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A Case Study of Four Districts' Procedures for Identifying and Serving Culturally, Linguistically, and Economically Diverse Gifted and Talented Students in One State

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A Case Study of Four Districts' Procedures for Identifying and Serving Culturally, Linguistically, and Economically Diverse Gifted and Talented Students in One State

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By

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Chapter I: Introduction

With the ongoing events pertaining to race relations in America, teachers and students are becoming increasingly aware of race and ethnicity within classrooms and how they intersect and impact students' learning experiences. Educators must be prepared for the plethora of differences their students bring into the classroom to provide the most equitable experience possible. Due to the ongoing racial bias that pervades so many in American society today, students of color can experience negative or harmful words and actions by their teachers and peers that create distrust and apathy within the school system (Sewell & Goings, 2020). When taking a further look into special services offered in schools such as gifted and talented programming, oftentimes we see large underrepresentation of students from culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse (CLED) backgrounds (Lakin, 2016). Furthermore, we can also see underrepresentation of students with disabilities, or twice-exceptional (2e) students, and underachieving students in gifted programming. This miscarriage of justice within the school system and gifted programs across the nation is leading our CLED students to adopt the Attitude-Achievement Paradox, the idea that no matter how hard certain students work, they will not be successful due to the racial discrimination and prejudices in society, and therefore remove any effort from their learning process (Sewell & Goings, 2020). CLED students are less likely to be chosen to be tested for giftedness, and therefore, are not getting their needs met. The methods of testing for giftedness disproportionately affect many racial or ethnic minorities, low-income, English Language Learners (ELLs), and female students (Lakin, 2016). To better serve all students in gifted programs equitably, changes need to be made in the identification process for gifted students.

Definition of Terms

To facilitate the understanding of this study, the following terms are defined:

1. Giftedness is defined by the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) (2019a) as "students with gifts and talents perform - or have the capability to perform - at higher levels compared to others of the same age, experience, or environment in one or more domains. They require modification(s) to their educational experience(s) to learn and realize their potential" (National Association for Gifted Children, 2019a). Another definition from Joseph Renzulli describes giftedness in the Three Ring Conception of Giftedness (1997). The three rings include creativity, task commitment, and above-average behavior. If all three rings work together, gifted behavior can be witnessed.

2. Students of Color include the "group of students also referred to by some as "minority" students. Includes Asian American/Pacific Islanders, African American, Hispanic/Latinx, and Native American/American Indian" according to Delano-Oriaran (2016).

3. The term "twice-exceptional," also referred to as "2e," is used to describe gifted children who have the characteristics of gifted students with the potential for high achievement and give evidence of one or more disabilities as defined by federal or state eligibility criteria. These disabilities may include specific learning disabilities (SpLD), speech and language disorders, emotional/behavioral disorders, physical disabilities, autism spectrum, or other impairments such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) (NAGC, n.d.a)

4. Federally, English Language Learners (ELLs) are described as a student who meets the following criteria:

   a. Enrolled or preparing to enroll in an elementary or secondary school and

   b. Either not born in the United States, a Native American or Alaska Native, a native resident of another outlying area and comes from an environment where another language other than English has a significant impact on the individual's level of English proficiency or a migrant whose native language is not English

   c. Has difficulty speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language (Education Commission of the States, 2014).

Statement of the Problem

The foundation of this problem is articulated by Sewell and Goings (2020), who explain that African American students are often described and judged by their deficits, rather than their talents. The authors explain the glaring discrepancy between the number of African American students enrolled in schools and the number of students enrolled in gifted and talented (GT) programs. Unfortunately, this problem can be found across many populations of students from many different backgrounds. Culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse students are historically underrepresented within gifted and talented programs across the United States (Lakin, 2016). This problem largely lies within the way that giftedness is tested for in school districts across the United States (Lakin, 2016). Overall, this is a difficult task as it can take many years of observation, tests, and records for a teacher to recognize a student's gifts and talents. Because of this, gifted students are often identified by IQ tests or high test scores due to this testing being resource-conscious and inexpensive. Despite research arguing against using

test scores, "...more than 90% of school districts use test scores, including IQ scores, in the decision to place students in gifted and talented programs (Harris et al., 2007, pp. 27-28). This disproportionately affects students of color, particularly African American and Latinx students, and is considered insufficient for ethnic and linguistic minorities (Harris et al., 2007). IQ tests and other test scores directly ignore major identifiers for gifted students such as task commitment, creativity, and above-average learning ability, leaving out large populations of students who would qualify for GT programs if IQ tests were not the main determining factor of giftedness (Harris et al., 2007).

However, even if other methods of identification such as teacher or parent referrals, classroom observations, and others are used as non-traditional ways to identify gifted students, they still largely exclude minority and economically disadvantaged students due to teacher bias and parental resources. Methods like universal screening that require all students to be tested for the gifted and talented program are often costly and take up a significant amount of resources and teacher time. And, in many cases, GT programs are often seen as a luxury to many school districts when budgets are reduced (Lakin, 2016). Still, low socioeconomic students do not have the advantage of seeking outside resources to develop their gifts and talents that wealthier students have (Lakin, 2016). Therefore, the root of the problem is in the inherent bias and societal prejudice that disadvantages students of color and low socioeconomic status students, and the many districts and teachers that continue to keep those students disadvantaged.

However, there still needs to be attention placed on the actual programming once a CLED student gets identified and placed in gifted programming. Ford et al. (2005) articulate the importance of incorporating multicultural education into gifted classrooms because the

programming may not reach those from culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse backgrounds. In fact, it may even hinder the ability of students of color to adequately learn and engage in the classroom. Regardless of the subject, incorporating a variety of experiences that may reflect the backgrounds of students in the classroom can help a diverse group of students find a place of belonging and affirmation within the classroom.

Lasting Effects of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to illuminate the ways that students of color and low socioeconomic status students are disadvantaged by the school system by being systemically overlooked for identification in gifted programs.

A positive school experience is paramount for young students to develop and realize their full potential. Without it, students can begin to feel withdrawn and lose the efficacy of hard work within school and continue that trend when out of school (Sewell & Goings, 2020). With students of color, teacher and student relationships can become sources of toxicity and unwelcomeness, and school can start to become a place where these students are not affirmed in their identities. Also, leaving these students out will neglect their various learning needs and isolate them from the curriculum even further.

These culminating reasons are contributing to the "gifted gap" which describes how African American and Latinx students are largely underrepresented in gifted programs compared to White and Asian students (Yaluma & Tyner, 2018, p. 7). Preventing students from gaining the tools necessary to further their academic journey can lead to poor results in high school and beyond. Going further, inequality among peers can create animosity towards the world in minority children and foster a fixed mindset that can be paralyzing. Educators should see it as

their duty to serve and foster a safe, affirming environment for all students. In fact, believing all

students are capable of achieving their highest potential with the right tools and resources is a

pillar to which every person and teacher should subscribe. Teachers need to educate themselves

and identify various biases to create meaningful learning environments for their CLED students.

Chapter II: Review of Literature

Educators are constantly learning more about how to provide equitable education within the classroom. However, there is still much information available on the best ways to cater to a student's individual needs. This chapter will discuss some of the key points on best practices in Gifted and Talented identification and programming.

The Need for Gifted Programming

As stated previously, when budgets get cut, GT programs are likely to be seen as a luxury and not as an integral part of many students' education (Lakin, 2016). However, gifted and talented programs have been shown to aid and accelerate these students. According to the National Association for Gifted Children (2019b), 7 in 10 teachers reported their gifted students were not challenged and given a chance to thrive in general education classrooms. In fact, gifted programs have shown a positive effect on gifted students' post-secondary lives with more than 50 times the base rate expectations (National Association for Gifted Children, 2019b). Additionally, these programs create a better relationship with school for these students as well as make them feel valued by the school system. Where culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse students are concerned, if gifted programming is not provided, they may be especially neglected and not pushed to reach their fullest potential without intervention. This disconnection may lead to underachievement and, in more severe cases, dropping out (Reis, 2008).

Best Practices for Identification

IQ tests and higher test scores can routinely leave out minority and low socioeconomic status students, so what is the best method for identifying giftedness in students? According to Lakin (2016), "...talents might not be recognized equally among all students and may overlook

gifted and talented students who do not fit traditional archetypes of giftedness", so using teacher and parent referrals as the first step in the identification process can sometimes be problematic (p. 140). However, research suggests universal screening has been offered as one solution to the identification problem. The advantage of universal screening, the method of testing all students as the first step in identification, is "...all students have an equal (or closer to equal) chance of being identified and offered special service tailored to their instructional needs" (Lakin, 2016, p. 140). This method can also be useful in identifying gifted students who might have behavioral problems and are "[hindered] from identification" (Lakin, 2016, p. 141). However, much of the literature regarding identifying gifted students, especially students from minority populations, recommend an approach with multiple steps and tests as it can provide a more complete picture of the student (Forsbach & Pierce, 1999). Pairing the multi-step identification method with universal screening can also benefit students "who would have scored significantly above the [ideal scoring and] often overlooked under the old referral system" of parent and teacher referrals (Lakin, 2016, p. 143).

Much of the literature suggests multi-step identification methods paired with universal screening as the most effective way to make the process of identifying gifted students more equitable for minority and low-income students. If this is the case, then why does every school district not do this? Simply put, testing is "expensive and time-consuming" (McBee et al., 2016, p. 258). However, research suggests that "saving money and time is a false economy if large numbers of students who need services are missed because a low-quality screener placed them in the group that did not need the full diagnostic testing" (McBee et al., 2016, p. 260). Educators must create a reality where every student receives the education that is most beneficial to them,

not just the one that is the most time-efficient or low-cost. Better screening methods also would identify those who do not fit the archetypal characteristics of giftedness that many subscribe to, thus generating a surge in those who are enriched by their education.

Additionally, eliminating hard cut-off scores have been shown to increase the representation of CLED students within gifted programs. High scores on gifted assessments should be used to include, not exclude, students, especially when these students come with other qualifying data such as self, parent, or teacher referrals. CLED students' performance on affective tests should be considered when making decisions regardless of what they scored on tests with hard cut-off scores.

Classroom Teachers' Role in Identification

Teachers and parents traditionally play a huge role in how students are identified for gifted programs. According to Lakin (2016), "86.5% of districts use teacher nominations, and 80.5% use parent nominations as some part of their identification system" (p. 140). To help with the representation gap within gifted programs, the National Association for Gifted Children (2019c) recommends teachers learn the characteristics and behaviors of the underrepresented populations, develop a positive peer culture within the classroom and school, fight for equitable and unbiased assessments, and show awareness and empathy towards culturally and linguistically diverse students. McBee et al. (2016) suggest identification processes that require a teacher referral before testing leads to large populations of gifted students being missed. Relying on teachers to nominate students for gifted programming assumes the teacher is well educated in giftedness and can make informed decisions accordingly. However, teachers may refer these students based on positive or likable qualities they associate with giftedness rather than

identifying a truly gifted student (McBee et al. 2016). Since these referral forms are subjective

and depend heavily on the teacher's knowledge and attitudes towards the student, this could

potentially be a problem for minority students and those who come from low-income families

(Lakin, 2016). When looking specifically at schools with larger populations of CLED students,

differences in background and cultural experiences from their teachers may lead to these students

not being identified (Ecker-Lyster & Niileksela, 2017). General education teachers are

responsible for gifted students for the majority of the day in most districts, so using these steps to

increase the inclusivity and affirmation of minority, gifted students in the general education

classroom can ensure these students are being taught using culturally responsive methods even

after the identification process.

Assessments for Giftedness

As the research suggests, a large part of the underrepresentation of African American,

Latinx, and students from low socioeconomic status backgrounds is due to the assessments and

measures used in the identification process. Since this issue has been extensively studied,

researchers like Jack Naglieri have created assessments that aim to equitably identify students

from minority and diverse language backgrounds compared to affluent, White, and Asian

students. These researchers claim assessments using quantitative or verbal ability simply seek to

assess academic ability rather than overall ability, which can lead to inequitable achievement.

Additionally, the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test (NNAT) researchers assert that using a

nonverbal measure of ability can combat underrepresentation within gifted programs (Naglieri &

Ford, 2015). Another common test in gifted identification is the Cognitive Abilities Test

(CogAT) that measures reasoning skills with different types of nonverbal, quantitative, and

verbal questions. Since the CogAT has been criticized for its ability to identify CLED students, a

nonverbal component was added to address this. However, a study done by Giessman, Gambrell,

& Stebbins (2013) suggests that there was no meaningful difference between the NNAT and the

CogAT nonverbal battery. The NNAT proved to be as effective as the CogAT at identifying

students from underrepresented groups, and the CogAT was more effective at moderating the

mean score disadvantage for African American, Latinx, multiracial, and non-Asian ELL students

(Giessman et al., 2013). Giessman et al. (2013) shed doubt on any assessment claiming a

nonverbal test is better at identifying underrepresented student groups. Because of this, Giessman

et al. (2013) suggest using nonverbal ability tests as a piece of the identification process, not as

the only assessment if the goal is to reach students from CLED backgrounds.

Cognitive ability tests commonly used across the United States for gifted and talented

identification are the Second Edition Kaufman Brief Intelligence Test (K-BIT2), the Screening

Assessment for Gifted Elementary and Middle School Students (SAGES), the Stanford Binet

Intelligence Tests, the Otis Lennon School Ability Test (OLSAT), and the Wechsler Intelligence

Scale for Children (WISC) (Colorado Department of Education, 2020). The K-BIT2 is used to

assess the intellectual ability of potentially gifted students and allows for cultural fairness

through the use of norming procedures and allowing responses in languages other than English

(Pearson, 2021). The SAGES tests are used to determine a child's current knowledge and ability

relative to their grade-level peers. These can include academic subject-specific tests as well as

standardized tests (NAGC n.d.b). The Stanford Binet test is a cognitive ability test that assesses

fluid reasoning, knowledge, quantitative reasoning, visual-spatial processing, and working

memory to produce an IQ score (Stanford Binet, 2021). The OLSAT is used to test a variety of

skills and claims to minimize gender, ethnic, and cultural bias through specialized statistical

procedures and a comprehensive review of testing materials by minority-group educators

(Pearson, 2019). The National Association for Gifted Children (2008) explain the WISC test is

an intellectual ability test administered individually. This test proves useful for testing students

with learning disabilities; however, guidelines for test interpretation may be necessary (NAGC,

2008).

Achievement tests often used across the United States in gifted and talented identification

include ACT Aspire and the Northwest Evaluation Association Measures of Academic Progress

(NWEA-MAP) (Colorado Department of Education, 2020). The ACT Aspire is a summative

assessment that measures math, English, reading, writing, and science ability and is linked to the

ACT for high school students. The NWEA-Measures of Academic Progress is a computer

assessment that tests reading, language usage, and math ability. Students having Individual

Education Plans (IEP) or 504 plans can use these accommodations on these tests if the district so

chooses (Colorado Department of Education, 2020).

Common norm-referenced observation scales used by districts across the United States in

their identification processes include the Scales for Identifying Gifted Students (SIGS), Renzulli

Hartman Scales for Rating the Behavior Characteristics of Superior Students, and the

Slocumb‑Payne Teacher Perception Inventory. The SIGS test involves home and at school rating

scales for teachers to measure general intellectual ability, math, language arts, science, social

studies, creativity, and leadership. The Renzulli Hartman Scales include 14 scales for identifying

student strengths in academic and social areas. The Slocumb-Payne Inventory allows teachers to

rate perceptions of students, positive or negative and is designed to be used with students from

low-socioeconomic backgrounds. Additionally, common norm-referenced assessments for talent aptitudes include the Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking (TTCT) which measures overall creative ability. Students use their life experiences to answer figural and verbal test questions (Colorado Department of Education, 2020).

Best Practices in Programming

A large portion of the literature has been dedicated to understanding how identification processes impact recruitment. Although being identified for gifted services is one hurdle to overcome for students from CLED backgrounds, programming for these students should be emphasized to maintain retention of these students. Research shows that minority students are more likely to drop out of gifted and talented programs than White students (Ecker-Lyster & Niileksela, 2017). Because of this issue, districts should focus their attention on providing their students with appropriate programming and services to maintain a diverse group of students. In many ways, researchers understand the relationship between identification processes and programming and how they work together to provide more equitable services (Ezzani et al., 2021). Researchers maintain that training or professional development in gifted education can benefit students within the classroom (Ecker-Lyster & Niileksela, 2017; Ezzani et al., 2021; McBee et al., 2016). Generally, classroom teachers are not well-versed in the unique nature and needs of the gifted and may become frustrated with finding opportunities to challenge their more advanced learners.

Additionally, gifted programming that is multicultural and culturally responsive can potentially increase the retention of minority gifted and talented students (Ecker-Lyster & Niileksela, 2017). Multicultural education is defined by James Banks (1993) as "an educational

reform movement designed to change the total educational environment so that students from diverse racial and ethnic groups, [all] genders, exceptional students, and students from each social-class group will experience equal educational opportunities in schools, colleges, and universities" (Ecker-Lyster & Niileksela, 2017, p. 84). However, to implement culturally responsive and multicultural education into the classroom, teachers need an in-depth, comprehensive understanding of what this means and what it looks like. This training for teachers can often be costly and time-consuming. Furthermore, teachers need a complex understanding of the unique issues and events relevant to their student population. Of course, understanding the barriers to identifying and advocating for students facing these issues is important. Today, these are the best practices with the knowledge available for CLED students but not a widely accepted and empirically validated best practice (Ecker-Lyster & Niileksela, 2017).

Practices like mentoring and focusing on nonacademic skills such as motivation and grit have also been shown to be beneficial within gifted programming. Mentoring provides students an adult they can look up to. Supportive adults and positive family relationships help children develop belief within themselves, facilitating self-motivation, resilience, and more positive interactions with other students. These programs can also help underachieving students with the tools necessary to reverse patterns of underachievement (Ecker-Lyster & Niileksela, 2017). Urging implementation of these programs related to multicultural factors helps create positive attitudes towards advanced level services such as gifted programming, pre-AP, or AP classes. Students need to believe in their ability to succeed in advanced courses to gain the confidence to join them. Instilling students with the confidence to reach their fullest potential as well as

affirming their racial or ethnic identities may increase retention (Ecker-Lyster & Niileksela, 2017). That being said, continued research may be needed to further understand the relationship between programming and equitability.

Chapter Summary

      In this chapter, the literature regarding CLED students in gifted and talented programming was discussed. Research shows there are practices in identification that are more effective for identifying students from CLED backgrounds and addressing identification methods that tend to exclude these students. Additionally, programming for these students is a narrowly researched topic but an important one for districts to consider. Overall, students from CLED backgrounds are being missed and not retained because of the identification and programming districts offer.

Chapter III: Methodology

The study consisted of interviews with Gifted and Talented Coordinators from four school districts in one state. These four schools were specifically chosen due to their high free or reduced lunch populations and higher populations of culturally and linguistically diverse students. All of these school districts are located in one state but different parts and serve students ages K-12th grade. The demographic information below comes from the most recent State Department of Education report card from the 2020-2021 school year. This chapter discusses the demographic data of each school district, how data were collected, and confidentiality methods.

Setting of School District A (SDA)

School District A (SDA) serves a total of 21,882 students (Arkansas Department of Education, 2021). The entire ethnic breakdown for School District A is as follows: 32% White, 49% Latinx, 2% African American, 1% Asian, less than 1% Native American/Native Alaskan, 14% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and 2% Two or More Races. Of these students, 72% of students were on free or reduced lunch, 35% were ELLs, and 9% of students were enrolled in gifted and talented programs (see Figure 1).

For School District A's gifted and talented program, the entire ethnic breakdown is as follows: 55% White, 34% Latinx, 1% African American, 3% Asian, less than 1% Native American/Native Alaskan, 3% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and 3% Two or More Races. Of the students in the gifted and talented program, 46% were on free or reduced lunch. Data was not available for gifted and talented ELLs (see Figure 2).

Figure 1:

Racial Demographics for School District A

Figure 2:

Racial Demographics for School District A's Gifted and Talented Program
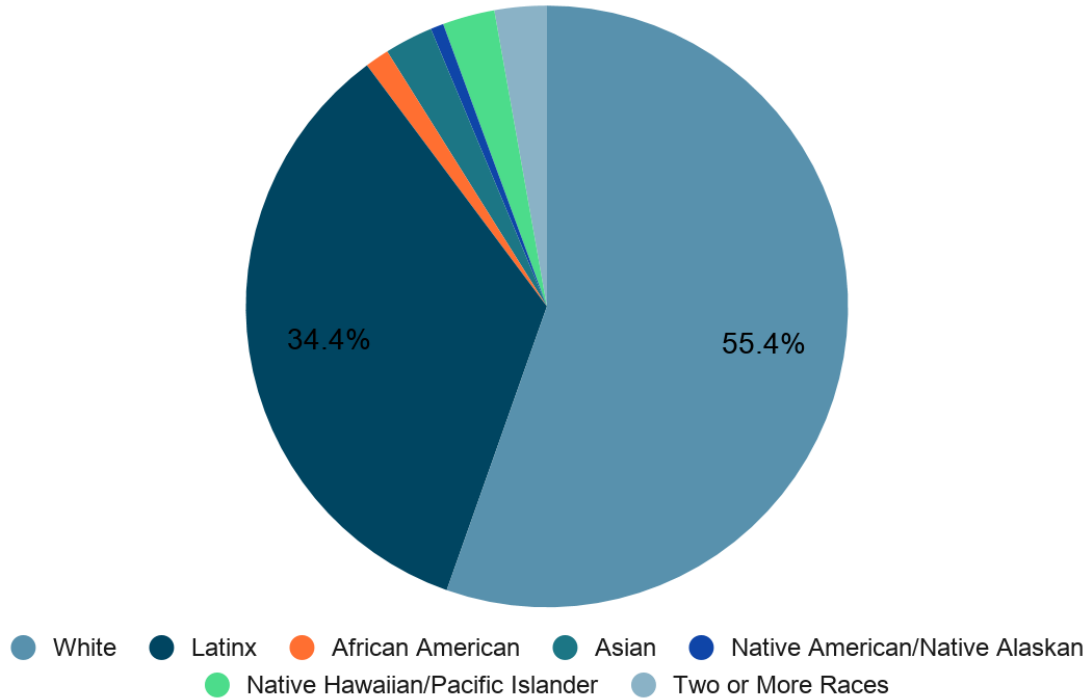
Setting of School District B (SDB)

School District B (SDB) serves a total of 2,799 students (Arkansas Department of

Education, 2021). The entire ethnic breakdown for School District B is as follows: 1% White,

1% Latinx, 96% African American, less than 1% Asian, less than 1% Native American/Native

Alaskan, less than 1% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and less than 1% Two or More Races.

All students were on free or reduced lunch, 1% were ELLs, and 13% of students were enrolled in

gifted and talented programs (see Figure 3).

For School District B's gifted and talented program, the entire ethnic breakdown is as follows: 1% White, 1% Latinx, 96% African American, 1% Asian, less than 1% Native American/Native Alaskan, 0% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and 1% Two or More Races. Of the students in the gifted and talented program, all students were on free or reduced lunch. Data was not available for gifted and talented ELLs (see Figure 4).

Figure 3:

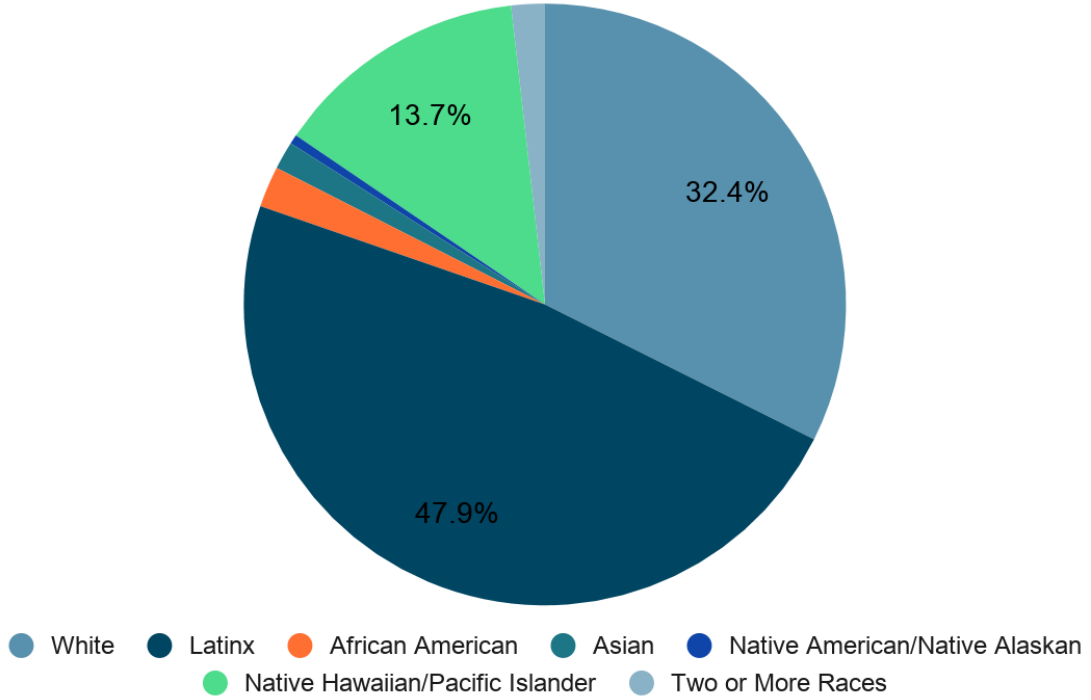Racial Demographics for School District B

Figure 4:

Racial Demographics for School District B's Gifted and Talented Program
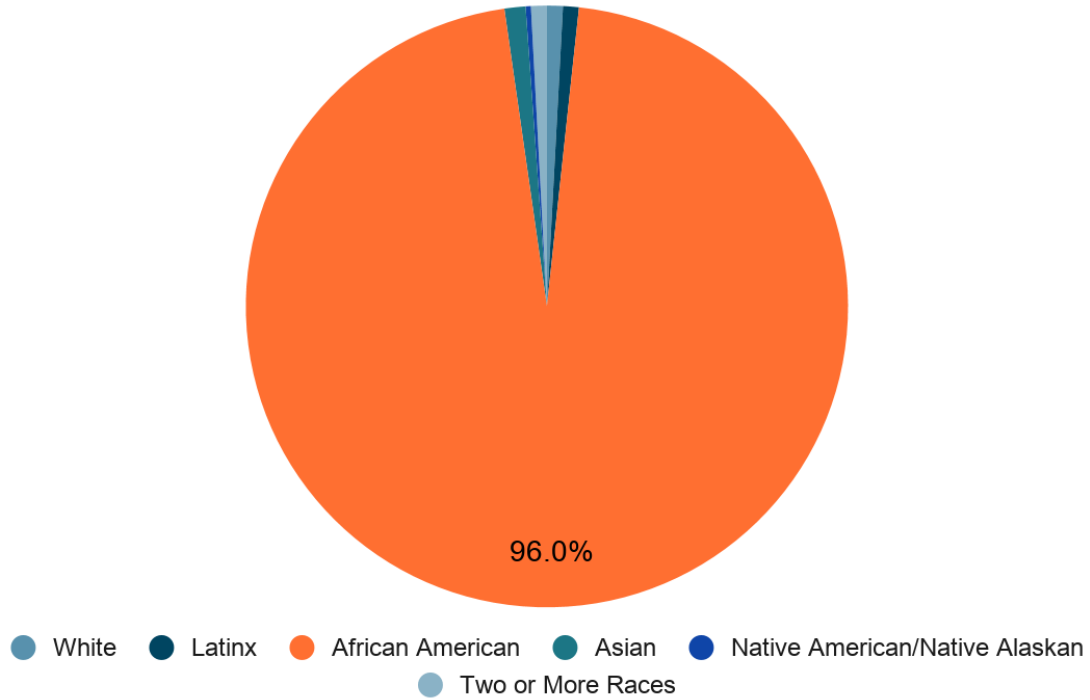
Setting of School District C (SDC)

School District C (SDC) serves a total of 13,839 students (Arkansas Department of

Education, 2021). The entire ethnic breakdown for School District C is as follows: 39% White,

34% Latinx, 11% African American, 5% Asian, 1% Native American/Native Alaskan, less than

1% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and 9% Two or More Races. Of these students, 73% of

students were on free or reduced lunch, 22% were ELLs, and 5% of students were enrolled in

gifted and talented programs (see Figure 5).

For School District C's gifted and talented program, the entire ethnic breakdown is as

follows: 54% White, 21% Latinx, 4% African American, 12% Asian, less than 1% Native

American/Native Alaskan, 0% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and 9% Two or More Races. Of

the students in the gifted and talented program, 44% were on free or reduced lunch. Data was not

available for gifted and talented ELLs (see Figure 6).

Figure 5:

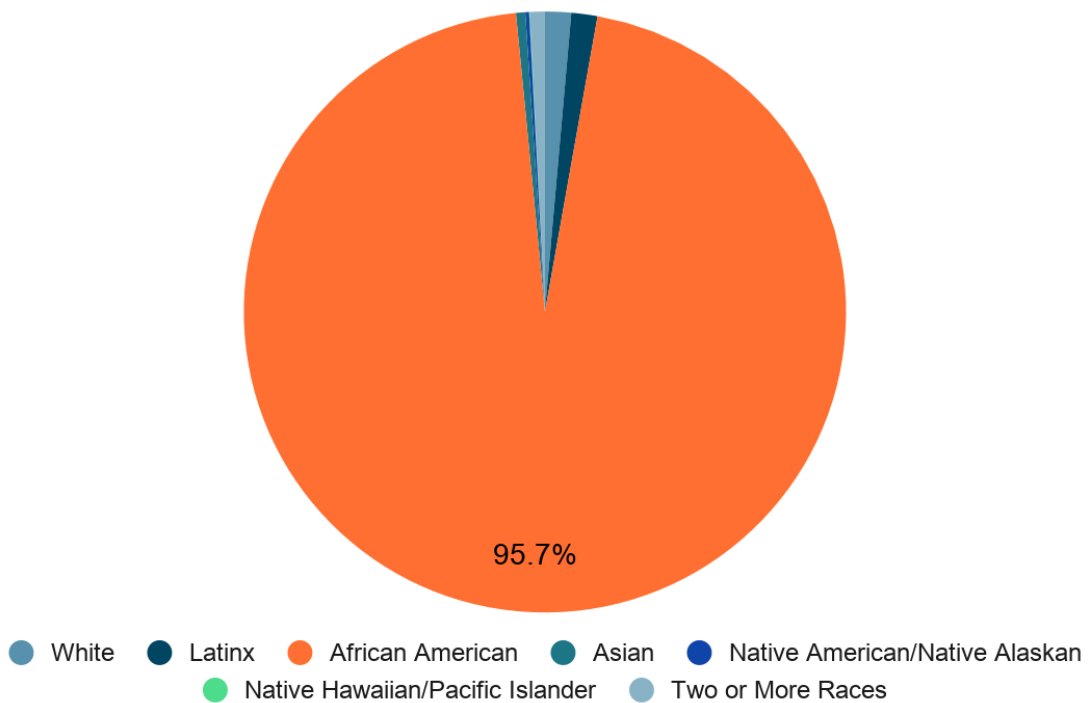Racial Demographics for School District C

Figure 6:

Racial Demographics for School District C's Gifted and Talented Program
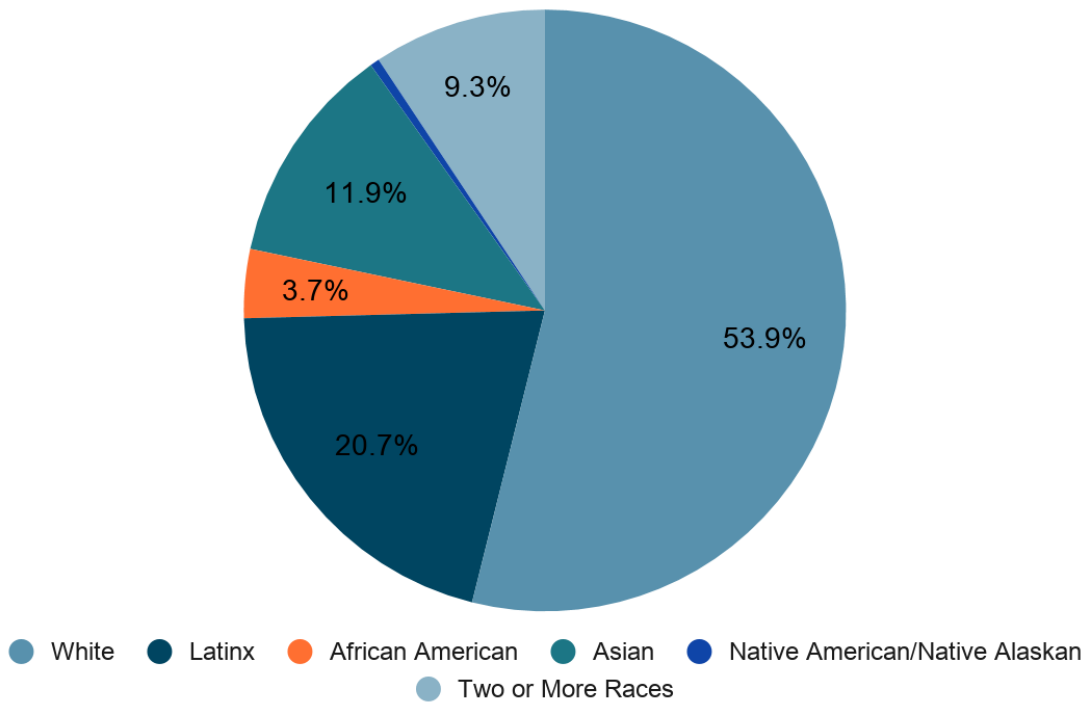
Setting of School District D (SDD)

School District D (SDD) serves a total of 20,745 students (Arkansas Department of Education, 2021). The entire ethnic breakdown for School District D is as follows: 19% White, 16% Latinx, 61% African American, 3% Asian, less than 1% Native American/Native Alaskan, less than 1% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and 1% Two or More Races. Of these students, 78% of students were on free or reduced lunch, 13% were ELLs, and 18% of students were enrolled in gifted and talented programs (see Figure 7).

For School District D's gifted and talented program, the entire ethnic breakdown is as follows: 31% White, 12% Latinx, 51% African American, 5% Asian, less than 1% Native

American/Native Alaskan, less than 1% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and 2% Two or More

Races. Of the students in the gifted and talented program, 61% were on free or reduced lunch.

Data was not available for gifted and talented ELLs (see Figure 8).

Figure 7:

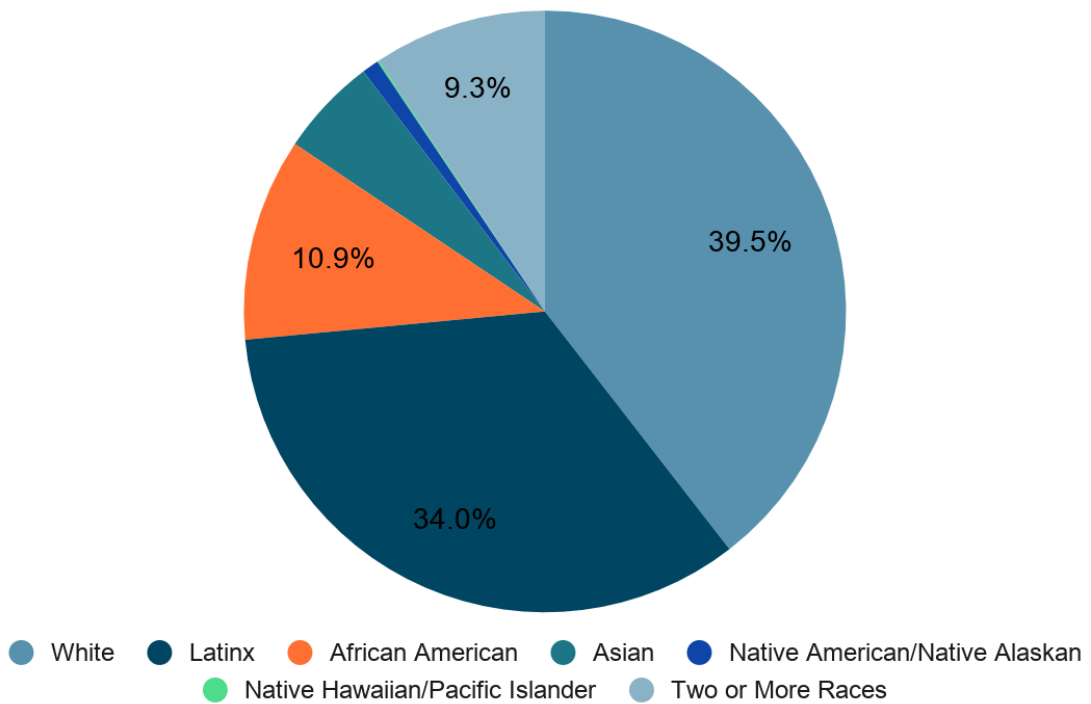Racial Demographics for School District D
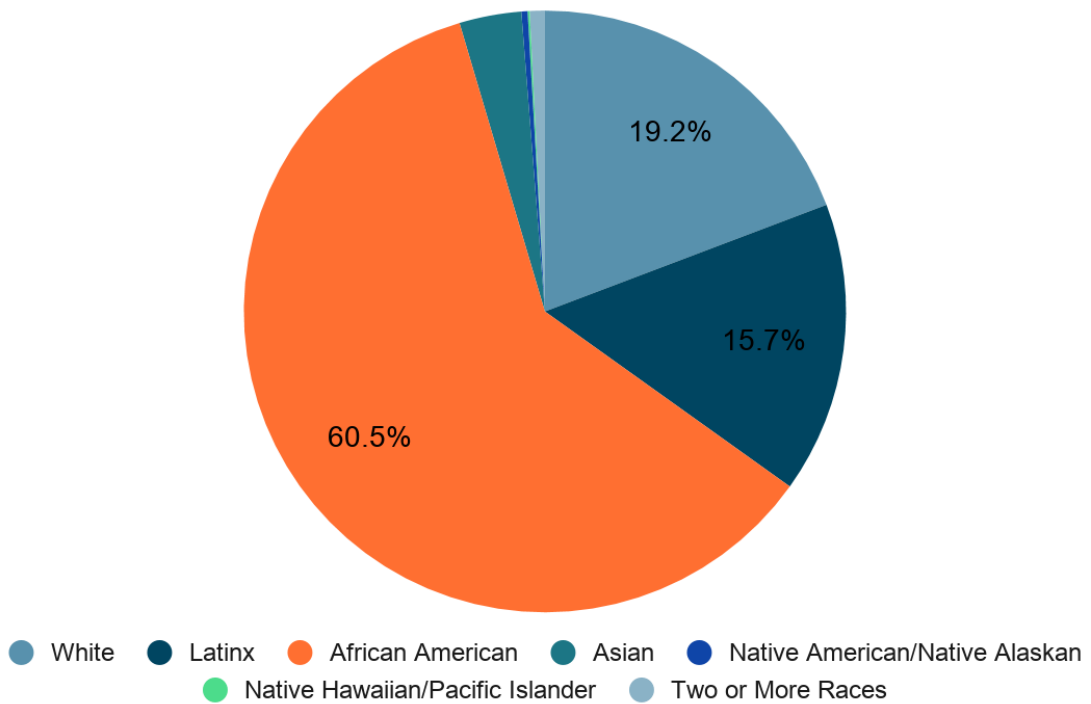
Figure 8:

Racial Demographics for School District D's Gifted and Talented Program
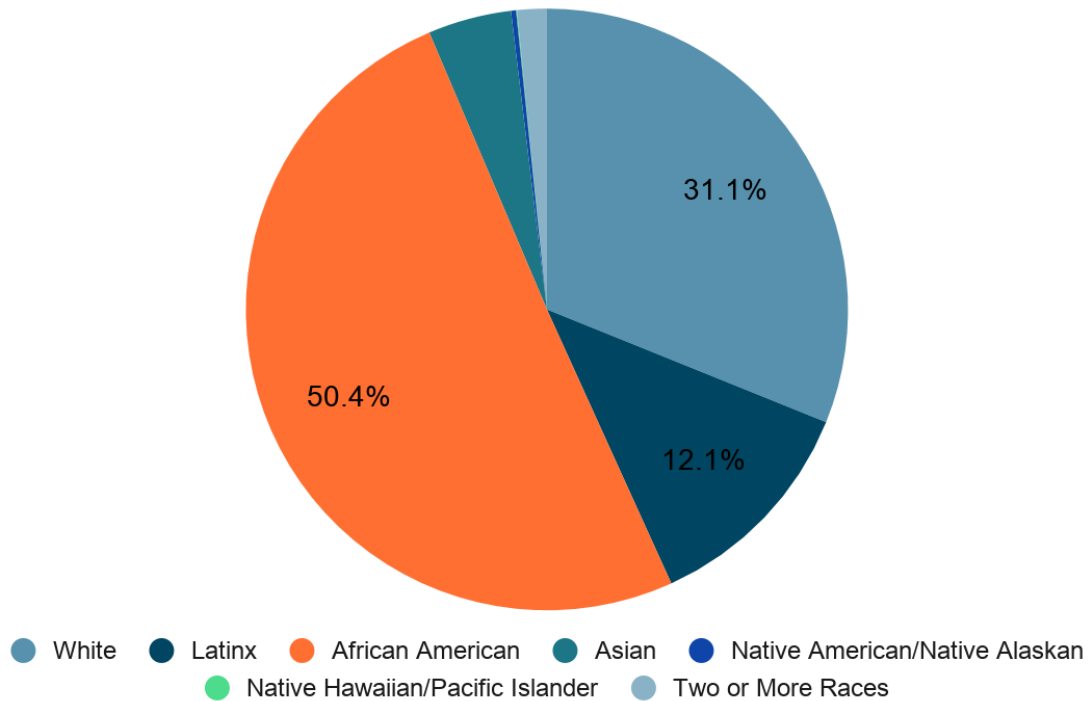
Comparing CLED Students and Gifted Students

The gifted population of each school district respectively is 9%, 13%, 5%, and 18%

respectively. The free or reduced lunch populations for each district are as follows 72%, 100%,

73%, and 78% respectively. Compared to the state populations of gifted and free or reduced

lunch populations of 8% and 66% respectively, every district in this study is above average in

free or reduced lunch populations and SDA, SDB, and SDD are above average in gifted

identification. Ideally, the data would reflect that culturally, linguistically, and economically

diverse students would have the same chance of being identified as everyone else. The

demographic makeup of a district's gifted program should statistically be the same or similar to

that of the total demographic makeup of the whole district population. However, the data

suggests there are still inequalities in the representation of CLED students in gifted programs.

The data reflect inequities in the identification rate of gifted students of color and their White

counterparts.

The data from School District A shows 32% of their population identified as White, but

their gifted programs reflect that 55% of their gifted population identified as White. Additionally,

Latinx students made up 48% of the total student population but only 34% of the gifted

population. African American, Native American/Native Alaskan, and Native Hawaiian students

seem less likely to be identified for gifted and talented services in SDA.

Data from School District B shows the total school population is majority African

American students at 96%. The data from the gifted student population reflects these numbers

and 96% of the students in the program identified as African American. Also, the data suggest

that the Asian population in the gifted programs more than doubles the total district Asian

population. The data suggests that there are no other glaring discrepancies between the total

population and the gifted population are present.

In School District C, the population of White students in the district is almost 40%, but

the population of White students in the district's gifted programs is 54%, 14 percentage points

above their population. The Asian gifted population is also more than double the total district

population. Finally, the Latinx, African American, Native American/Native Alaskan, and Native

Hawaiian populations were all underrepresented in SDC's gifted program.

School District D has an overrepresentation of both their White and Asian populations with their representation in the entire district being 19% and 3% respectively, but making up 31 and 4% of the district's gifted and talented program respectively. This means that the Latinx, African American, Native American/Native Alaskan, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander populations all seem to be underrepresented in School District D.

Data Collection

Data were collected through online Zoom interviews with the four district's Gifted and Talented Coordinators. Each interview consisted of the same ten questions concerning the identification of CLED students, their gifted programming, and ways the four districts accommodate increased diverse populations of gifted students (see Appendix A). Each of the interview participants was informed of the questions at least a month in advance and verbally given each individual question during the interview process as well as the occasional clarification question when needed. Since these interviews took place over Zoom, I recorded and transcribed the meetings at a later time. Each meeting took roughly an hour.

Confidentiality

Permission to conduct these interviews was granted by the University of Arkansas' Institutional Review Board (IRB) (see Appendix B). Due to the pandemic, the research participants electronically signed Informed Consent forms that outlined the research overview, potential risks, and benefits of the study to consent to the study. Each participant signed and understood that "Confidentiality will be assured and maintained by the researcher through the establishment of a pseudonym. Each district will be assigned a name at random to establish the code. All data will be recorded and reported anonymously using the code. Only the researcher

will have access to the code and all data will be kept in a secure location in the researcher's office. Once the study is successfully defended, the code will be destroyed.

Chapter Summary

These districts were specifically chosen because they all have high populations of culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse students. These interviews were conducted to discover how districts with higher populations of CLED students specifically identify and program for a diverse population of students and if certain measures were being taken to rectify any discrepancies is applicable. This chapter outlined the types of school districts I worked with as well as the demographic data for each school district. In the next chapter, I will discuss the results and implications of the collected data and discover what districts are doing to help identify and serve increasingly diverse populations of students.

Chapter IV: Results

Each district had its own process for identifying and serving its gifted and talented

students. The process of identification and programming varied between the districts despite

being in the same state. However, each district had a multi-step method for identifying gifted and

talented students and started identification in lower elementary.

Case Study A

School District A is a larger school district comprising 30 schools from elementary to

high school and over 22,000 students (Arkansas Department of Education, 2021). This particular

school district has received many awards from the Arkansans for Gifted and Talented Education

in the past few years.

Identification

School District A's definition of giftedness includes creativity, cognitive ability, and

affectively gifted students. Coordinator A explained that there is a district-wide placement

meeting that meets on the last Friday of every month including nine teachers and administrators

from various schools within the district. He explained that the process starts with a data

collection sheet where the various teachers and administrators discuss and select students to be

tested further. The data collection is blind so the evaluators do not know the student's name or

identity, only which school they come from. School District A uses multiple methods for

identification through a Cognitive Abilities Test, Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test, parent/teacher

referrals, the Second Edition Kaufman Brief Intelligence Test, and the Torrance Tests of Creating

Thinking. The identification process begins at the end of first grade and all students are screened

for giftedness regardless of ability and performance. Every student takes the Naglieri Nonverbal

Ability Test and data from that is collected and then supplemented with data from the student's

kindergarten and first-grade teachers. Coordinator A explained that during the data collection

process, NWEA Measures of Academic Progress, and ACT Aspire data are used when available.

Due to the current worldwide pandemic, the identification process was a bit different from

normal, and some modifications had to be made to the identification process such as current

second graders being tested late due to not being tested at the end of their first-grade year. Any

student that tests within the "gifted ranges" will be pulled from the data, and Coordinator A

discusses with the student's teachers to discover more information about the student and if the

teacher believes the student should be placed in gifted programming (Personal Communication,

January 21, 2021). Coordinator A believes one of their district's more valuable traits is that they

"give students many opportunities to show their giftedness" and that they go above and beyond

state requirements for identification (Personal Communication, January 21, 2021). One specific

test score will not keep or admit a student into the gifted programs in School District A. The

school district takes a look across the board at the collected data and uses the district-wide

placement committee members to decide to provide gifted programming.

Addressing Inequities

As far as specific measures taken to address underrepresentation within their gifted

programs and how their identification processes help to bridge the gap with inequities,

Coordinator A explains that they look at the specific schools for their individual populations and

percentages for free/reduced lunch. He explains that since the school district is so large, it is

sometimes hard to even the playing field because of the resource and population differences

district-wide. So, the district runs through more disadvantaged schools with a "fine-tooth comb"

to try and find giftedness in students within these schools (Personal Communication, January 21, 2021). He explains that certain students like ELLs can display giftedness in different ways than students who speak English as their primary language and that they consider many diversity factors when screening students for giftedness. Coordinator A explains that while he is proud of the progress the school district has made and the improvements he has seen in the students, "[the district] is not perfect" and there is still work that needs to be done to reduce inequities within School District A (Personal Communication, January 21, 2021). However, through the interview, Coordinator A explained that a school district as big as theirs struggles to reach every student because the school's time, money, and resources are just not there, a problem with universal screening and with gifted programming in general.

Coordinator A discussed how world events such as the recent election and other pushes for social justice have come into the school and classroom. He remarked that when students come to him with personal issues regarding world events, he sometimes needs to adapt his own beliefs to take care of his students socially and emotionally. Being a coordinator, he does not have the same amount of time as teachers do with these students, so Coordinator A frequently meets with teachers regarding these issues with the student's well-being and mental health in mind. He believes that "gifted programs should be a safe place for anybody" and works to ensure the students and teachers are being taken care of (Personal Communication, January 21, 2021).

When addressing issues with socioeconomic status and poverty, Coordinator A believes that teachers should have the budget to take care of students so that no student has to go without a field trip, pencil, or notebook. He said that dividing students between the "haves and the have nots" further segregates students and puts added stress on students, teachers, and parents

(Personal Communication, January 21, 2021). With online courses, he says that this problem has

been exacerbated by the pandemic and everything going online since some students do not have

access to a reliable internet connection or have parents who can sit with them to complete work.

He explains that he does what he can to provide his students with the necessary resources to

succeed.

Programming

Coordinator A understands that not every gifted child will have the highest grades or be

the most successful in school. He also believes gifted students who come into these classrooms

should be taken as they are and not "forced into boxes" (Personal Communication, January 21,

2021). Coordinator A believes that gifted students should learn to use their authentic voices and

push to achieve the goals they set out to reach. In regards to gifted programming, School District

A offers a variety of enrichment and acceleration options for their gifted students. In elementary

school, the gifted problems use a pull-out program to provide gifted programming for second to

fifth graders. For kindergartens and first graders, a whole group enrichment program is used to

provide a more advanced curriculum to gifted students who have not yet been identified. During

middle school, however, the students can enroll in cluster classes based on their varying interests.

Coordinator A remarked that students love the cluster classes so much that some students who

had dropped out of gifted and talented in fifth grade later ask to be re-enrolled. Some of these

interest-based classes include CSI, Quizbowl, and Robotics. Students can fluctuate between

classes and try new things and are not locked into a single class for the entire semester.

Coordinator A remarks that "a gifted kid should feel at home within the gifted classrooms" and

that he works with students and teachers to accomplish this objective (Personal Communication,

January 21, 2021). To improve their gifted programming, Coordinator A remarks that he would like to have a gifted facilitator in every building. He also wanted to find one test or a mixture of tests that would find the "definitive gifted kid", reaching gifted students across all backgrounds (Personal Communication, January 21, 2021). However, Coordinator A discussed how other school districts within the state and even other states nationwide look toward his school district to see how they are identifying and serving gifted students, but he believes that his district is not perfect and still has a long way to go before being where they should be.

Case Study B

Before interpreting the data from the interview, it is important to note that School District B has the highest African American population, which makes up about 95% of the district, and all students participate in the free or reduced lunch program. Therefore, this district is an outlier, so data from this school district may not represent other school districts. Even so, there is still much to gather from how this district goes about identifying gifted and talented students and what programming looks like in a district such as this.

Identification

School District B defines giftedness in their district by "Gifted and talented children and youth are those of high potential or ability whose learning characteristics and educational needs require qualitatively differentiated educational experiences and/or services. Possession of these talents and gifts, or the potential for their development, will be evidenced through an interaction of above-average intellectual ability, task commitment and/or motivation, and creative ability" (Personal Communication, February 9, 2021). The pull-out program in School District B starts in first grade, but identification can happen anywhere during kindergarten through twelfth grade.

Furthermore, anyone can recommend a student be tested for gifted and talented services, "even neighbors of kids have recommended students to be tested," but normally the teacher, parent, or student fill out the referral form (Personal Communication, February 9, 2021).

The referral form comprises a checklist of academic, creativity, intellectual, and leadership or motivation characteristics. Regardless of the number of boxes checked off, Coordinator B described that the student will be tested for giftedness. Simply putting a student's name on the sheet with no boxes checked off will grant permission for the school to test the student for gifted programming. The testing process includes a multi-step process of tests including the CogAT, a drawing test, Frank Williams' Divergent Thinking Test, and a look at ACT Aspire, grade point average, and other test scores. Coordinator B describes that "only top-notch kids" get accepted into the program and that they take the top 11% of students who are tested (Personal Communication, February 9, 2021). This is a larger standard than the state requires which is only 5% (Arkansas Department of Education, 2009). Despite testing for creativity, Coordinator B shared that School District B focuses on academic achievement and intellectual ability since they utilize a pull-out program that develops into AP and pre-AP classes later on in middle school and high school.

Addressing Inequities

When asked about inequalities and serving underrepresented populations such as African American and Latinx students in gifted programs, Coordinator B shared that "[they] have no choice…that's us" (Personal Communication, February 9, 2021). This is true as the minority populations in School District B are White and Asian students. 96% of the student population identify as African American within School District B. Furthermore, Coordinator B describes the

process of maintaining equity between the total district population and gifted population where

they compare the numbers each year and ensure measures are being taken to maintain close

percentages. Also, since the referral process is the first step of the identification process, School

District B tests every student recommended for gifted services regardless of what is checked off

and "strictly follows the referral form" (Personal Communication, February 9, 2021). This

process makes Coordinator B "100% confident" about their assessments to identify students

from diverse backgrounds (Personal Communication, February 9, 2021).

Coordinator B describes that since the majority of their district population identifies as

African American, "[they] live in social injustice," and that feelings about current events show

up in the classroom (Personal Communication, February 9, 2021). During tumultuous times,

students are encouraged to discuss with their peers, research for more data and information, and

listen to multiple viewpoints. Being the only African American teacher in her particular school,

Coordinator B describes that she has to help her cohort understand the viewpoints of their

overwhelmingly African American population and that "when issues do arise, we address them"

(Personal Communication, February 9, 2021). However, when asked ways School District B

could cast a wider net to find more students who are gifted, Coordinator B explained "it all goes

back to money" (Personal Communication, February 9, 2021). With the number of resources,

time, and training it takes to test, identify, and serve gifted and talented students, Coordinator B

does not believe the resources are there for more comprehensive testing.

Programming

The pull-out program begins in first grade and continues until fifth grade. This program

consists of a center where the gifted students from all the district schools are bussed in on their

particular day and grouped with other students of their same grade level. Students are at the

center for a half school day in the AM or PM and bussed back to their general education schools

after. The first through third-grade curriculum is designed by the coordinators and facilitators,

while fourth and fifth-grade students get a choice from courses such as Quiz Bowl, Cooking

With Math, and Chess to include a few. Pre-AP classes start in sixth grade for gifted and talented

students and these services continue through high school. The core subject areas of English,

Math, Social Studies, and Science are provided. Advanced Placement (AP) classes begin in tenth

grade and are offered through twelfth grade. Students are then encouraged to take the AP test at

the end of the year to obtain college credit.

The programming for the pull-out programs include options for students to discover their

own interests. Coordinator B describes that due to the pandemic, their curriculum changed to fit

within new guidelines. Also, to deal with the stress of the pandemic, students are given yoga

classes as well as nutrition instruction to help make healthy choices. Coordinator B believes their

students are enriched cognitively, socially, and emotionally in the classroom because they "sneak

in academics" (Personal Communication, February 9, 2021). Also, students and teachers can

spend much time working one-on-one to get to know each other and build a community within

their school. Coordinator B believes "[gifted students] are overlooked and expected to be the

smart ones," so she "allows kids to be themselves. Kids have a lot going on, so I give them

emotional support," (Personal Communication, February 9, 2021). This includes a debriefing at

the end of the school day where students are asked an eye-opening question or something sure to

get them talking. Coordinator B finds this as an opportunity to learn more about her students and

for her students to find more about themselves in the process.

Case Study C

The demographics for School District C show that Latinx and White students make up most of the students in the district. In the 2019-2020 school year, School District C won an Arkansas School Recognition award due to the performance of their gifted and talented programs. For simplicity's sake, I will refer to the interviewee as Coordinator C despite that not technically being her title. However, she does oversee the gifted and talented programs for her district.

Identification

School District C follows three definitions for giftedness from the NAGC, Arkansas Department of Education, and the Federal Javits Act. These definitions describe gifted students as those who exhibit higher levels of performance in one or many domains such as task commitment, creativity, intellectual ability, and more. School District C screens all second graders for gifted and talented services. However, identification for School District C's gifted and talented program can occur anywhere between kindergarten and twelfth grade. The process starts with a referral from any school personnel, parent, student, community member, or peer. Once referred, the student will then go be tested with a series of tests including the Otis Lennon School Ability Test, CogAT, abbreviated Scales for Identifying Gifted Students, Slocumb-Payne Rating Scale by teacher(s), Naglieri Non-Verbal Ability Test, and Williams Exercise in Divergent Thinking. In addition, data such as the student's grade point average, test scores from norm-referenced and criterion-referenced tests, data from the referral forms, and data from observations will be used in the identification process. Next, a "Building Review Team " consisting of the building principal and/or assisting principal, the building counselor, and one or

two classroom teachers is created to review the student's profile (Personal Communication, February 22, 2021). The data is viewed holistically and there are no cut-off scores.

Addressing Inequities

When asked about measures taken to address underrepresented groups in their district's gifted and talented programs, Coordinator C described how "[School District C] just recently added the Naglieri Non-Verbal Ability Test (NNVAT-3) as an assessment for identification and are also screening all second graders" (Personal Communication, February 22, 2021). She also remarked how she is "very confident" about the assessments used to identify CLED students more effectively, especially after adding the NNVAT-3 to the identification process (Personal Communication, February 22, 2013). With these measures being taken, Coordinator C believes that she has seen an increase in diverse student populations being identified for gifted services. Regarding progress being made over the last few years, Coordinator C revealed that the district has a history of focusing on IQ, but they have "recently made changes to look as strongly at creativity and leadership qualities" (Personal Communication, February 22, 2021). In addition, Coordinator C stated that finding ways to better identify and serve underrepresented populations within their gifted programs was the focus right now and is carefully being considered during evaluation.

During the actual testing process, English Language Learners can obtain testing accommodation according to their Individual English Language Acquisition Plan, and those who have Individualized Educational Plans (IEPs) or 504 plans will be allowed the same modifications on identification tests as they have on other assessments (Personal

Communication, February 22, 2021). Furthermore, one single test will not disqualify a student from gifted programming, and cut-off scores are not used.

Programming

In kindergarten through second grade, School District C provides a whole-group enrichment. Gifted specialists provide enrichment lessons once a month. Information from these lessons is recorded on observation forms and later used during the identification process for higher achieving students. The district handbook also details how instruction is differentiated through learner, environment, content, process, and product to meet the needs of their higher achieving students. Between third and sixth grades, students are pulled out of their traditional classrooms for 150 minutes per week to work with a gifted specialist. These lessons are tied to the gifted and talented education standards for the state and follow their frameworks as well. In the handbook it states learning will be developed cognitively, creatively, and affectively through leadership skills and training, career and technical awareness, and technology.

From seventh to ninth grade, students may elect to participate in Pre-AP courses as well as direct instruction with a gifted specialist. The gifted specialist classes meet daily and develop learning in the characteristics listed above. Students in these classes are also encouraged to participate in extracurricular activities such as Quiz Bowl and Junior National Honors Society. From grades seven to twelve, students can participate in Pre-AP and AP classes to obtain an honors diploma and a chance to achieve college credit through the completion of the College Board AP Exam. The curriculum provided for these students will be differentiated and scaffolded according to the student's needs and will be "culturally responsive" according to Coordinator C (Personal Communication, February 22, 2021). Coordinator C also remarks that

"[they] are always looking to provide instruction that requires students to problem solve and learn the processes and creative options instead of the "right answer" (Personal Communication, February 22, 2021).

Case Study D

School District D's population consists of just over 50% of students who identify as African American and also has a higher proportion of free or reduced lunch recipients than the state average. In addition, many of School District D's teachers of the gifted have been honored at previous Arkansans for Gifted and Talented Education Conferences as well as recognized as an Outstanding Program for the state.

Identification

School District D follows the state's guidelines for identifying gifted and talented students. The state's definition is as follows, "Gifted and talented children and youth as those of high potential or ability whose learning characteristics and educational needs require qualitatively differentiated educational experiences and/or services. Possession of these talents and gifts, or the potential for their development, will be evidenced through an interaction of above-average intellectual ability, task commitment and/or motivation, and creative ability" (Personal Communication, March 31, 2021). To start the identification process, someone in the student's life needs to fill out a referral form and turn it into the building's gifted specialist. Anyone can fill out the referral form, which can be found online as well as in the school building to make the process "as accessible as possible" (Personal Communication, March 31, 2021). The district uses multiple methods for identifying gifted students and also utilizes a placement committee of at least five school professionals to make placement decisions. Furthermore, there

is a second level of review at the district level that meets during the identification process to ensure the correct protocols were followed. The School District D also uses a universal screener for all second graders in the district. The tests that School District D use are the NNAT, Northwest Evaluation Association-Measures of Academic Progress, Screening Assessment for Gifted Elementary and Middle School Students, Renzulli Hartman Scales for Rating the Behavior Characteristics of Superior Students, and the Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking as well as information from the referral forms and standardized test data.

Addressing Inequities

When asked how the district handles underrepresented groups in gifted and talented education, Coordinator D explains that it is an "ongoing endeavor" for the district and is something they reflect on constantly (Personal Communication, March 31, 2021). Coordinator D says district representatives sit down yearly to compare the demographic numbers within their district and gifted programs to see where they can make improvements. She understands that if they do not "pay attention to the why and keep a finger on that pulse," students will continue to not be served (Personal Communication, March 31, 2021). School District D does use a universal screener and multiple testing criteria in their identification processes to "[cast] a wide net and give everyone opportunities to show their strengths" (Personal Communication, March 31, 2021). Furthermore, School District D provides a summer seminar for their gifted students that is completely free and provides transportation and meals for attending students. Due to the district's high free or reduced lunch population and low SES students, this opens many doors for those who may otherwise be unable to afford summer enrichment or may opt-out due to the inability to provide transportation or resources during the summer. In regards to

twice-exceptional students, Coordinator D states that specialists go into general education classrooms to help identify students and are "intentional with inclusion" of 2e students (Personal Communication, March 31, 2021). Despite concerted efforts to lessen the gap of underrepresentation, Coordinator D believes "there is always room for improvement," by "raising awareness" of these problems and "building relationships" with their staff and students will help them achieve equity (Personal Communication, March 31, 2021).

Programming

Coordinator D made a point to discuss how their "programming and identification go hand in hand to ensure the measures [for identification] apply" to their programming (Personal Communication, March 31, 2021). In School District D, students between kindergarten and second grade are provided a whole group enrichment lesson once a week. This lesson focuses more on creativity or critical thinking skills due to the emphasis on literacy during these grades and not having time to provide instruction in these skills otherwise. The pull-out program is used from third to fifth grade and is provided at the student's school as there is a gifted specialist in every building. School District D meets the 150-minute requirement set by the state and offers a virtual Friday session due to the pandemic for students who opted out of in-person instruction. Lessons rotate between STEM, creativity-based instruction, literacy-based instruction, and problem-solving/critical thinking skills lessons week by week. During middle school, students are enrolled in a GT seminar where they can focus on learning based on their individual interests. Coordinator D describes how affective needs lessons are incorporated into the curriculum to facilitate student "conversation regarding their experiences" and how social justice is often a topic that is brought into the classroom (Personal Communication, March 31, 2021). She prides

herself on the district's "student-centered instruction" and how they create a "safe haven for

students to open up" about their lives and the challenges they face (Personal Communication,

March 31, 2021). The summer program is typically a STEM-based curriculum from the National

Inventors Hall of Fame. In years prior, gifted specialists would create their own curriculum to

teach for the summer enrichment camp, but they opted with purchasing programming materials

once more students began to attend.

Comparison of the School Districts

Looking at the demographic data, SDA, SDC, and SDD all displayed large discrepancies

between the demographics of the total district population and the gifted and talented population.

SDB's demographic data showed small discrepancies between the total district population and

gifted and talented population for the Asian population percentage, which more than doubled. It

is important to note that the SDB's demographic population is almost entirely made up of

students from CLED backgrounds. As stated above, most of the students in the district identify

as African American and every student receives either free or reduced lunch. This means that

despite having small racial discrepancies between the total district and gifted populations, their

identification practices and programs are not necessarily more effective at recruiting students

from CLED backgrounds. Despite these differences, each school district is following the

recommended best practices for identifying CLED students and addressing underrepresentation

within gifted and talented programs. Through the interviews, it was evident that each coordinator

was interested, invested, and committed to finding solutions to address underrepresentation

within their districts. The Gifted Coordinators reflected that the money and the resources were

simply not there. Administering and grading sometimes thousands of tests is extremely costly in

both money and time. Due to this, casting a large net to identify all of the gifted students within a population may not be feasible, making it possible for students who are more easily identifiable to receive gifted programming, and those who are not may be overlooked.

Furthermore, every coordinator discussed the importance of building communities with their total school population regardless of gifted status. The interviews revealed the steps each district takes to make students feel welcome, heard, and advocated for within the classroom. Coordinator A described how specialists were brought in to supplement math instruction for a gifted ELL who was not getting the necessary challenge from their core math instruction due to the language barrier. Coordinator B often attends her student's basketball games or extracurricular events. Also, she was called to calm a student who was having a meltdown on their campus. She is on a first-name basis with her students' parents and often sees them in the community. SDC provides teachers with specific training to find gifted students in diverse populations. During the pandemic and the large push for online learning, School District D provides online enrichment sessions for students who may not be in person during the school year.

It is also important to note that only one district mentioned how they specifically identify twice-exceptional students. School District D sends a special-education specialist to observe within the general classrooms to identify gifted students who may also have a disability. School District C also allows for students with IEPs or 504 plans to use their prescribed testing accommodations on their gifted identification assessments. This is also true for ELLs who received testing accommodations. Additionally, SDC was the only district that specifically mentioned training their teachers to recognize giftedness from a diverse group of students.

School District A considers the student's primary language when making recruitment decisions and also provides funding to teachers to give students the materials they need to succeed. This information does not suggest that the other school districts did not implement any of these practices already, just that they did not specifically mention it during the interview process.

Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the identification processes with a focus on inequities and the programming of four districts within one state. The Gifted and Talented Coordinators revealed how the process of limiting the underrepresented within their gifted programs is an ongoing one and is viewed as something to constantly review for improvements. It was clear that this challenge is an integral part of each district's assessment and discussion and that necessary actions are being taken to remedy this problem. The next chapter will look at this study as a whole, the results, and the future implications of the research.

Chapter V: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to discover different ways high CLED student population

districts identify and serve those students within gifted programs. The data suggests that these

districts may still have work to do to provide gifted identification and programming that is

equitable for all students regardless of cultural, linguistic, or economic background.

Each district follows different protocols for identifying gifted students in their district.

Every district's identification process started with a referral form and moved into assessments.

Three districts universally screened their early elementary populations for giftedness, which has

been shown to be a best practice for identifying CLED students (Lakin, 2016). Despite each

district following the best practices for identifying and serving CLED students, the demographic

data still falls short. Overall, this may come down to resources and the unfortunate truth that

reducing inequities in gifted programs may take time even using best practices. Perhaps if the

demographic numbers of each district were compared over the years to find growth it may reveal

drastic improvement. Unfortunately, the interview questions did not delve into the timing and

implementation of the current identification processes. More research may be needed to find and

develop better assessments, training, and practices to combat this problem.

As far as addressing inequalities faced both in and out of the classroom, each district had

its way of providing programming and support to those who need it. Each district coordinator

reflected on how recent pushes for social justice have influenced student behaviors within the

classroom. Providing opportunities for discussion, research, and support is integral to the success

of all students, CLED students especially (Sewell & Goings, 2020). In addition, each district

mentioned ways they can make their programming more accessible to low SES students by

providing materials in school or for further enrichment out of school. Furthermore,

twice-exceptional students, or gifted students with disabilities, and other underrepresented

groups are also a core part of each district's plan to identify and improve. It was evident that

measures were being taken to make each district's gifted and talented program more equitable

and accessible to a diverse population of students.

Conclusions

It is already established that each district is taking measures such as using multi-step

identification measures as well as universal screening to identify students from diverse

backgrounds. To further improve this process, districts should consider multicultural professional

development to better equip teachers to identify giftedness in CLED students (Ford et al., 2005).

Furthermore, integrating multiculturalism into gifted education classrooms may provide CLED

students with support in the classroom (Ford et al., 2005). Also, the more that students of color

are represented within the curriculum, the more these students connect with learning and are

engaged in the process. The world is becoming increasingly more diverse, so our curriculums

should reflect this change.

Overall, more research into this problem needs to be done. It is clear that even with best

practices, districts with high populations of CLED students still seem to have students being

overlooked in gifted programming. Perhaps we need to look at how we label students as "gifted"

or "not gifted" overall because it can suggest that gifted students are part of an exclusive club or

superior to their non-gifted peers. Instead, placing students on a spectrum based on their

advanced needs may help to decrease the underrepresentation of CLED students, but even that

process would likely take years to implement (Hanover Research, 2017). Providing more

differentiated instruction in the general classroom can provide ways to reach high-achieving

students who may have been overlooked during the identification process. This may also help to

give identified gifted students more challenging work within the general classroom. However,

training all teachers within one school or the entire district to implement differentiated

instruction could be another costly bill to add to the district's already strained budget.

Additionally, the literature regarding the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test has shown that

it may not be a catch-all solution to the problem of underrepresentation (Giessman et al., 2013).

Every district is currently using the NNAT, and while only one district explicitly mentioned the

use of the NNAT as a measure to increase the representation of CLED students, the other

districts may be using this test without the most recent research. This is not to say it is an

ineffective test, but using the NNAT as the sole measure for increasing representation may not

procure the desired results. Districts should not assume that one measure will be a sufficient

solution and should instead use it as another lens to identify and serve CLED students.

Limitations

It is important to note this case study only covered four districts in one state, so there may

be limitations to its generalizability to other states and districts. These districts cannot serve as a

representative for all other districts across the state or country. Although each district coordinator

and program had a multitude of accolades, different perspectives or ideas may have flourished if

interviews included classroom teachers of the gifted, other school personnel, parents of the

gifted, students of the gifted, and many others who are familiar with gifted and talented

programming. In addition, due to the interviews taking place over Zoom, more information may

have been discovered from in-person interviews as well as anonymous surveys or experimental

research. Being on a Zoom call can become tiresome and be less engaging than an in-person

conversation. Furthermore, due to the hectic nature of this past year, many school personnel may

be reluctant to take more time out of their already crowded schedule to participate in an

interview for a college study. Because of this, pertinent information may have been forgotten or

left out. Since this study concerned such a sensitive topic, it is also important to note that any

interviewee would not intentionally speak ill of CLED students or state that inclusion of these

groups is not one of the district's main priorities. The data gathered from this study and the

information these coordinators had to share about this topic is what we have to interpret of the

coordinator's best interests and feelings about their district's gifted programming.

Implications

Perhaps this study has illuminated the notion that even when a district is doing everything

the literature suggests to be best practices, actual results may still fall short. Ultimately, this topic

may need more research and a more concerted effort to bridge the gap of underrepresentation

within gifted programs. Of course, it must be said that identifying CLED students just for the

sake of representation is not the goal of this study or any gifted program. However, since this is a

problem historically with gifted programs, discrepancies should be scrutinized. As stated

previously, it may be a matter of needing more time for these best practices to become effective

and for the numbers to shift in the right direction. Gifted education as a whole should be seen as

an integral part of any district, and therefore should be supported in every state's Department of

Education. In addition, increasing or introducing funding to schools for gifted programming may

encourage districts with higher populations of CLED students to move towards the best practices

such as universal screening or multiple testing criteria. Although, this thought is a bigger

undertaking than stated. Furthermore, multicultural education may help to provide both teachers

and students with more diverse learning experiences and more meaningful education for students

of color. After all, a curriculum that supports a student holistically is more likely to develop the

readiness and willingness to learn. Providing students with IEPs or 504 plans with the same

accommodation granted to them on regular testing for gifted assessments may help to better

identify these populations. Also, ELLs may benefit from accommodations during testing if

needed.

However, districts only have what is available to them in regards to funding, resources,

and training. Implementing these best practices may not be feasible for every district. Gifted

education is often seen as a luxury and those who do not see the benefit or the capabilities of

providing gifted programming may let it fall to the wayside. Perhaps in the future, there will be

better methods for specifically targeting CLED students. Researchers in the field may find using

the different perspectives mentioned earlier from classroom teachers or the students themselves

can garner better information regarding the best next steps. Furthermore, disseminating

information about gifted and talented education to parents and guardians may help to support the

identification of CLED students. Regardless of what to do next, it is important to find ways to

continue to include culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse students in gifted

programming to create a more equitable experience for all

Recommendations for Future Research

In a future study, it would be beneficial to more closely analyze a district's programming

given to students within gifted and talented programs, especially those with high populations of

CLED students. A greater look at how this programming is designed to be equitable and

meaningful CLED students could potentially benefit these students and address issues in the way

gifted and talented programs are conducted. Since this study did not go into the details of

programming, this research will give greater context to this study.

Additionally, research regarding students of color's feelings and attitudes regarding

placement in gifted and talented programs may provide a more in-depth look into how these

students perceive recruitment. Further analyzing these attitudes could provide areas of

improvement to schools and districts as well as information regarding ways to meaningfully

target students of color. After all, programming that does not instill motivation for learning

regardless of being labeled gifted or not will not provide enriching learning experiences or

positive attitudes towards the classroom. Research based on attitudes of parents or guardians of

gifted students of color may shine a light on the greater issue at hand and provide more context

to the issue this study tried to address. Understanding the issue from multiple points of view

helps to paint a bigger picture of intertwined issues within this greater problem.

Chapter Summary

This chapter draws conclusions from the research based on the data gathered. The

implications of the data were discussed as well as recommendations for future research. This

includes ways to give greater context to the issues at hand as well as those that would be useful

to the field. In closing, this study found that underrepresentation of students from culturally,

linguistically, and economically diverse backgrounds was present within three of four selected

districts in one state. To address this, more research, money, and resources may be needed.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions

1. What is your school's/district's process for identifying gifted and talented students?

2. What steps do you or your district take to address the issue of underrepresented groups in your district?

3. What kinds of indicators of giftedness is the district looking for? How confident are you about these assessments to accurately identify gifted and talented students across diverse backgrounds?

4. In what ways does your gifted and talented programming reach students of diverse racial, ethnic, linguistic, and socio-economic backgrounds?

5. In what ways does your program address issues of injustice and discrimination that you think benefit students?

6. Does your district specifically recruit and serve underserved populations within Gifted and Talented programs (e.g. LGBTQ+, twice-exceptional, etc.)

7. In what ways do you believe your program has an inviting, welcoming culture for a diverse group of students?

8. Can you describe a typical day within one of your gifted and talented classrooms? How do these classrooms support these student's cognitive as well as social-emotional development?

9. Since there is a large proportion of African American and Latinx students in your schools/district, how has your school/district made plans to address any problems African American and Latinx students could experience in school or out in the world in regards to this recent push for social justice and what does it look like in the classroom, if applicable?

10. In what ways could your programming or identification processes be improved to better represent diverse student populations?

Appendix B

UNIVERSITY OF
ARKANSAS

To:	Mackenzie Suzanne Anderson
From:	Douglas J Adams, Chair IRB Expedited Review
Date:	11/17/2020
Action:	**Expedited Approval**
Action Date:	11/17/2020
Protocol #:	2009286354
Study Title:	A Case Study of Four District's Procedures for Identifying and Serving Culturally, Linguistically, and Economically Diverse Gifted and Talented Students in One State
Expiration Date:	11/16/2021
Last Approval Date:	

The above-referenced protocol has been approved following expedited review by the IRB Committee that oversees research with human subjects.

If the research involves collaboration with another institution then the research cannot commence until the Committee receives written notification of approval from the collaborating institution's IRB.

It is the Principal Investigator's responsibility to obtain review and continued approval before the expiration date.

Protocols are approved for a maximum period of one year. You may not continue any research activity beyond the expiration date without Committee approval. Please submit continuation requests early enough to allow sufficient time for review. Failure to receive approval for continuation before the expiration date will result in the automatic suspension of the approval of this protocol. Information collected following suspension is unapproved research and cannot be reported or published as research data. If you do not wish continued approval, please notify the Committee of the study closure.

Adverse Events: Any serious or unexpected adverse event must be reported to the IRB Committee within 48 hours. All other adverse events should be reported within 10 working days.

Amendments: If you wish to change any aspect of this study, such as the procedures, the consent forms, study personnel, or number of participants, please submit an amendment to the IRB. All changes must be approved by the IRB Committee before they can be initiated.

You must maintain a research file for at least 3 years after completion of the study. This file should include all correspondence with the IRB Committee, original signed consent forms, and study data.

cc: Marcia B Imbeau, Investigator

Appendix C

INFORMED CONSENT

Researcher(s):
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Description: The purpose of this honors research thesis is to better understand how school districts with diverse populations adequately serve and identify all students. You are being asked to participate in an online Zoom interview that will take up to an hour. Approximately ten questions that you will receive in advance will be asked during this interview. The questions concern identification processes as well as programming made available for diverse students in your school district. By signing below, you consent to participate in the interview and have your answers recorded and transcribed. The recordings will contain identifying information, but will only be used by the researcher, Mackenzie Anderson, and will be deleted upon completion of the research. Any transcriptions will not contain any identifying information and can be made available to the research committee as well as research participants upon request.

Risks and Benefits: There are no risks in participating in this research project. Potential benefits include an increased improvement of more inclusive practices/services for your district's gifted and talented students.

Voluntary Participation: All names used in the final project will be aliases. It will not be possible to identify any one person in any one school using the information provided. The final project will only be made available to my research committee and me (the primary researcher). An executive summary will be made available to all districts that participate.

Right to Withdraw: If you decide to participate in this program, but at any time and for any reason change your mind, you may withdraw your consent. There would be no negative consequences for this decision.

Confidentiality: All information will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by applicable Federal and State law and University policy. Confidentiality will be assured and maintained by the researcher through the establishment of a pseudonym. Each district will be assigned a name at random to establish the code. All data will be recorded and reported anonymously using the code. Only the researcher will have access to the code and all data will be kept in a secure location in the researcher's office. Once the study is successfully defended, the code will be destroyed.

Informed Consent: I, _____, have read the description of this study, understand the purpose of this project, the procedures to be used, the potential risks and benefits, how confidentiality will be established and maintained, and the option to withdraw.
My signature below indicates that I freely agree to participate in the experimental study and that I have received a copy of this agreement from the research.

_____
PRINTED NAME OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

_____
SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

_____
DATE