in the Gifted and Talented program.

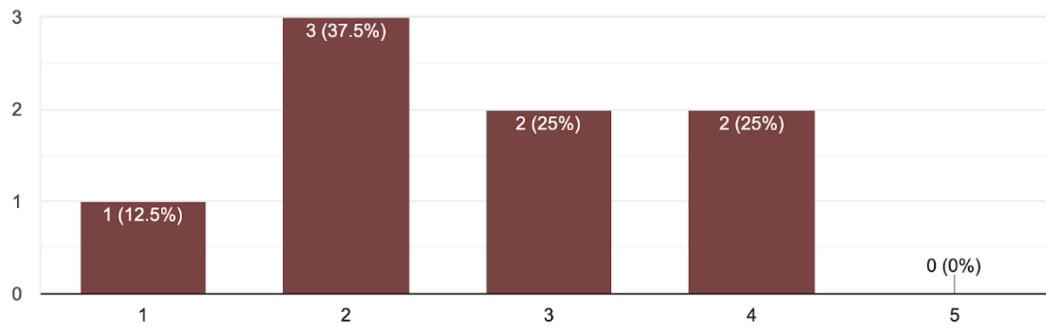Evaluate the representation of students of varying ethnicities in the Gifted and Talented program at your school.

The fourth larger question asked participants to look at their school's demographic make-up and compare it to the Gifted and Talented populations on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). This figure illustrates that 12. 5% of the population or one respondent, strongly disagreed that their school demographics were reflected in the Gifted and Talented program's population. The majority of the participants, at 37.5% of the population, disagreed to a lesser extent that the populations were congruent. 25% of the population expressed that they neither disagree nor agree that the Gifted and Talented population reflected the school demographic make-up. Two additional respondents agreed that there was some overlap in terms of the populations that made up the school demographic and the Gifted and Talented program's populations.

Figure 7. Teacher perception of school demographics being reflected in Gifted and Talented demographic make-up.

I feel that my school's demographic make-up is similar or reflected in the Gifted and Talented demographic make-up.
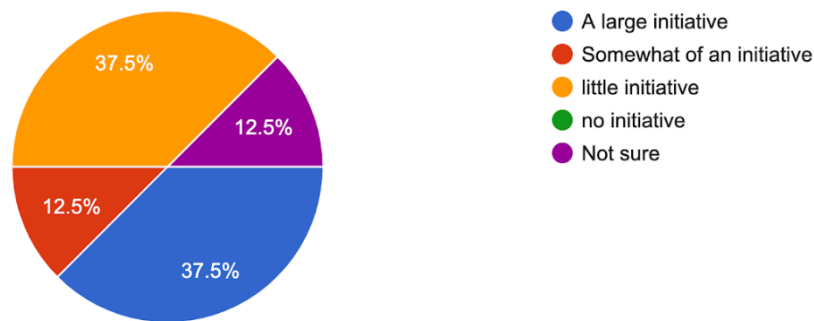8 responses

The second to last question asked participants to look once more at the district level and reflect if they believe that the district is developing opportunities to expand their Gifted and Talented population to include individuals that are presently a part of the under-represented sector.

37.5% of the population felt that there was a large initiative in working towards the gaps and developing the opportunities currently presented for those who are considered under-represented. An additional 37.5% of the population expressed that the district had little initiative to create prospects for the under-represented community. 12.5% of the population also felt that the district was somewhat creating initiative to develop opportunities for the expansion of identifying Gifted and Talented students in the traditionally under-represented groups. Another 12.5% of the population was not sure if the district had been or is currently developing opportunities to identify more students who are under-represented in the program at the moment.

Figure 8. Level of district initiative to develop opportunities for under-represented populations.

In the last decade, my district has made _____ to develop the opportunities for students who are presently in underrepresented populations in gifted education to be screened/identified as gifted.

8 responses

Perception of district initiatives in developing opportunities.

When it came to elaborate on what the educators knew was being done by the district, there were three varying personalized responses. The first response was that they were not aware of any programs that were being offered by the district nor could they expand on if the district was taking any initiative. Two participants fit into the category.

The second take was that the respondent could name a few district initiatives that they believed were opportunities to develop populations under-represented in the Gifted and Talented program. One participant named the programs by their title, which include "Horizons Showcase, Stepping Up in Math, Destination Imagination, and enrichment programs". These activities are spread across an academic year, some of which are only catered to the already identified Gifted and Talented population, like the Horizons Showcase and Destination Imagination. On the other hand, Stepping Up in Math and enrichment programs are not limited in terms of participation and could be used to identify students. Another respondent elaborated that "We have different criteria besides grades to find gifted and talented students. A list goes out each year with things to look for and then recommendations are made". The participant did not expand on what the list entailed but that it was available to educators and parents.

The final viewpoint, which belonged to the majority, was that the participants believed that not enough was currently being done to develop opportunities for the under-represented populations in the Gifted and Talented program or in the identification process. Two respondents agreed that they had "not witnessed anything being done to help identify the underserved population of the GT program". Two other respondents further expanded on this idea as to why they felt there was not a plan to *develop* any opportunities. One respondent thoroughly explained their rationale behind their opinion. They stated:

> I do not believe there is much being done to screen minorities in our district for the GT program...The current initiative that I know of to allow underrepresented students into the GT program is to allow them to take K- Level (GT) classes if they maintain a certain average in On-level classes. So for example, if a student can maintain an 85 or above in an on-level class in elementary they can be placed in a GT (K-Level) class when entering

junior high. Those kids are not identified and will not be offered the same access to
programs that the identified students are offered.

The other respondent took the same stance by explaining that there needed to be "more connection" when it came to developing opportunities for the under-represented population on the district level.

Summary of Findings

In regard to research question one (Do teachers perceive that gifted students of all populations are being served at XYZ District?), many of the educators surveyed who had taught Gifted and Talented students at some point in their career indicated that the identification process from the district either always or sometimes sought referrals from multiple sources. This could have been via teachers, parents, or cognitive ability assessments. The educators that had been teaching over eleven years answered more frequently than those who had been teaching under ten years, who answered not sure or sometimes in terms of their knowledge of the process. When it came to assess the measures put in place to identify students, educators either were neutral or agreed that they were identifying the students who should be in the program. Teachers with more experience were most likely to select the neutral option than those who had been teaching less than five years, where their most popular answer was either agree or strongly agree.

In reference to the data collected on research question two (What do teachers perceive is being done to ensure that all students are being identified and served who are gifted in XYZ District?), teachers did not have a clear majority when it came to their assessment of the district's initiative to develop opportunities for the underserved population. The answers selected ranged from a large initiative to little initiative with the divide being shown once again by the years of experience. Teachers between ten to fifteen years of experience answered a large initiative and could list programs by name that were used to grow the Gifted and Talented program's visibility in the community. The teachers that had over fifteen years of experience were more likely to answer little initiative or somewhat of an initiative and expressed their concerns for how the current opportunities to develop underrepresented populations' involvement in the program were not working nor were they visible to show any kind of positive impact.

One of the contextual factors that was addressed in the survey revolved around the relationship between school demographics and how they compared to their Gifted and Talented population. Every participant agreed that the Black/ African American and Hispanic populations were under-represented at their schools. In addition to that figure, they also agreed that White/Caucasian students were overrepresented in the Gifted and Talented program where they taught. In order to make connections between the school demographic make-up and Gifted and Talented demographic make-up, teachers were asked if they felt like they were similar to each other in terms of percentages. The majority of educators indicated they either disagreed or were neutral with the statement that there was a pattern to be found between the two make-ups.

Interpretation of the Data

The data collected showed that teachers felt satisfied with the process to identify students that it truly identifies most, if not all, the students who meet the qualifications for the program. Educators felt as if the process was doing its purpose and labeling students when they needed to do so. When it came to the identification process, educators who were more seasoned had a better idea of the process, which could be because of experience and more practice in having to identify students (McBee et al, 2018). Younger educators were less likely to indicate they knew the process of identification had or needed multiple sources to ensure the student was properly being labeled for the program.

The process was not where educators had the issue or even problem; it lied in the opportunities. In a system that has been set up to find individuals who exhibit qualities of a Horizons student, there's not anything being done to develop opportunities for students who are traditionally underrepresented in the program, specifically the Black/African American and Hispanic population, which were labeled by teachers as such (Stambaugh and Ford, 2018). The concept of equality is being applied to have every child take the same cognitive ability assessment; however, the opportunity for equitable experiences being used as an indicator to label gifted and talented individuals has not been utilized (Ford, 2015). To look further into the two concepts, it is imperative to locate the gap between the process of identification and the opportunities for students in underserved populations.

The results of the findings are supported by the Department of Education Office of Civil Rights (2015) with their record of Black students making up 15.4% of the total population while White students only contribute to 48.9%. In comparison, Black students comprise only 8.5% of the gifted population nationally compared to the White students' 58.8%. The results were also supported by study done by Liu and Waller (2017) where they found that Black/ African American and Hispanic communities were marginalized in the American education system.

Implications for Future Research

The schools that were surveyed for this study were a part of the researcher's district during a pandemic year. In a year where the expectations of teachers have reached further than the normal qualification, unrequired activities were low on the list.

Still, the results of this study added evidence the claims made by Baldwin (2005) who also explored the lack of representation of culturally diverse backgrounds and areas of concerns that she and other scholars explored as the reasons behind that along with alternatives that would be better suited for the identification process. One area of concerns lies in the association of IQ as a consideration to be labeled gifted. Baldwin suggests a model called the Baldwin Identification Matrix, which evaluates a student on six components: cognitive, psychosocial, creative products, psychomotor, motivation, and creative problem solving. This was an option; however, Baldwin stressed that this was mostly about shifting the focus and considering varying types of intelligence, but it may not "provide the proper quantitative proof of giftedness" (2005, p. 109). To support this matrix, teachers, counselors, and parents can have a hand in the process by providing their feedback and observations of the students being tested. Baldwin acknowledged that there is much to be done in this realm of supporting the underrepresented population and see this a topic that will provide further research and analysis to provide more context and helpful solutions.

Furthermore, Subotnik, Olszewski-Kubilius, and Worrell (2011) sought to investigate the variables that could be considered when defining what giftedness is in a more elusive matter in terms of certain contextual factors. Their inquiry relies on an outside theory that students who are labeled gifted will become successful academically, which they argue is not always the case. Subotnik et. al (2011) explains that "the belief does not serve gifted well in the long run, because the appearance of effortlessness masks the enormous commitment of time and dedication on the part of the gifted performer or producer" (p. 8). Their rationale comes from what they have used to define giftedness, which does not include an expert or prodigy framework. Moving forward, Subotnik et al (2011) affirm that two factors which help rework the characterization of giftedness should involve motivation and opportunity.

Future research should consider combining the findings of the teams mentioned above to create a new measuring tool. By combining the work of Baldwin (2005) and Subotnik

and others (2011), a new, unique matrix tool measuring cognitive, psychosocial, creative products, psychomotor, motivation, creative problem solving, motivation and opportunity can help broaden the factors considered when identifying giftedness which could also broaden the scope of inclusivity in those programs.

Recommendations

The data from the study specifies that educators believe that the identification process works for students who currently meet the qualifications to be seen by teachers, parents, and administrators. Moving forward, asking more open ended response questions to gauge where teachers are at in their own knowledge of the Gifted and Talented program and the opportunities they currently offer would be helpful. Future researchers need to examine the primary grades, as this is when most students are identified and labels for the Gifted and Talented program. Researchers could look to see if there is a relationship that is formed between data in the primary grades and data at the secondary level. From the district and campus level, there should be more professional development training that can help educators in the process if they need more information.

Concluding Remarks

This chapter presented the summary of major findings from the survey, the interpretation of the data collected, implications based on the research, and recommendations for future studies related to Gifted and Talented identification for traditionally underrepresented populations as well as the programs that have been implemented to develop opportunities to provide equity for potential or already labeled students.

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