5-2022

Factors Contributing to Barriers to Equity in Gifted and Talented Identification

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Factors Contributing to Barriers to Equity in Gifted and Talented Identification

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

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May 2022
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the existing barriers to equity in the identification and servicing of gifted students in a small mid-western suburban school district. A mixed method approach guided by constructivist philosophy was used to conduct this research. An inductive Grounded Theory was the methodological approach. This study sought to gather the perception of school district stakeholders to identify potential barriers that exist for specific subgroups of students to being identified for gifted and talented services. The research questions for this Problem of Practice were as follows: (1) How do teachers and parents in School District A define the concept of giftedness? (2) How do teachers' and parents' definition of giftedness impact which students are identified for gifted and talented programming in School District A? (3) What additional elements of School District A's gifted and talented identification process may create barriers to racial, linguistic and socioeconomic equity? (4) How might School District A effectively eliminate barriers to racial, linguistic and socioeconomic equity in their gifted and talented programming? Analysis of data collected from surveys and in-depth interviews revealed teachers' and parents' conception of giftedness as well as perceived barriers to achieving equity.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A most sincere thank you to the many professional mentors that I have been fortunate to have throughout my career in education. These impactful leaders have empowered me to explore my interests, make mistakes, create, and extend my capacity for leadership. They have challenged my thinking and supported my aspirations. Their trust, friendship, and guidance have impacted my personal and professional life in immeasurable ways.

Thank you also to my family for their unending patience, understanding, and support. Their love and encouragement motivated me to remain resilient in completing this dissertation and degree.

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CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to examine a problem of practice that exists within School District A's gifted and talented programming. The research aims to identify the existing barriers to creating equity in the identification and servicing of K-12 students. This study seeks to review the perception of stakeholders in School District A in order to identify potential barriers that exist for specific subgroups of students to being identified for gifted and talented services. Determination and subsequent examination of identified barriers will lead to recommended action steps that can be taken to reduce or eliminate racial, linguistic, and socioeconomic inequity within School District A's gifted programming.

Problem Statement

District demographic data, achievement data, and observational data indicate that the process for identifying and servicing gifted and talented children in School District A is inequitable for students of color, students whose native language is not Englis,h and those receiving free or reduced lunch. Figure 1.1 shows the current process for gifted identification in math in School District A. The school district's published definition of giftedness, described as a belief, is that gifted students have the "potential and/or demonstrated ability to learn, think and achieve at high performing levels in areas such as intellectual, academic, creative, artistic and/or leadership fields." This belief can only be found on a subpage of the district's website and is listed as one of eight beliefs that were developed during a program review that took place in 2006. The current identification practices and provided services fall short of supporting this description. In addition, this definition, along with identification and program details, are not explicitly communicated to teachers or parents. Currently, the identification process relies on

limited academic assessment data and/or adult referral. Second grade students who score a 15 or higher on a locally developed screening assessment qualify to take a locally developed challenge assessment administered by the Gifted and Talented Coordinator. Students can also qualify to take the challenge assessment by way of parent or teacher referral. The score on the challenge assessment determines whether students qualify for services. There is no predetermined score that leads to qualification, but instead, the gifted and talented coordinator identifies a cutoff score based on score distribution and program capacity. In grades 3-5, students' scores on the Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) assessment and monthly Continental Math assessments are monitored by the gifted and talented coordinator and students whose scores are high may be considered for services.

Parent and teacher referral also leads to students' consideration for gifted services. Figure 1.2 shows the current process for gifted identification in reading in School District A. This also varies from the published process found on the district's website. Currently, the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessment and the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System (BAS) are used as initial academic performance data points in determining potential qualification for gifted and talented services. Those students whose scores on these assessments are arbitrarily determined as high based on either raw score or percentile are moved on to be further considered for services. As with math, students can also qualify for further consideration through parent or teacher referral. At this point in the process, the gifted and talented coordinator examines test student test scores as well as observational data provided by teachers and parents to determine qualification. Currently, no cognitive/intelligence assessments or creative thinking measures are administered in the process of determining giftedness in School District A. In addition, once a student qualifies for services, they are not reevaluated for continuation at any

point. Students who qualify are retained in the gifted and talented program throughout their school career or until they choose to un-enroll from services.

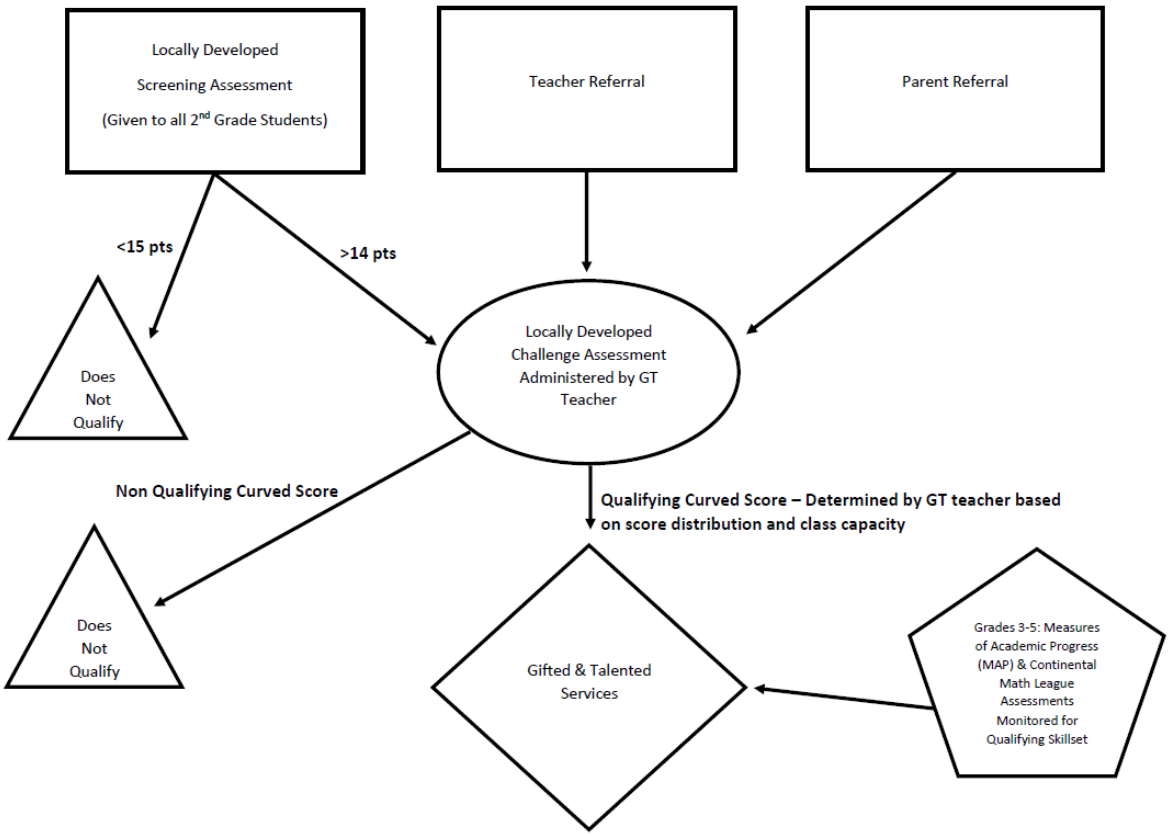

Figure 1.1: Process for Gifted Identification in Math

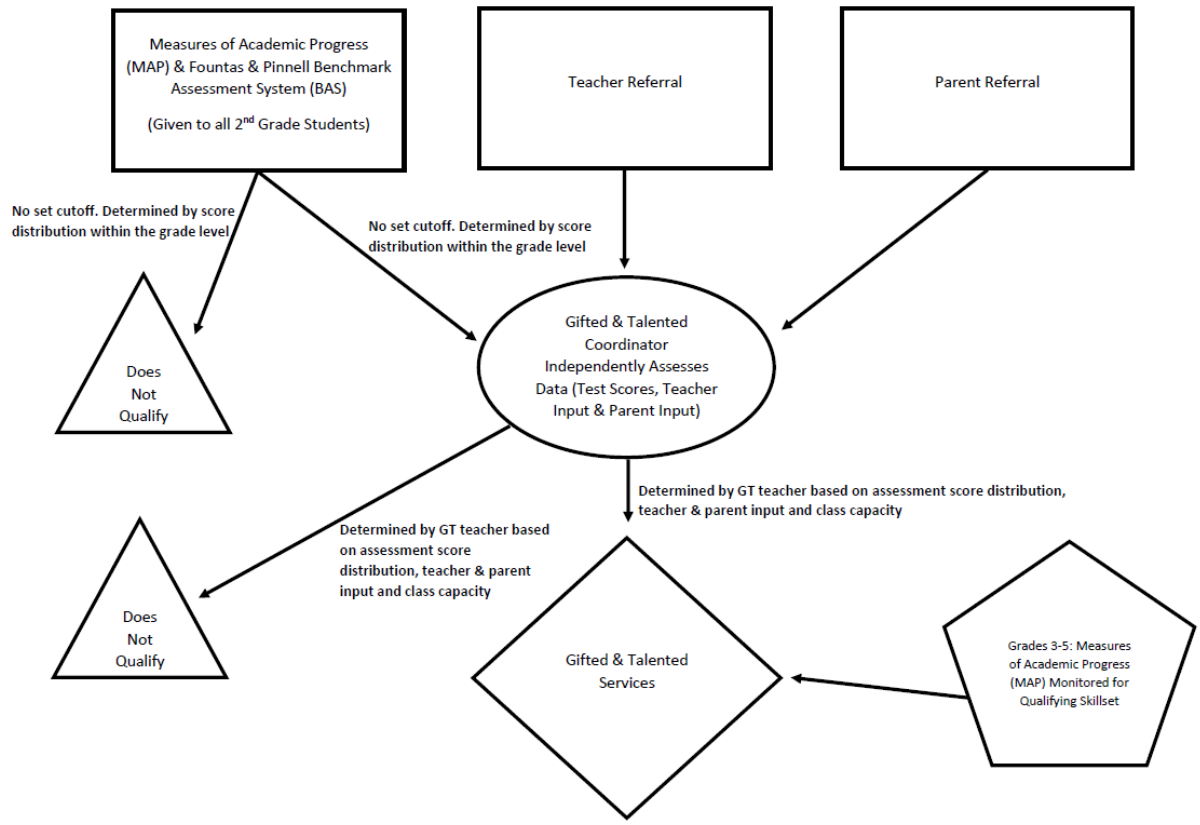

Figure 1.2: Process for Gifted Identification in Reading

It is plausible that teachers' and parents' varied and potentially subjective definitions of giftedness, along with insufficient assessment practices, bias, and reduced access are major factors leading to the identification of very few students of color, non-native English speaker,s and students living in poverty for gifted and talented services. The current process relies heavily on parent and teacher referral. The lack of a recently developed, collectively agreed-upon, district-wide definition of giftedness that is broadly communicated to stakeholders forces the referrer to rely on their subjective definition of giftedness when determining who to recommend for services. This lack of standardization likely causes a district-wide discrepancy in qualification criteria. In addition, the current process requires the Gifted and Talented

Coordinator to serve as a gatekeeper in determining students' qualifications using a non-standardized process. This one person's definition of giftedness could also dramatically impact program requirements. The lack of a standardized process extends to the way the assessment data is used. Some clear qualifying cut-off scores have been established for certain assessments, while others are left up to the discretion of the coordinator based on program capacity. The overall lack of a standardized process for identifying gifted students increases the potential for personal bias and other barriers to impact equity within the program.

Furthermore, since the current assessments are primarily designed to determine academic proficiency, rather than cognitive ability or creativity, there is a possibility that eligibility is being determined by students' ability to "do school" rather than their aptitude for processing, problem solving, or creative thinking. English Language Learners are at a distinct disadvantage given that the current assessments are administered in English and their vocabulary is likely not as strong as their native English-speaking peers. These students' inability to perform well on the current tests does not mean that they are not gifted thinkers and learners. The families of non-native English speakers, as well as those living in poverty, may also experience reduced access to information regarding school programming in general and specifically gifted education services, including the referral process. It is also worth noting that a number of students fall into two or more of these categories potentially compounding the barriers that exist to gifted identification and services. Valid concern exists that not ALL gifted students are being recognized. It would be worthwhile to identify existing barriers to gifted identification and explore how District A might alter or add to its current processes to ensure that they are equitably identifying the students who could benefit from gifted and talented services.

Many school districts in the state and around the country establish specific, agreed-upon criteria for giftedness. These organizations screen all students using cognitive, creative, and academic assessments, determine objective cutoffs for academic measures, train teachers and parents to look for universally accepted indicators, and educate families on how to navigate the process for service qualification. School District A could potentially benefit from a similar, stricter set of operating guidelines.

Focus on Instructional and/or Systematic Issues

This is a systematic issue that involves the interaction between students, teachers, families, and district leadership. The problem directly connects to the performance of the district and to the well-being of the community. If all students are given the opportunity to maximize their academic potential, the community benefits by producing more highly educated citizens. The school benefits from increased academic outcomes as well as the professional and ethical satisfaction of knowing they are meeting the individual needs of their students. In addition, ensuring equity in any capacity, particularly in gifted education, helps to counteract negative stereotypes and biases related to race, culture, language, and socioeconomic status.

Is Directly Observable

This Problem of Practice is directly observable. The current enrollment and demographic information for students receiving gifted services is easily accessible. Table 1.1 shows the overall district demographic data for Kindergarten through fifth grade for the last four school years and Table 1.2 shows the Kindergarten through fifth grade demographic data for the same years for those students receiving gifted services. K-5 data were examined because these are the grades where initial identification and services primarily occur. When students enter middle and high school, the direct gifted services no longer exist and students generally follow advanced

coursework tracks based on their previous gifted services and identification. However, students at these levels can also self-select advanced coursework making the demographic data more difficult to track. It is safe to assume that the demographic information of those receiving gifted services in K-5 closely mirrors the data of those taking advanced coursework at the middle and high school levels. The current and historical performance on existing assessments (e.g., MAP, MCA, Benchmark Reading, etc.) for all students is also readily accessible. It would be possible to solicit stakeholders' perceptions to identify where barriers in the identification process exist. District A could then design an intervention to circumvent these barriers that includes the use of additional methods for identifying gifted thinkers and learners as well as improving information access regarding gifted services. After implementing the intervention, the number of students of color, non-native English speakers, and free/reduced lunch recipients that were identified before and after could be compared. This data could also be used to determine if District A has inaccurately identified students in the past by using limited academic measures.

Table 1.1: K-5 Student Demographic Data

Academic Year	Total Students Enrolled K-5	% of total enrollment non-white	% of total enrollment - f/r	% of total enrollment - primary language other than English	% of total enrollment - female	% of total enrollment – receives special education services	% total enrollment – primary language other than English who are non-white	% of total enrollment – f/r who are non-white	% total enrollment – primary language other than English who are non-f/r
2016-2017	1156	10.0	8.3	4.8	48.5	12.1	3.7	8.0	3.1
2017-2018	1179	11.5	7.5	4.3	50.9	15.0	3.8	4.9	2.2
2018-2019	1221	12.7	7.9	5.3	47.0	17.7	4.3	5.4	2.8
2019-2020	1194	11.1	6.7	4.4	48.3	15.4	3.3	4.8	2.1

Table 1.2: K-5 Demographic Data for Students in Gifted Services

Academic Year	Total Students Receiving GT Services	% of gifted enrollment - non-white	% of gifted enrollment - f/r	% of gifted enrollment - primary language other than English	% of gifted enrollment - female	% of gifted enrollment – receives special education services	% of gifted enrollment - primary language other than English who are non-white	% of gifted enrollment – f/r who are non-white	% of gifted enrollment – primary language other than English who are non-f/r
2016-2017	136	4.4	1.4	1.4	47.7	8.0	0.0	3.6	1.4
2017-2018	146	7.5	1.3	1.3	23.9	4.7	1.3	0.6	1.3
2018-2019	133	7.5	1.5	3.0	45.8	10.5	2.2	0.7	3.0
2019-2020	149	8.0	1.3	2.0	44.2	11.4	1.3	0.6	2.0

Is Actionable

A realistic opportunity exists to improve this problem in School District A, making it actionable. Barriers to equity in the gifted identification process can be identified by soliciting stakeholder perception and analyzing current processes. Based on the identified barriers, a more comprehensive identification process can be explored to create an approach that better recognizes those students who possess the skills and aptitudes that would qualify them for gifted and talented services. Possible ideas would be to investigate the implementation of a thinking curriculum or to explore new and varied assessments including cognitive and creative thinking measures.

Connects to Broader Strategy of Improvement

This problem connects to the district's strategy for improvement and the potential solutions could easily be woven into its current action plan. The district's mission states that "Our students will maximize their potential in life because of their experiences in (School District A)." Within School District A's current action plan, two goals designed to fulfill this mission directly connect to this Problem of Practice. The scholarship goal: "Students will engage in personalized and rigorous learning practices and programs, leading to high levels of achievement for all" and the character goal: "Students and staff members will understand and model the core ethical values that lead to good character." The scholarship goal makes clear the importance of tailoring the curriculum to the individual need of the students so that they can achieve at the highest level possible. Ensuring that the district is accurately identifying those needs is critical to achieving this goal and it is a core component of this Problem of Practice. The character goal speaks to the ethical obligation that the district has to create an equitable system and learning environment for ALL students. This too is at the center of this Problem of Practice.

Is High Leverage

Addressing this Problem of Practice could have a tremendous impact on individual students and the overall community, making it high leverage. It is likely that numerous students in School District A are being underserved. Correctly identifying the strengths and needs of those individuals and tailoring their instruction and programming to those elements will allow them to excel at an accelerated pace. Eliminating inequity and appropriately serving the needs of all learners has the potential to improve the overall health of the community.

Research Questions

The research for this Problem of Practice will focus on exploring the following questions:

- *How do teachers and parents in School District A define the concept of giftedness?*
- *How do teachers' and parents' definition of giftedness impact which students are identified for gifted and talented programming in School District A?*
- *What additional elements of School District A's gifted and talented identification process may create barriers to racial, linguistic, and socioeconomic equity?*
- *How might School District A effectively eliminate barriers to racial, linguistic and socioeconomic equity in their gifted and talented programming?*

Overview of Methodology

A mixed method approach guided by constructivist philosophy will be used to conduct this research. An inductive Grounded Theory will be the methodological approach to this study. This approach will gather perceptual information using interviews and surveys. Data will be collected and analyzed to develop an understanding, a subsequent theory, and a potential solution to the problem of practice.

The participants for this study will be chosen from two distinct groups: teachers and parents from School District A. The two groups were chosen because of the likelihood that each of these groups may have unique impressions and experiences around the idea of giftedness and equity in education (Seidman, 2013).

The survey (see appendix A) is designed to gauge participants' perceptions of barriers to equity in District A's gifted and talented identification process and services as well as how they define the concept of giftedness. The survey uses a Likert Scale (see appendix A) to measure responses. The data collected from the surveys will provide quantitative data for this mixed

methods research. The survey also includes items that ask for participants' demographic information. This information will allow the researcher to determine if patterns of perception exist within or between groups.

The interview (see appendix B) will be semi-structured and is also designed to collect information regarding participants' perceptions of barriers to equity in District A's gifted and talented identification process and services as well as how they define the concept of giftedness. The results from the interviews will provide the qualitative data for this mixed methods study. The interviews will allow for authentic responses that yield information regarding participants' insights, behavior, and beliefs. Moreover, the interviews will provide opportunities for the researcher to probe deeper into relevant topics that emerge during the conversation.

Positionality

Positionality is an important consideration for this research. Positionality refers to the "researcher's relationship to participants, the nature of that involvement, how much of the study's purpose will be revealed to participants, and how ethical dilemmas will be managed" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). The researcher in this study must identify how they fit within the context of the research to anticipate potential reactions or misconceptions of participants and to uncover any biases that may exist within their thinking and understanding.

Researchers Role

The researcher serves as the principal of the primary school in School District A. Because of this, the researcher may serve as the supervisor for some of the teacher participants. This relationship may hinder the researcher's ability to gain accurate information during the study. It is possible that participants may not be comfortable sharing information regarding a potentially sensitive topic with the person that oversees their work. In addition, some of the parent

participants will likely have children in the researcher's school and therefore be direct customers of the researcher. This relationship may impact their interactions during the research. Finally, some of the participants may be students or former students in the researcher's school. This dynamic could certainly affect participants' willingness to participate or their interview and survey responses.

Assumptions

The researcher possesses certain biases that may impact the research. He holds the belief that equity in all facets of education is important and that it is the role of educators to ensure that it exists within schools. In addition, he holds a strong opinion about the problem of practice in School District A and has ideas about what barriers are in place and what strategies may reduce those barriers. Because of this, the researcher must remain open-minded about the data that is collected. To reduce the potential impact of the biases that accompany these assumptions, the researcher will attempt to collect a large volume of data since deep and rich data tends to be more accurate. He will also explore methods to validate his interpretations of results with a sample of the participants. If possible, the researcher will compare the results with any existing research that explores similar questions. The researcher also holds an assumption that the district leadership will be open to considering results and implications that come from this research and if so, that School District A possesses the knowledge, skills, and resources to effectively act on recommendations. It will be critical for the researcher to constantly consider his biases and the potential influence that they could have on the research to ensure that those assumptions do not impact the results.

Definition of Key Terms

- **Equity**- The absence of personal and social barriers such as socioeconomic status, race, etc. that prevent fair and equal access to education.
- **Gifted Students**- Students "with outstanding talent who perform or show the potential for performing at remarkably high levels of accomplishment when compared with others of their age, experience, or environment" (U.S. Department of Education, 193, p. 11).
- **Gifted & Talented Services**- Systematic educational programming provided to students who are identified as highly capable in academics, creative arts, or leadership.
- **Identification**- The assessment process used to determine whether students are in need of specialized service within a school setting.
- **Barrier**- Anything that stands in the way of a child or family receiving services that they are entitled to or eligible for within a school setting.
- **Free/Reduced Lunch-** Students whose families meet certain family income requirements are eligible to receive economic assistance for their child's school lunches. The data from eligible families can be used as an indirect measure of the number of low-income students within a school district.
- **Students of Color-** Students whose parent or guardian has self-identified that the student is of non-white racial/ethnic background.
- **Non-Native English Speaker-** Students whose parent or guardian has self-identified that English is not the family's primary language.

Organization of the Dissertation

Chapter Two of this dissertation is a review of the literature that impacts and informs this problem of practice. The literature that is explored encompasses a wide range of critical topics

that connect to the concept of equity in gifted education. These topics include the definition of giftedness, gifted identification, equity in education, inequity in gifted education, and strategies to reduce inequity in gifted education. Finally, Chapter Two will present the conceptual framework for this research

Chapter Three describes the inquiry methods used in this study. This chapter details the rationale for the research paradigm and methodology, as well as describes the setting for the problem of practice. In addition, the research sample and data sources as well as the data collection and analysis methods are explained. Finally, the trustworthiness, limitations, and delimitations of the research are explored.

Chapter Four describes the quantitative and qualitative data collected from the perception survey administered to teachers and parents as it relates to the research questions. The qualitative data collected from the parent and teacher interviews is also explained.

Chapter Five includes a discussion of the results for each research question, a revisiting of the limitations and delimitations of the study, implications for practice in School District A, and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER TWO- LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to examine a problem of practice that exists within School District A's gifted and talented programming. The research aims to identify the existing barriers to creating equity in the identification and servicing of K-12 students. This study seeks to review the perception of stakeholders in School District A in order to identify potential barriers that exist for specific subgroups of students to being identified for gifted and talented services.

To fully understand the problem of practice presented in School district A, a review of relevant literature was conducted. This literature review examined key areas that impact equity in gifted education identification and practices. Table 2.1 presents the number and types of sources reviewed:

Table 2.1: Number and Types of Sources Reviewed

Type of Source	Number Reviewed
Peer reviewed articles/journals	36
Scholarly books	10
Dissertations	1
Websites/blogs	18
Reports/databases	16

Review of the Literature

The following sections present topics that were explored to further understand the problem of equity in gifted education: definition of giftedness, gifted identification, equity in education, barriers to equity in gifted education, and strategies to reduce inequity in gifted education.

Definition of Giftedness

The concept of giftedness is challenging to define because it can encompass many factors of a person's academic, physical, social, and emotional ability and performance. The debate about whether giftedness is innate or can be developed also adds to the difficulty of defining the concept. The work of Renzulli (1978), Gardner (1983), and Gagne (1985) have shaped many of the current definitions of giftedness. Renzulli defines giftedness as a combination of ability, motivation, and creativity. Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences broadens the idea of intelligence, proposing that individuals can display different levels of aptitude in a variety of competencies. Gagne draws a distinction between giftedness (natural ability), and talent (cultivated skills). His theory proposes that competence determines giftedness while talent is an outcome of motivation and performance. This idea of natural ability is a principle that is widely held when defining giftedness. There are many who believe that giftedness simply means that one has a high IQ (Pfeiffer, 2012). In this case, giftedness is tied heavily to intelligence and is viewed as a fixed trait rather than something that can be developed.

Pfeiffer (2012) describes the characteristics that are frequently correlated with giftedness as "advanced language and reasoning skills, conversation, and interests more aligned with older children and adults, impressive long-term memory, intuitive understanding of concepts,

insatiable curiosity, advanced ability to connect disparate ideas and appreciate relationships, rapid learning and heightened sensitivity" (p. 5).

The lack of consensus has led to the Federal government, most individual states, and various educational organizations each having unique definitions of giftedness. These definitions often share characteristics, but do not entirely align. For example, the US Department of Education (1993) describes gifted children as those "with outstanding talent who perform or show the potential for performing at remarkably high levels of accomplishment when compared with others of their age, experience, or environment" (p. 11). In contrast, the Minnesota Department of Education (2020) describes that gifted and talented children and youth are:

> those students with outstanding abilities, identified at preschool, elementary, and secondary levels. The potential of gifted students requires differentiated and challenging educational programs and/or services beyond those provided in the general school program. Students capable of high performance include those with demonstrated achievement or potential ability in any one or more of the following areas: general intellectual, specific academic subjects, creativity, leadership and visual and performing arts (para. 1).

Additionally, The National Association for Gifted Children (2010) defines gifted individuals as those:

> who demonstrate outstanding levels of aptitude (defined as an exceptional ability to reason and learn) or competence (documented performance or achievement in top 10% or rarer) in one or more domains. Domains include any structured area of activity with its own symbol system (e.g., mathematics, music, language) and/or set of sensorimotor skills (e.g., painting, dance, sports) (para. 1).

What can be gleaned from these varied definitions is that intelligence and/or giftedness can take many forms. Students can be gifted in non-traditional ways and their giftedness may present itself in multiple domains including such things as the arts, cognitive ability, leadership or specific academic content areas (National Association for Gifted Children, n.d.).

The lack of a standard, agreed-upon definition has led to the idea that giftedness may not actually be specifically definable, that it may in fact be a socially constructed phenomenon (Pfeiffer, 2012). If this is the case, some would argue that the act of defining it, may be futile or in fact harmful. Siegle, et. al. (2016) suggest that "Even the act of defining gifted students as a single population neglects the vast diversity among student populations" (p. 3). If giftedness is simply a social construct, then it could be expected that many of the biases that are present within society would impact how it is defined. Society's notions around race, gender, and class can inequitably impact who is identified as gifted (Parekh, et. al., 2018).

For this study, the researcher will use the US Department of Education (1993) definition of giftedness because it is broad and does not specify areas of learning, performance, or knowledge.

Gifted Identification

Because giftedness is complex and the definition is not universally agreed upon, identifying students as gifted can be complicated and controversial. However difficult, "a transparent, research-based, and purposeful identification process is a critical first process in providing appropriate learning opportunities to gifted youth" (Hodges, Tay, Maeda & Gentry, 2018, p. 148). School districts' methods for determining giftedness can vary greatly. These methods can either be determined by state mandate or local policy. Sturnberg and Subotnik (2000) identified five decision-making models that organizations use in determining students'

giftedness. Most organizations' practices align with one of these five models: 1) single cutoff – the school district uses a single assessment score from a specific assessment, such as an IQ score to determine whether a student qualifies for gifted services; 2) single cutoff: flexible criterion – school districts use a single score, but the score can be from one of several assessments as determined by the district; 3) multiple cutoff – students are required to score above a predetermined score on multiple assessments; 4) averaging – scores from multiple assessments are averaged in order to determine qualification; 5) dynamic – a student's giftedness is measured by comparing their score on an initial assessment with their score on the same assessment after a period of time.

Hodges (2013) asserts that when it comes to gifted identification, the "selection of suitable tests, checklists and tools for each student is important (p. 1). This decision about what type(s) of assessment(s) an organization will use and to who it will be administered to, appears to hinge on two debates: 1) Whether intelligence is an observable fixed trait or something that can be developed 2) Whether intelligence is defined as cognitive, academic ability or includes a broader aptitude in additional, more non-traditional domains. An organization's stance on these two issues will determine how and when they assess students for gifted programming. If an organization believes that intelligence is innate and unchanging, they may tend to assess students less frequently. If a student is identified as having high cognitive ability, then that is who they are and who they will always be. There is no need for further assessment. Likewise, if a student does not meet the criteria for being gifted, then they never will, and it is not necessary to administer any subsequent assessment. Interestingly, students must be reevaluated periodically in every other domain of school i.e., special education, athletic teams, etc. (Pfeiffer, 2012). If an organization's philosophy includes the belief that intelligence can be developed over time, then

they are likely to assess and reassess students more frequently utilizing methods similar to the dynamic method proposed by Sternberg and Subotnik (2000). Those organizations whose philosophy on intelligence focuses primarily on cognitive ability and academic achievement will be more likely to utilize a single cutoff model for gifted determination, while those who believe in a broader definition of intelligence will likely use a multiple cutoff or averaging model often including assessments from multiple domains.

The majority of school districts rely heavily, if not solely on traditional cognitive ability assessments to determine eligibility for gifted programming (Brown, et. al., 2005). These assessments are designed to measure students' quantitative ability, working memory, perceptual reasoning, processing speed, and verbal comprehension. The most common of these assessments determine a student's Intelligence Quotient or IQ. Examples of these individually administered assessments are the Stanford-Benet, Weschler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC), and the Woodcock Johnson (NAGC, n.d.; MDE, 2020; Loveless, 2020). While this type of testing may identify some students with exceptional abilities, many current authorities believe that relying only on IQ testing for identifying gifted students is too simplistic and clings to the false pretense that giftedness is an inherent and fixed trait (Pfieffer, 2012). Many experts believe that intelligence and giftedness are complex and cannot necessarily be quantified by a single number. (McCluskey, 2017). McCluskey (2017) argues that IQ tests tell us "little about creativity, morals, values, and perseverance…" (p. 195). Moreover, some researchers believe the practice of establishing cutoff scores using IQ is problematic because students who score one point apart could be labeled as gifted and not gifted, respectively (Borland, 2009). There are also several cognitive ability tests that can be administered in group settings, either through a universal screening model or with predetermined groups of students. These assessments do not offer IQ

scores, but can present comprehensive data on students' intellectual strengths. Examples of these assessments are the CogAt and the Otis-Lennon (NAGC, n.d.; MDE, 2020; Loveless, 2020).

In addition to cognitive ability tests, academic achievement tests are utilized for gifted and talented identification. These assessments measure the learned knowledge of students and compare their performance with peers (National Association for Gifted Children, n.d.) Examples of these assessments are the Iowa Test of Basic Skill (ITBS), Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), and the Stanford Achievement Test (SAT). (NAGC, n.d.; MDE, 2020; Loveless, 2020). These assessments can serve as the basis for gifted services qualification or as a reason to refer for further assessment.

With the theories of Renzulli (1978), Gardner (1983), and Gagne (1985) in mind, some school districts have chosen to utilize a more comprehensive approach to assessing students' abilities and aptitudes. Organizations using these practices subscribe to the belief that giftedness is more complex and nuanced than simply possessing high cognitive ability. The National Association for Gifted Children (n.d.) identifies five domains where students may exhibit giftedness: intellectual, academic, creative, artistic, and leadership. Organizations with a more comprehensive view of giftedness will commit to assessing students in multiple domains. In addition to the intellectual and academic assessments previously referenced, assessments to gauge students' abilities in the additional domains of creativity, artistic talent, and leadership can be utilized. Examples of assessments in these areas are behavioral rating scales such as Gifted Rating Scales (GRS), Scales for Identifying Gifted Students (SIGS), and Scales for Rating the Behavioral Characteristics of Superior Students (MDE, 2020; Westberg, 2011). Moreover, assessments specifically focused on measuring creativity include the Torrance Test of Creative Thinking and the Profile of Creative Abilities (Kaufman, Plucker & Russell, 2012). Assessments

specific to gauging leadership ability include personality tests, observation, and interviews (Phillips, 2009).

The decision of which students to assess can vary greatly between school districts. A student can either be initially referred based on an established assessment performance criteria or by an adult (teacher or parent) based on observed knowledge of the students' abilities (Hodges, et. al., 2018; NCAG, n.d.). Many organizations follow a two-step system for identification including a nomination stage and a confirmation stage (McBee, et. al., 2016). Often, this involves the use of universal screening as an initial assessment strategy. Universal screening refers to the practice of administering an assessment "to all eligible students, as opposed to only those who meet some other initial criteria" (MDE, 2020, para. 2). In theory, universal screening allows for all students to be considered for gifted services. By contrast, other organizations' gifted assessment process is only initiated for students who demonstrate high ability based on identified criteria. For example, students may be assessed if they score high on existing academic tests or if they achieve at high levels on academic content. Diagnostic assessments often follow to confirm superior knowledge and/or ability in the assessed disciplines. Regarding adult observer referral, teachers and/or parents often initiate the gifted assessment process through a recommendation based on factors such as anecdotal observation of perceived strengths and talents, high academic achievement, and formal or informal behavioral checklists or rating scales that align with the organization's definition of giftedness (NAGC, n.d.; Renzulli, 2008).

Equity in Education

As defined by the Oxford English Dictionary (2020), equity is "the quality of being fair and impartial." In education, this is often translated as being fair and inclusive. To be fair and inclusive, schools must establish and sustain "high expectations and strong support for all

students" (NCTM, 2000, p.11). They must also consider the needs of individual students or groups of students and tailor their supports to meet those needs. These needs may exist due to factors including, disability, historical disenfranchisement, socioeconomic status, or native language (American University, 2020). The United States Department of Education Office for Civil Rights (2015) outlines equity in education as guaranteeing that all students have equal access to the core elements of a quality education regardless of their race, sex, national origin, or religion. Students' disabilities must also not limit their opportunities to receive a quality and robust school experience.

A commonly held misconception is that equity in school means that all students must receive equal resources and support. The truth is, to ensure fairness and inclusion, resources often must be allocated based on the needs of students, schools, or districts. "The students who are furthest behind — most often low-income students and students of color — require more of those resources to catch up, succeed, and eventually, close the achievement gap" (Mann, 2014, para. 4). This unequal distribution can be considered fair "based on differences in merit or need" (Masters & Adams, 2018, para. 5). Although resources in these cases are allocated unequally, the purpose is to guarantee that all students are provided with the supports that they require to achieve at high levels. In other words, to provide all students with equal opportunities to achieve, schools may have to deliver unequal or varying levels of support based on need. These supports may be fiscal, instructional, social-emotional, or involve the allocation of physical resources such as school supplies or food. The purpose of providing these supports is to ensure equal access for all students or "a level, shared area with open pathways that are equidistant to mutually agreed-upon currencies" (Heick, 2015 para. 2).

Inequity in Gifted Education

The underrepresentation of students who belong to racial minority groups, particularly Black and Hispanic, can serve as evidence of inequity in gifted programming (Ford, 2012). Black and Hispanic students, as well as those that receive free and reduced lunch and English language learners, are less likely to be identified as gifted (Siegle, et.al., 2016). In fact, they are "2.5 times less likely to be identified and served in gifted and talented programs, even if they're achieving at the same level as their white, more majority peers" (Islas, 2017, para. 6). If equity was a reality in gifted identification and programming, racial subgroups' percentage of the gifted enrollment would more closely mirror their percentage of the total student enrollment. However, the Mid Atlantic Equity Center (2009) reports that historically, "the percentage of minority students constituting gifted and talented programs is below their percentage make up of total enrollment" (para. 1). According to the United States Department of Education Office of Civil Rights (2014), Black students made up 15% of the students in the U.S. public schools that offer gifted services in 2011-2012, yet only 9 percent of those identified as gifted. Moreover, Hispanic students made up 25 percent of the total student population in schools that offer gifted programming and only 17% of the students who were identified as gifted. In contrast, white students made up 50% of the school enrollment and 60% of those receiving gifted services.

Students who are identified as English Language Learners are also underrepresented in gifted programs relative to their overall population (Callahan, 2005). In fact, "their representation in gifted and talented education continues to lag behind all other types of learners" (Langley, 2016, para. 1). In 2017, there were five million English Language Learners in U.S. schools. This represents 10.1% of all students (NCES, 2020). However, less than three percent of the students in gifted and talented programs are identified as ELL (Harwin & Sparks, 2017).

In addition to race and language, gender appears to impact students' likelihood to be identified as gifted. According to the United States Department of Education Office for Civil Rights (2012), since the late 1970s, girls have outnumbered boys in gifted and talented program enrollment. In 2009, 7.4% of boys were enrolled in gifted programming while 8.1% of girls participated in gifted services. Despite these figures being relatively close, referrals for gifted and talented programming are still influenced by gender stereotypes (Bianco et. al., 2011). In some cases, students are more likely to be nominated for gifted services if they do not conform to the stereotypes that the nominators hold. For example, if a teacher believes that males are stronger math students, they may be more likely to nominate a female student who is excelling in mathematics than they would a male student (Bianco et. al., 2011).

Finally, a student's socioeconomic status can impact the prospect that they will receive gifted and talented services (Van Tassel & Stambaugh, 2007). According to Hamilton et. al. (2018), "Even when they exhibit equally high mathematics and reading achievement, FRL students were less likely to be identified for gifted services than non-FRL students" (p. 20).

Grissom, Redding, and Bleiberg (2019) found that "among students in the top 1% of math scores, the probability that a student in the highest SES quintile will receive gifted services is about 13 percentage points greater than students in the first quintile. In reading, the difference is 7 percentage points" (p. 19).

Barriers to Identification

The underrepresentation of certain groups of students indicates that barriers exist that prevent those groups from being equitably identified for gifted and talented services (Ford, 2001; Ford 2010; Siegle, et. al., 2016. There are many potential barriers that can account for this imbalance including referrer knowledge and understanding of giftedness and their cultural

competency and biases, culturally biased assessments and curriculum, and limited family access to information. These "barriers exist due to misconceptions, misperceptions, and lack of awareness or knowledge of what to look for" (Grensing-Pophol, 2017, p. 21).

Many programs rely on teacher or parent referral for initial consideration for gifted services. This practice positions these adults as the gatekeepers for gifted services. Establishing these roles can be problematic given that individuals' definition of giftedness, as well as held biases, can influence who is referred. Ford (2010) identifies the scarcity of teacher referrals as one of the roadblocks preventing Black and Hispanic students from being identified as gifted. Moon & Brighton (2008) assert that "whether a primary grade student receives support to develop his or her talents and how his or her talents are developed will depend in large measure on how that student's teacher conceptualizes giftedness…" (p. 449). Referrers' biases can also influence who is referred. Szymanski and Shaff (2013) assert that "teacher's attitudes and understanding of culturally diverse learners may play a large role in the selection of these students for special programs" (p. 5). Pigott and Cowen (2000) found that teachers judged African American students to have less educational promise than their white peers. Furthermore, Elhoweris (2008) asserts that "perceptions about economically disadvantaged students combined with a lack of cultural understanding may undermine the ability of educators to recruit economically disadvantaged students into gifted education" (p. 35). Teachers' nominations of students for gifted programming often align with the values of the dominant culture (Peterson, 1999).

The current assessment practices used to identify students for gifted and talented services in schools are often limited and rely on traditional measures of intelligence rather than on factors such as creativity, leadership or problem solving. One of the proposed reasons for this is, that

"most tests of ability or intelligence assume some level of similarity in background experience for a given normative group" (Peters & Engerrand, 2016, p. 161). The problem with this assumption, of course, is that students possess an extremely diverse set of background experiences, including the degree and sequence of their exposure to academic content. Therefore, comparing a diverse group of students to each other in this way is not an effective method for accurately assessing their ability or creativity. The lack of universal testing and testing that goes beyond traditional measures can prevent those students who do not score high on traditional assessments from being identified as gifted. Ford (2010) argues that "students' differential performance on traditional intelligence and/or achievement tests" (p. 32) serves as a barrier to identification for Black and Hispanic students. According to Hodges et al., (2018), "if schools are only using IQ scores to identify gifted students, Black, Hispanic, and Native American students who may not have the opportunities to develop their gifted potential are not likely to be identified and served" (p. 149). Additionally, when identification measures rely heavily on language, either verbal or written, this can place students with lower English language proficiency at a great disadvantage for qualifying for gifted and talented services (Mun, et. al., 2016).

Finally, cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic differences between families and the dominant culture can lead to issues of access for students of color, English Language Learners, and those living in poverty. These differences "have served as stumbling blocks to establishing effective home-school partnerships. The involvement of minority families in the recruitment and retention process is incomplete without early, ongoing and substantive family involvement" (Ford, 1998, p. 11). This lack of family involvement can lead to a limited understanding of both gifted indicators and the gifted identification process.

Strategies to Reduce Inequity in Gifted Education

The research identifies several elements of school, that if addressed effectively, can better ensure equity within the schools' gifted and talented programs. Assessment, Curriculum, Teacher Preparedness, Family/Community Engagement, and Cultural Competency are all critical components to ensuring equity in serving all students with exceptional needs (NAGC, 2008; Ford, 1998).

It is critical that students' eligibility for gifted services not be determined by a single measure but by multiple measures that vary in the level of standardization, the response format, method of material presentation, and the assessed content or constructs (NAGC, n.d.). Multiple assessments should be explored that measure aspects outside of the traditional academic realm. Creative thinking, cognitive aptitude, problem solving, and motivation should be considered when identifying students' abilities. According to Hodges,et. al. (2018):

> Some identification methods for giftedness combine elements from traditional and nontraditional forms of assessment by including a nonverbal component in the testing. This is done in hope of reducing the language bias that may exist within traditional verbal and quantitative assessments (p. 149).

Nonverbal intelligence assessments such as the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test and the TONI-4 Test of Nonverbal Intelligence can be utilized to ensure that verbal ability and language proficiency are not impediments to identification. With any assessments, cut-off scores should be avoided. "High scores should be used to include students, but if students meet other criteria, then lower test scores should not be exclusionary" (TEA, 2015).

One strategy to increase diversity in gifted education is the practice of establishing group-specific norms. Group-specific norms can "enhance the use of achievement measures to yield

more proportional representation of underserved students in gifted programs" (Peters & Gentry, 2012, p. 140). In addition, identification should not be a one-time assessment. If, as many believe, intelligence is dynamic and not fixed, a process should be created with organizations to continually assess new students and reassess previously identified students to ensure that they are being properly served. When assessments are administered, universal screening can be used to ensure that all students are considered for gifted services. The practice of universal screening for gifted identification has been shown to increase the representation of low-income and culturally diverse students in gifted education (Card & Giuliano, 2016).

If schools are to ensure equity in gifted education, it is critical that they take steps to make certain that core curriculum, as well as the curriculum specifically targeting gifted students, is thoughtfully designed and implemented. A well-developed core curriculum is vital in guaranteeing that the skills and talents of all students are being developed. This curriculum should then be effectively differentiated to meet the individual needs of gifted students (Berger, 1991). Tailoring the curriculum to the needs of the learners is more likely to create a culture that fosters the demonstration and identification of giftedness. A "design down" curricular model can be used where the learning is designed with an outcome in mind that promotes a high level of readiness for all students and can be modified based on the need of the student. "Enrichment-oriented" models can also be used. These models tend to focus on the learning process and typically hold a broader view of giftedness (Van Tassel-Baska & Brown, 2014). To elicit critical thinking and problem solving that is good for all students, but also aligns particularly well with the needs of gifted students, a thinking curriculum should also be considered. "Thinking curricula fulfill a dual agenda by integrating content and process. Within this agenda, students develop habits of mind with respect to learning that serve them well both in school and in the

real world" (Fennimore & Tinzmann, 1990, p.1). A thinking curriculum can offer an emergent talent experience as part of a more comprehensive talent nurturing model. These models should "include experiences for students that prepare them for the formal identification process" (Siegle, et. al., 2016, p. 21).

Professional development opportunities that enhance teachers' understanding of gifted students and that provide teachers with the knowledge they need to accurately identify and teach students with exceptional needs are critical to eliminating the existing inequities. Ford (1998) asserts that "The ability of teachers to work effectively with gifted minority students will increase based on staff development efforts and teacher education preparation" (p. 11). Unfortunately, "Few teacher preparation programs require coursework in differentiation for gifted and advanced learners or strategies for teaching advanced classes and content. Thus, even when teachers want to help-and many do-they lack the knowledge and skills to do so" (Rakow, 2012, p. 35). The National Association for Gifted Children (n.d.) has identified five critical areas for educator professional development. These areas are needed if schools are to effectively develop and identify gifted students from populations that have been historically underserved.

- Learning characteristics and behaviors of underrepresented gifted populations
- Awareness of cultural differences
- Children with multiple exceptionalities
- Developing positive peer culture in the classroom and school
- Equitable and nonbiased assessments

Hansen & Feldhusen (1994) found that teachers who are specifically trained in gifted education practices are better able to meet the needs of gifted students. Interestingly, they also develop classroom climates that are more positive. Furthermore, methods should be explored to guide

teachers in developing a growth mindset. “Teachers with a growth mindset appreciate the incremental nature of all learning, and are better able to provide a good match, whether a student is ahead of grade-level curriculum or behind” (Foster & Matthews, 2013, para. 10). Teachers with a highly developed growth mindset will be more likely to accurately identify students from underserved populations who are displaying non-traditional indicators of giftedness

If the schools wish to create equity in their gifted and talented identification and services, they must develop a high level of cultural competency among staff. It is paramount that teachers be able to effectively work with and understand the diverse population of students in their classroom and in their school (Ford, 2012). They must also be “committed to removing barriers to accessing gifted education services” (Ford, Dickson, Davis, Scott & Grantham, 2018, p. 127). A high level of cultural competency will allow teachers, administrators, and support staff to understand the distinctions in students’ methods, strategies, and ways of thinking that may be different from the majority, but have roots in their unique backgrounds and experiences. Supporting school staff in the development of cultural competency can reduce the existence of ignorance and indifference which together leads to the “poor referral and identification process of under-represented groups in gifted education” (Wright, Ford &Young, 2017, p. 48). If we are going to rely on teachers, at least in part, to refer students for gifted education services, they “need education, training, and support to develop the skills to make these recommendations” (Szymanski & Shaff, 2013, p. 2).

Finally, families and community members, particularly those in traditionally underserved populations, must be educated and empowered to identify, foster and support the learning associated with giftedness. Schools should develop a structured plan to engage families and create an open, safe direct home-school communication and education plan concerning gifted

education with the families of ELL, minority, socioeconomically disadvantaged, and special education students. Ford & Harmon (2001) contend that schools "must make sure that diverse families know that the school district offers gifted education services, understand referral and screening measures and procedures, and know how placement decisions are made" (p. 145). Grantham, et. al. (2005) suggest that:

> When parents of culturally diverse gifted students are informed and actively involved in the educational policy and practices related to gifted students, they are in a better position to advocate on their children's behalf and to proactively address issues of equality and excellence.

According to Kitano (2003), "Parents and families are among the most important influences on children's academic performance, particularly in families most at risk for school failure based on poverty" (p. 298). Of particular importance is the families' role in referral for gifted services since they observe students in multiple situations and settings on a daily basis. Families must be involved in the "screening, identification, and placement process (Ford, 1998, p. 11). If families in underserved populations are educated on the behavioral indicators of giftedness, they could more accurately and responsibly refer their children for assessment (TEA, 2015). In addition, those families should be informed about in-home and extra-curricular strategies and opportunities to support the learning of their gifted student. Community mentors have also been shown to be effective resources for gifted students (Berger, 1990). Adults who have excelled in an area that is of interest to a gifted child can serve as motivators and advocates for disadvantaged students.

In some school communities, effectively addressing one of these elements of inequity may very well produce more equitable outcomes within their gifted programming. Most

communities, however, will likely need to employ a comprehensive plan that addresses multiple elements to produce long term systemic change.

Conceptual Framework

District demographic data, achievement data, and observational data indicate that the process for identifying and servicing gifted and talented children in School District A is inequitable for students of color, students whose native language is not English, and those receiving free or reduced lunch. Currently, the identification process relies on limited academic assessment data and/or adult referral. Students who score high on standardized assessments or those who are referred by a parent and/or teacher are automatically considered for gifted services.

The trends that have emerged in School District A mirror the patterns of inequity in gifted education nationwide. Students belonging to minority groups are typically underrepresented in gifted and talented education (Cross & Donovan, 2002). Native language, socioeconomic status, and disability diagnosis are also common factors that lead to the exclusion of potentially qualified students from gifted services. If we are to eliminate these discriminatory practices, the education community must recognize that *"*Outstanding talents are present in children and youth from all cultural groups, across all economic strata, and in all areas of human endeavor" (Ross, 1993, p.11).

Given the limitations of this process, it is plausible that teachers' and parents' varied and potentially subjective definitions of giftedness, along with bias and reduced access are major factors leading to the identification of very few students of color, non-native English speakers, and students living in poverty for gifted and talented services. The current process relies heavily on parent and teacher referral. The lack of a recently developed, collectively agreed-upon, and

widely communicated district-wide definition of giftedness forces the referrer to rely on their subjective definition of giftedness when determining who to recommend for services. This lack of standardization likely causes a district-wide discrepancy in qualification criteria. In addition, the current process requires the Gifted and Talented Coordinator to serve as a gatekeeper in determining students' qualifications using a non-standardized process. This one person's definition of giftedness could also dramatically impact program requirements. The lack of a standardized process extends to the way the assessment data are used. Some clear qualifying cut-off scores have been established for certain assessments, while others are left up to the discretion of the coordinator based on program capacity. The overall lack of a standardized process for identifying gifted students increases the potential for personal bias and other barriers to impact the equity within the program. Figure 2.1 shows a graphic representation of the study's conceptual framework.

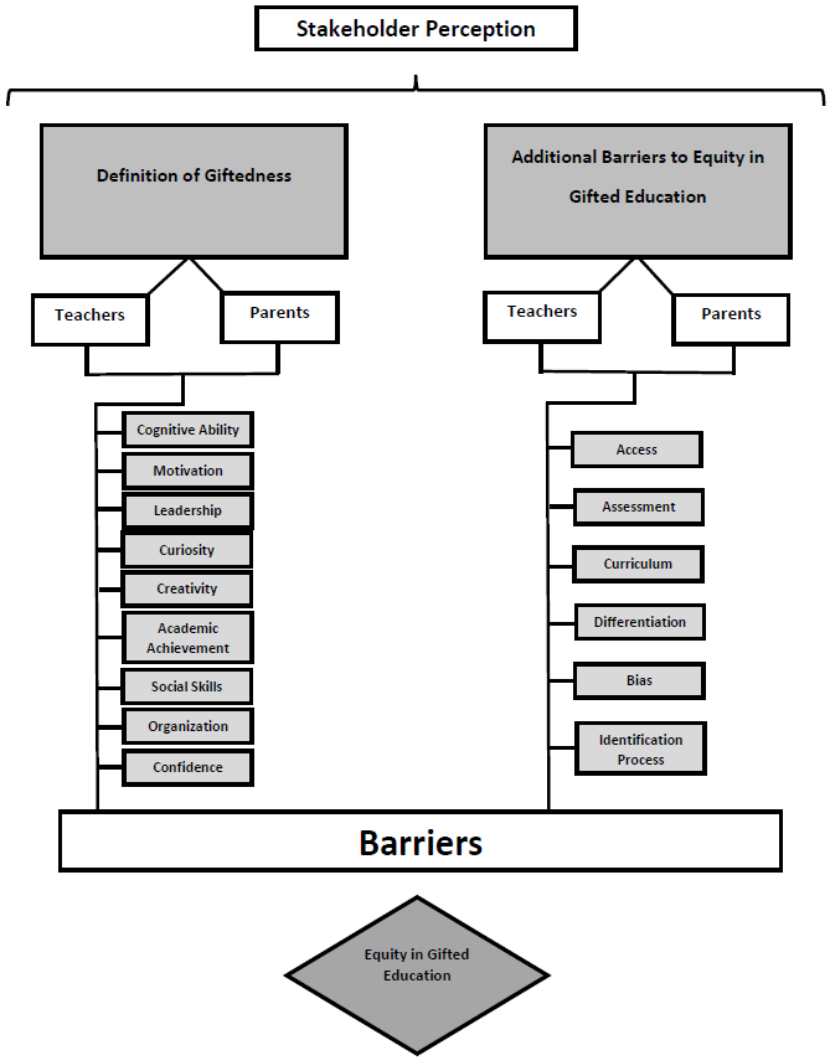

Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework

CHAPTER THREE – INQUIRY METHODS

Introduction

A mixed methods research study will be conducted where surveys are administered to 100 stakeholders that include 50 teachers and 50 parents from School District A. The survey will use Likert Scales to measure responses allowing the information gathered to provide quantitative data. In addition, a total of 10 stakeholders will participate in a semi-structured interview designed to collect information regarding participants' perceptions. The results from the interview will provide the qualitative data. The conceptual framework for this written work was borrowed from the author's proposed problem of practice that exists within School District A's services for gifted learners.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this mixed methods study is to examine the problem of practice that is present within School District A's gifted and talented programming. The research aims to identify the existing barriers to creating equity in the identification and servicing of K-12 students. Inductive Grounded Theory will be the methodological approach to this study.

The research will explore the following questions:

- *How do teachers and parents in School District A define the concept of giftedness?*
- *How do teachers' and parents' definition of giftedness impact which students are identified for gifted and talented programming in School District A?*
- *What additional elements of School District A's gifted and talented identification process may create barriers to racial, linguistic and socioeconomic equity?*
- *How might School District A effectively eliminate barriers to racial, linguistic and socioeconomic equity in their gifted and talented programming?*

Chapter Three will explain the rationale for the research paradigm and methodology, as well as describe the setting for the problem of practice. In addition, the research sample and data sources as well as the data collection and analysis methods will be detailed. Finally, the trustworthiness, limitations, and delimitations of the research will be explored.

Rationale

Determination and subsequent examination of identified barriers to equity in the gifted and talented programming in School District A will ideally lead to recommended action steps that could be taken to reduce or eliminate racial, linguistic, and socioeconomic inequity within their gifted programming. The philosophy in which this study is framed is constructivism. Data will be collected and analyzed in order to develop an understanding, a subsequent theory, and a potential solution to the problem of practice. A mixed methods approach is the most appropriate method for this study because much of the research will rely on participants' specific perceptions and ideas concerning giftedness and equity. It would be ineffective to reduce these ideas to a numerical value. To identify specific potential barriers, it will be important for participants to voice, in detail, their understanding and experiences related to this problem of practice. Individuals' construction of reality around equity in gifted education could vary greatly given that it is formed by personal experiences. Soliciting perceptions through open-ended responses will allow participants to share their reality and provide an opportunity for the researcher to gain a greater understanding of the problem of practice. This knowledge and insight will be critical in creating a plan for reform. Grounded Theory is the most suitable methodology for this research because the outcomes will rely on an inductive process. The researcher will use the collected data to develop a theory regarding equity in gifted programming (Ravitch & Carl, 2016) In order to generate ideas around existing barriers to equity and create theories for their existence, data

must be gathered, analyzed, tagged, and categorized. This methodology will allow the researcher to generate a plausible theory to explain the existence of the problem of practice and develop recommendations to effectively address it.

Problem Setting/Context

The site for this study is a PreK-12 public school district located about 20 miles outside of a major Midwestern city. The district serves one of the most affluent communities in the state. The school district consistently places among the highest-performing schools in the state on all academic measures. The average ACT score for students in the district is 25.1 and 93% of students continue their education after high school. The high school was one of only two in the state to be distinguished on all four "best of" lists: America's Top High Schools (*Newsweek*), Top High Schools (*The Daily Beast*), America's Most Challenging High Schools (*The Washington Post*) and Best High Schools/Gold Medal (*U.S. News & World Report*). In addition, the district was named a National District of Character by the Character Education Partnership. Despite this overall high achievement, a distinct achievement gap between white students and students of color exists.

At the time of this study, the district's enrollment totaled 2,819 students across four schools- two elementary buildings and two secondary buildings. Approximately 30% of the student population is open enrolled from neighboring districts. The racial/ethnicity demographics are as follows: 91% White, 5% Hispanic/Latino, 1% Asian, 1% African American, and 2% identify as two or more races. Approximately 2% of the district's students are English Language Learners, 12% receive special education services, and 7% qualify for free or reduced lunch. The district employs approximately 192 teachers (82% of which hold advanced degrees), 11

administrators, and 143 support staff. Class sizes average approximately 26 students per class across grades K-12.

The district has provided gifted and talented services for more than 30 years. Currently, they use multiple criteria to identify students in grades 2-5 who qualify for direct gifted and talented service. These include standardized test scores, parent/teacher recommendation, curriculum-based assessments, classroom performance, and/or anecdotal information. The services at his level consist primarily of pull-out, small group supplemental instruction focused on a specific curricular area. In 4th and 5th grades there are also double accelerated math courses available. In Kindergarten and 1st grade, the gifted and talented teacher pushes into classrooms and teaches all students using a thinking skills-based curriculum. On rare occasions, a kindergarten or first grade student will qualify for pull-out gifted services. When students in K-1 are identified, it is with all the aforementioned assessments except for standardized test scores. For students in grades 6-12, direct gifted services no longer exist and students generally follow advanced coursework tracks based on their previous gifted services and identification. However, students at these levels can also self-select advanced coursework. There are no cognitive or creative ability assessments utilized for gifted identification at this time.

Achievement data, observational data, and the district demographic data indicate that the process for identifying and servicing gifted and talented children in this school district is potentially inequitable for students of color as well as those that are economically disadvantaged or speak a language other than English. These factors make this district a unique and compelling site for research of this kind. Addressing this Problem of Practice could have a tremendous impact on individual students and the overall community. It is plausible that a group or groups of students in the district are being underserved. By identifying the organizational and social

barriers that exist, the district could begin to more accurately identify the strengths and needs of the individuals in these groups and tailor their individual instruction and programming in a way that allows them to achieve at an accelerated pace.

Research Sample and Data Sources

Before conducting any research in this study, the researcher will submit a protocol to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Arkansas and receive approval from said board. Furthermore, all participants in the study will sign a consent form (see appendix C) that will specify how and why the data will be used as well as assure that the information that they provide will be kept confidential throughout the research process.

The participants for this study will be chosen from two distinct groups: teachers and parents from District A. These two groups were chosen because of the likelihood that each of these groups may have unique impressions and experiences around giftedness and equity in education (Seidman, 2013). To develop a broad perspective on the state of equity in gifted education in District A, having numerous perspectives from a diverse group of participants will be critical.

The research participants for this study will be selected using a stratified sampling method. Initially, two groups will be identified: teachers and parents. Participants will then be chosen at random from within those groups. This sampling method will ensure that there is representation from each of these critical stakeholder groups.

Participants' personal information, as well as their survey and interview responses, will be kept confidential at all times during this research. The sensitive nature of the topic and the social pressures that exist around it create ethical issues (described in more detail later in this chapter) that make confidentiality imperative. Each participant will be assigned an identification

number from one to n. All data collected from that participant will be coded and referenced by that number rather than by name. The identification number will be followed by a letter that identifies the participant's stakeholder group i.e. teacher (T) or parent (P). Following the stakeholder identifier, participants will be tagged with a symbol to represent additional self-identified information. A circle will indicate that the teacher works with primary (K-2) grade students, a square will indicate that the teacher works with intermediate (3-5) grade students, a star will indicate middle school (6-8) and a triangle will indicate high school (9-12). Finally, teacher and parent participants will be color-coded by their self-identified information related to either how long they have been teaching in the school district or how long they have had children attending School District A. Those who indicate that their years teaching or years as a parent of a student are between 0-3 will be coded as blue, those that indicate 4-7 years will be coded as green, 8-11 years: red, 12-15 years: orange and over 15 years will be coded as purple. Finally, a parent who indicates that their child currently receives gifted and talented services will be coded by having their entire code underlined. For example, a participant could be coded as "16P*red" meaning they are participant #16, they are a parent of a middle school student who has had children in the school district for 8-11 years and their child currently receives gifted and talented services. A participant coded as "28T■purple" is participant #28, who is a teacher who works with the intermediate grades and has worked in the school district for over 15 years. Coding participants in this way will allow the researcher to identify patterns in responses within and between groups and sub-groups. The researcher will be able to use this data to determine if there are any specific groups within District A who hold a unique or distinctive perception of equity as it relates to gifted and talented

Data Collection Methods

Teachers and parents who agree to take part in the study will either complete a survey, participate in an interview, or both. The survey tool (see appendix A) was designed to gauge participants' perceptions of giftedness and barriers to equity in District A's gifted and talented identification process and services. Surveys of this kind can "be a useful data source within a larger data collection plan" (Ravitch & Carl, 2016 p. 172). The survey includes items that ask for demographic information and items that prompt participants to respond about their perceptions using Likert scale ratings. Demographic information will be collected on participants to determine if patterns of perception exist within and between groups.

A semi-structured interview (see appendix B) will also be used to gather more specific and in-depth data from participants. Qualitative interviews can be used to effectively "gain focused insight into individuals' lived experiences" and to "explore how individuals' experiences and perspectives relate to other study participants" (Ravitch & Carl, 2016 p. 146). The interview questions will primarily prompt participants for open-ended responses. This will allow participants to respond by using their own words to explain their perceptions. Interviews will allow for authentic responses to questions that yield valuable information regarding participants' insights, behavior, and beliefs. Moreover, interviews will provide opportunities for the researcher to probe deeper into relevant topics that emerge during the conversation.

Data Analysis Methods

The quantitative data from the survey and the qualitative data from the interviews will be analyzed to determine barriers to equity in District A's gifted and talented identification and programming. Given that this research focuses on equity, it is plausible that specific demographic groups or sub-groups may possess unique and important perspectives on this issue.

Analyzing the demographic information of participants for both the Likert scale survey and the interviews will allow the researcher to make or refute correlations in and around these groups. In addition, the researcher can determine if patterns emerge within the identified groups of teachers or parents.

Likert scale responses will be calculated numerically, with the researcher determining, the mean and the rank order of responses for teacher respondents and parent respondents. These data will reveal whether any significant differences in the responses of these groups exist. In addition, the Likert scale data will be compiled to establish patterns in perception for the participants as a whole. These data, in part, will be a critical piece in uncovering how stakeholders define giftedness and how they perceive equity in District A's gifted and talented program.

Interview responses will be coded, sorted, and analyzed by the researcher using a process (See Figure 3.1) to create meaning connected to the research questions including identifying key themes, patterns, or discrepancies in how stakeholders define giftedness as well as identify barriers to equity as it applies to the gifted and talented programming in the district (Saldana, 2013). The responses will first be sorted by their correlation to the research questions. Each interview question is directly tied to one of the four research questions. Research Questions 1 and 2 can be broadly categorized as Definition of Giftedness while Research Questions 3 and 4 are paired under the category of Additional Barriers to Equity. From there the data will be sorted by interviewee group: parent or teacher, allowing for the analysis of patterns or discrepancies between different groups' perceptions. The data pertaining to the definition of giftedness will then be further coded into categories that present themselves based on participants' responses. Some potential categories could include cognitive function, work completion, or social-

emotional. This analysis will reveal the range of definitions within School District A as well as the characteristics with the most perceived value overall. The data pertaining to additional barriers to equity will be coded into categories of commonly found barriers for educational programs: access, assessment, curriculum, differentiation, bias, and identification process. The data will reveal if additional or alternate coding categories are needed. The data may further be coded into experiences and attitudes/beliefs to delineate information that is based on actual interaction with the gifted and talented process and those that are purely based on philosophies and or principles. This method for coding will allow for the identification of commonly perceived barriers by the community or subgroups. The survey data and the interview data will then be analyzed together to determine how the quantitative and qualitative data support each other allowing for close analysis of the perceptions that exist about the problem of practice in School District A.

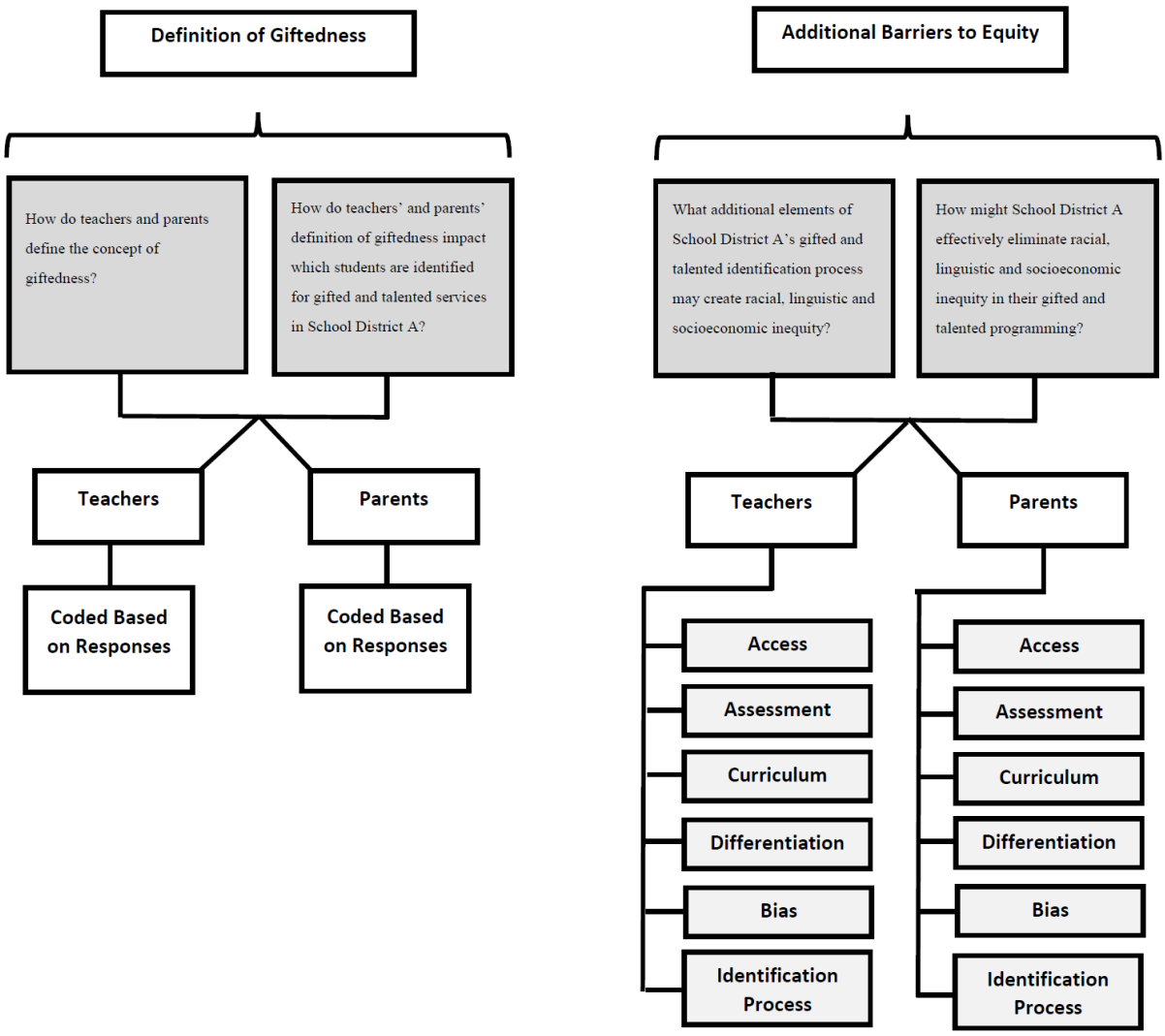

Figure 3.1: Coding Schematic Illustrating the Coding Process for Interview Responses

Validity/Trustworthiness

In conducting this research, it will be critical to ensure that the study is valid and trustworthy. There are two potential validity threats that I, the researcher must be mindful of to prevent them from impacting the study's results. Seidman (2013) asserts that "conflicts of interest are inherent in interviewing people you supervise" (p. 44). Since I serve as a supervisor

in the setting where the study is taking place, there is concern regarding the accuracy of interview responses. Participants may not be comfortable sharing information on such a potentially sensitive topic with the person that oversees their work. In part, the culture of risk taking and open dialogue that has already been established in the setting will promote open and honest participant responses. In addition, I will do all I can to openly assure participants that their responses are honored and important and that they will have no bearing on personnel decisions. I will also allow the participants to review the transcripts of their interviews to ensure that they feel their responses have been accurately recorded.

Another potential validity threat is researcher bias. I enter this work inevitably having preconceived ideas about equity in gifted education and what implications the level of equity has for both the organization and the larger school community. The mixed methods approach for this study allows for the use of quantitative data that is less vulnerable to biased interpretation. This quantitative data will be triangulated with the other collected data to ensure accuracy. This richness and diversity of data collection methods will lead to more reliable results.

Limitations

There are several limitations to this research that cannot be controlled. One significant limitation of this research is that it may not be generalizable. The research was conducted in a very specific context and the findings reflect the reality of that context. The characteristics of this research's location will not match exactly with other settings and therefore the findings may not apply to the problems found there. The data gathered in this research, however, could be used to provide context to another setting to explain a similar phenomenon that exists. This issue will also be addressed by comparing the results of this study with existing research and analyzing any discrepancies to ensure that there is no outlying evidence that may be inaccurate.

Another limitation in this study is a result of the sensitivity of the topic. Social pressures exist around the topic of equity and therefore may impact the accuracy and honesty with which participants approach their participation. The setting for this research is heavily populated by upper middle class to upper class Caucasian families. Because of this mostly mono-cultural setting, participants may feel social pressure to not openly identify areas of inequity, especially as it applies to race. Although the data that are collected during interviews cannot be entirely anonymous since the researcher will be present, the researcher will transcribe, code, and categorize responses in such a way as to be unidentifiable. The survey data that will be collected will allow participants to remain anonymous and therefore hopefully elicit accurate and truthful responses.

Delimitations

Two main delimitations were set for this research study. The data collection methods excluded focus groups while including surveys and interviews. The researcher believes that social pressures and insecurities may impact participants' participation if they are offering their beliefs and perceptions in the company of other participants, and therefore skew the data.

In addition, not all stakeholder groups were included in this research. The researcher chose to focus on collecting the perceptions of those stakeholders that he felt were closest to the student experience in the district. Therefore, the research included teachers and parents. The research did not include the perceptions of administrators, support staff, volunteers, etc. because they have a more limited role in students' direct educational programming.

CHAPTER FOUR – FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine a problem of practice that exists within School District A's gifted and talented programming. The research aims to identify the existing barriers to creating equity in the identification and servicing of K-12 students. This study sought to review the perception of stakeholders in School District A to identify potential barriers that exist for specific subgroups of students being identified for gifted and talented services. The research for this Problem of Practice focused on exploring the following questions:

- *How do teachers and parents in School District A define the concept of giftedness?*
- *How do teachers' and parents' definition of giftedness impact which students are identified for gifted and talented programming in School District A?*
- *What additional elements of School District A's gifted and talented identification process may create barriers to equity?*
- *How might School District A effectively eliminate barriers to equity in their gifted and talented programming?*

A mixed method approach guided by constructivist philosophy was used to conduct this research. This approach gathered perceptual information using interviews and surveys. Data was collected and analyzed to develop an understanding, a subsequent theory, and a potential solution to the problem of practice.

The first section of Chapter Four describes the quantitative and qualitative data collected from the perception survey administered to teachers and parents as it relates to the research questions. The second section of Chapter Four describes the qualitative data collected from the parent and teacher interviews.

Survey Results

The quantitative data for this study were gathered through a survey (see appendix A). The survey includes items that ask for demographic information and items that prompt participants to respond about their perceptions about the definition of giftedness and potential barriers to gifted equity using Likert Scale ratings. The survey also includes two open-ended questions that will be used in part, as qualitative data for the study.

Respondent Demographics

The demographic data of the respondents was collected using the stakeholder perception survey. Table 4.1 shows the number and percentage of respondents representing teachers and parents, respectively. 42% (n = 55) of the respondents were teachers, 48.8% (n = 64) were parents and 9.2% (n = 12) were both teachers and parents in the school district.

Table 4.1: Role of Survey Respondents

Role	Responses (n = 131)	Response Percentage
Teacher	55	42.0
Parent	64	48.8
Teacher & Parent	12	9.2

Table 4.2 shows the level(s) where the teacher respondents (n = 67) currently teach. These data are relatively evenly distributed among the four main levels of school. 28.4% (n = 19) of teachers work in the primary grades. 22.4% (n =15) work in the intermediate grades, 19.4 % (n
= 13) work in the middle grades, and 22.4% (n = 15) work with high school students. The remaining 7.4% (n = 5) work in some combination of the four levels.

Table 4.2: Teaching Level of Teacher Respondents

Teaching Level	Responses (n = 67)	Response Percentage
Primary (K-2)	19	28.4
Intermediate (3-5)	15	22.4
Middle (6-8)	13	19.4
High (9-12)	15	22.4
Primary & Intermediate	3	4.5
Middle & High	2	2.9

Table 4.3 shows the level(s) where parent respondents' (n = 76) children currently attend school. Parent respondents whose children are only in the primary grades comprised 23.7 % (n = 18) of participants. Parent respondents who only have children in the intermediate grades make up 2.6% (n = 2) of participants, while 3.9% (n = 3) and 14.5% (n = 11) only have children that currently attend school in the middle grades and high school respectively. Most parent respondents, 55.3% (n = 42) have more than one child and their children currently attend school in different grade level bands.

Table 4.3: Parents' Children School Level

School Level	Responses (n = 76)	Response Percentage
Primary (K-2)	18	23.7
Intermediate (3-5)	2	2.6
Middle (6-8)	3	3.9
High (9-12)	11	14.5
Primary & Intermediate	10	13.2
Primary, Intermediate & Middle	3	3.9
Primary & Middle	4	5.3
Primary & High	1	1.3
Primary, Middle & High	1	1.3
Intermediate & Middle	9	11.8
Middle & High	14	18.4

Finally, the data presented in Table 4.4 shows whether the parent respondents (n = 75) have children that currently receive gifted services or have received gifted services in the past. 41.3% (n = 31) of parent respondents have children that have received gifted services and 58.7% (n = 44) do not have children that have received gifted services.

Table 4.4: Parent Respondents: Children Receive(d) Gifted Services

Child Received Services	Responses (n = 75)	Response Percentage
Yes	31	41.3
No	44	58.7

Definition of Giftedness

To address the research question, "How do teachers and parents in School District A define the concept of giftedness?" survey respondents were asked to rate specific student characteristics using a Likert Scale. A score of 1 indicates that the respondent believes that the identified characteristic is "not at all important" when considering a student for a gifted and talented referral. A score of 2 indicates that the characteristic is "slightly important," a score of 3 denotes that the respondent is "unsure" of the importance, 4 means "important" and a 5 signifies that the respondent believes the characteristic is "very important." Figure 4.1 displays the average score given by all parent and teacher combined survey respondents (n = 131) for each of the identified characteristics. The combined group of parents and teachers identified curiosity (4.45), problem solving skills (4.32), creative thinking (4.20), enthusiasm for learning (4.19), and perseverance (4.00) as the most important characteristics to consider when determining giftedness. Socioeconomic status (1.16), athleticism (1.19), cultural background (1.48), works quietly (1.86), and technology proficiency (2.18) were identified as the least important characteristics.

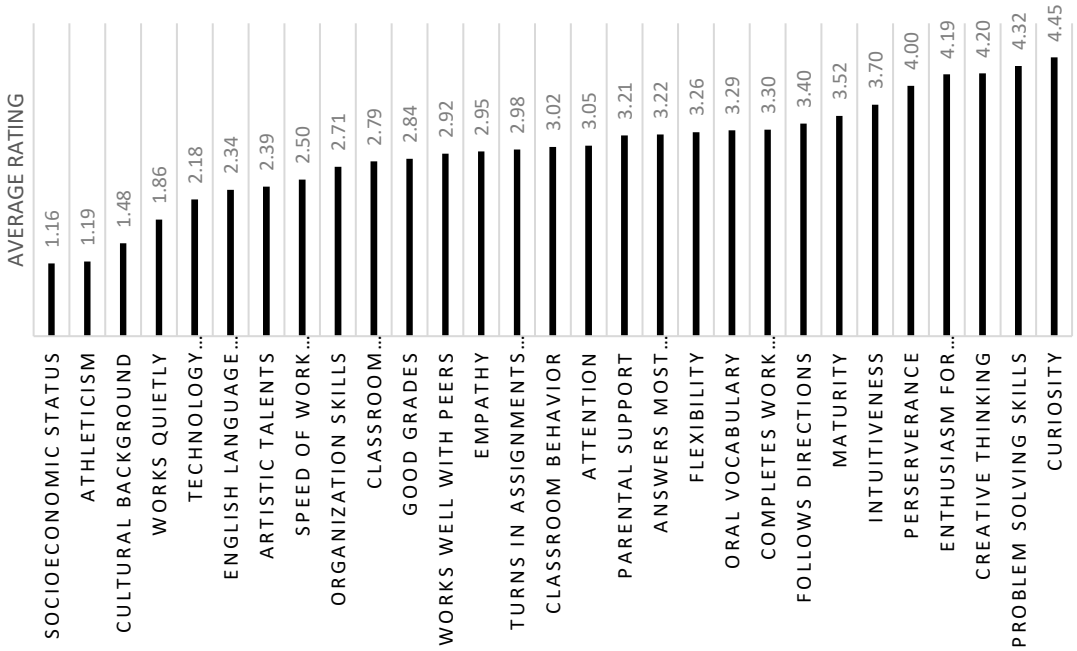

Figure 4.1. Teacher & Parent Combined Characteristics of Giftedness

Figure 4.2 presents the average score indicated by parent survey respondents (n = 76) regarding the characteristics of giftedness. Curiosity (4.39), problem solving skills (4.32), enthusiasm for learning (4.13), creative thinking (4.00), and perseverance (3.89) were rated as the top characteristics respectively. In contrast, socioeconomic status (1.12), athleticism (1.26), cultural background (1.45), works quietly (2.08) and artistic talents (2.41) were rated as the least important student characteristics.

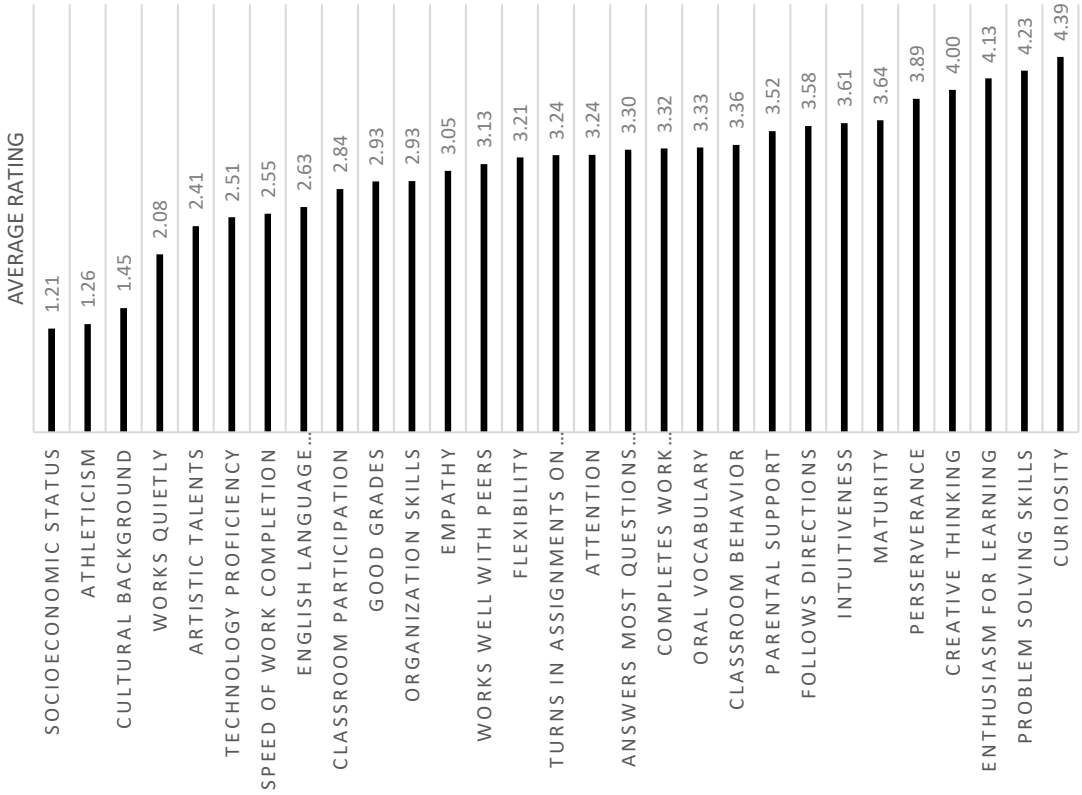

Figure 4.2: Parents' Characteristics of Giftedness

Figure 4.3 shows the average score indicated by teacher survey respondents (n =67) regarding the characteristics of giftedness. Curiosity (4.48), creative thinking (4.45), problem solving skills (4.41), enthusiasm for learning (4.21), and perseverance (4.07) were rated as the most as the most important characteristics to consider when determining giftedness. Athleticism (1.07), socioeconomic status (1.13), cultural background (1.53), works quietly (1.55) and technology proficiency (1.84) were rated as the least important characteristics.

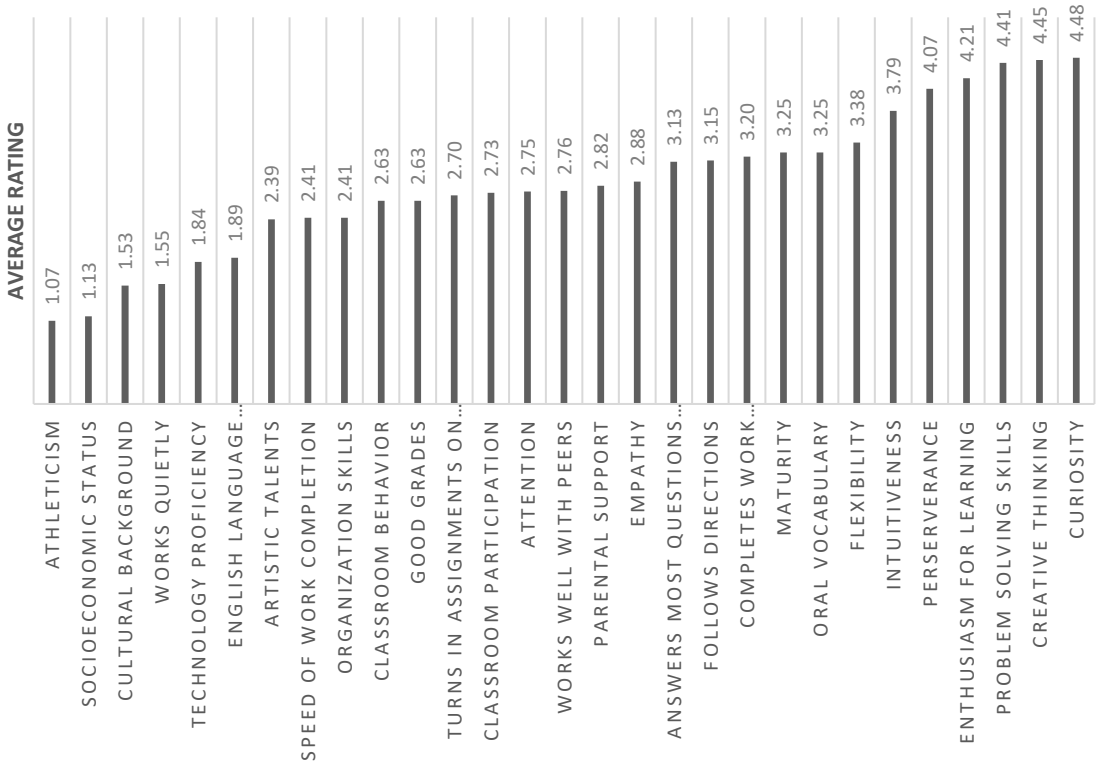

Figure 4.3: Teachers' Characteristics of Giftedness

Additional comparative data from the "Definition of Giftedness" portion of the survey were analyzed to further address the question, "How do teachers and parents in School District A define the concept of giftedness?" Figure 4.4 shows the difference between parent and teacher respondents' ranking of twenty-nine identified characteristics of giftedness when arranged from highest average rating to lowest average rating. It also displays the stakeholder group that ranked each characteristic as more important. Classroom behavior had the largest difference in ranking between the two groups (10), followed by flexibility (6), empathy (5), parental support (5), and classroom participation (4). The characteristics with the smallest difference in ranking were curiosity, perseverance, works quietly, and cultural background. Each of these characteristics had

a difference in ranking of zero, meaning they were ranked in the same place by both teachers and parents.

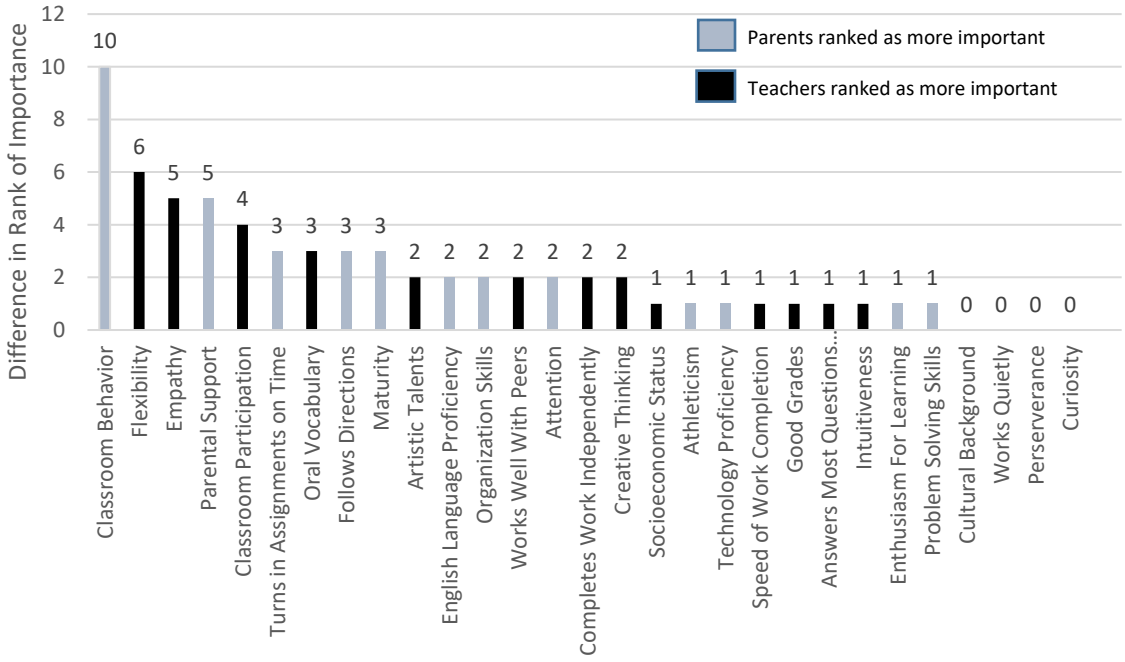

Figure 4.4: Characteristics of Giftedness: Difference in Parent and Teacher Ranking

Figure 4.5 displays the difference between parent and teacher respondents' actual average rating score for each of the characteristics of giftedness. It also indicates which stakeholder group rated each characteristic higher in terms of importance. The characteristics with the largest difference in average rating were English language proficiency (.74), classroom behavior (.73), parental support (.70), technology proficiency (.67), and turns in assignments on time (.54). The characteristic with the smallest difference in average rating were artistic talents (.02), cultural background (.08), enthusiasm for learning (.08), socioeconomic status (.08), and oral vocabulary (.08).

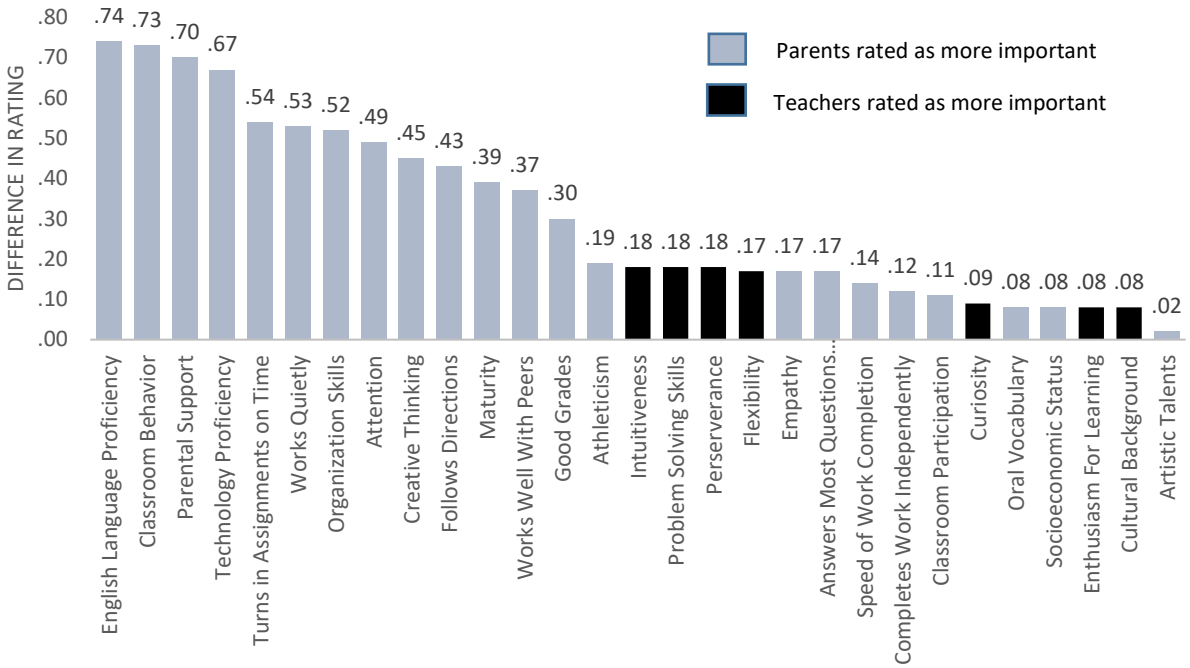

Figure 4.5: Characteristics of Giftedness: Difference in Parent and Teacher Rating

Perception of Barriers to Equity

To address the research question, "What additional elements of School District A's gifted and talented identification process may create barriers to equity?" survey respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement on twenty statements related to giftedness and gifted services using a Likert Scale. A score of 1 indicates that the respondent "strongly disagrees" with the statement. A score of 2 indicates that the respondent "disagrees" with the statement, a score of 3 signifies that the respondent is "unsure" about their level of agreement, 4 means "agree," and a 5 denotes that the respondent "strongly agrees" with the statement. Figure 4.6 displays the average score given by all parent and teacher combined survey respondents (n = 131) for each of the statements. The combined group of parents and teachers most strongly agreed with the statements, "All students should have an equal opportunity to be identified for gifted and talented services" (4.40), "Students with high IQs should be considered for gifted and talented services"

(4.04), and "Students who show high levels of creativity should be considered for gifted and talented services" (3.93). This group most strongly disagreed with the statements, "If a student gets poor grades in school, they are not smart" (1.46), "The student's gender has an impact on whether or not they will be identified for gifted and talented education (2.16)," and "If a student gets good grades in school, they must be smart" (2.23).

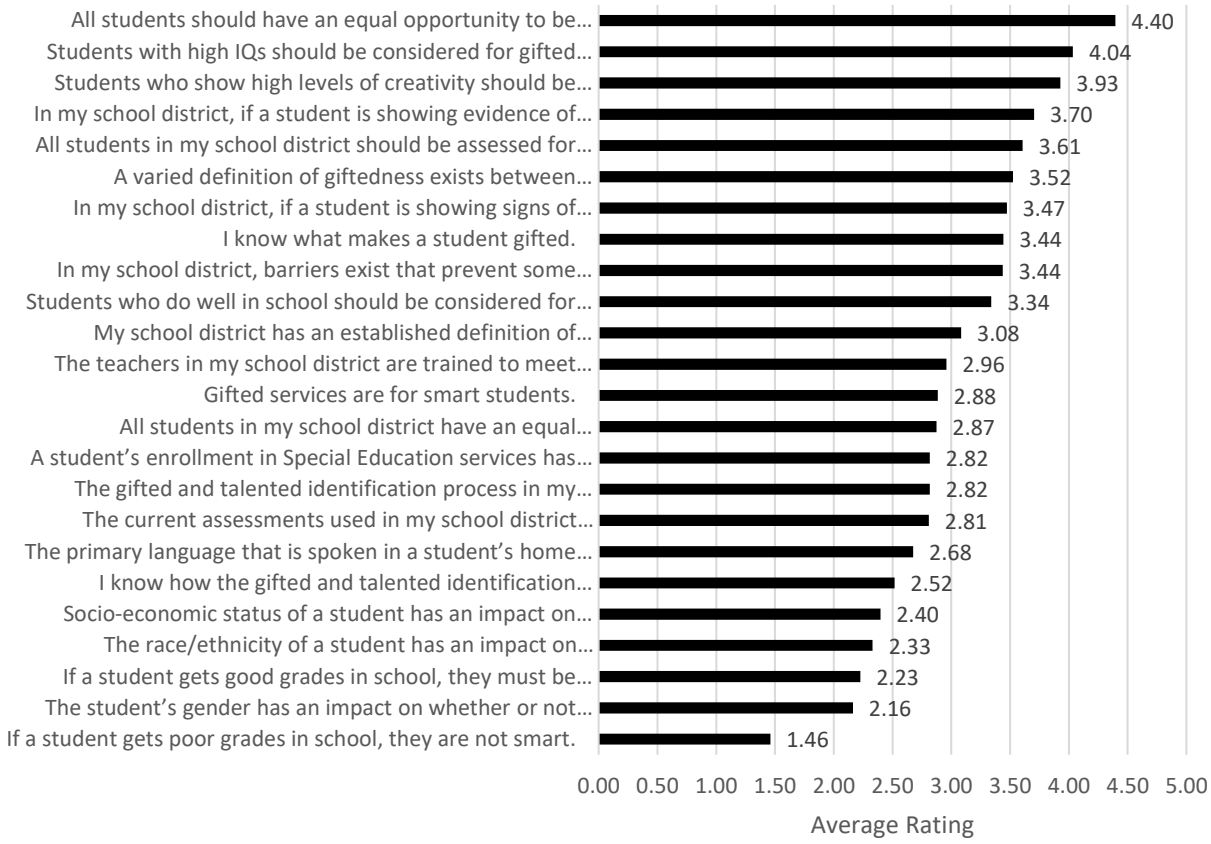

Figure 4.6: Barriers to Identification: Parent & Teacher Perception

Figure 4.7 shows the average score given by all parent respondents (n = 76) for each of the statements. Collectively, the parent respondents most strongly agreed with the statements, "All students should have an equal opportunity to be identified for gifted and talented services"

(4.33), “Students with high IQs should be considered for gifted and talented services” (4.09), and “Students who show high levels of creativity should be considered for gifted and talented services” (3.83). The parent respondents most strongly disagreed with the statements, “If a student gets poor grades in school, they are not smart” (1.57), “The student’s gender has an impact on whether or not they will be identified for gifted and talented education” (2.18), and “The race/ethnicity of a student has an impact on whether or not they will be identified for gifted and talented identification” (2.25).

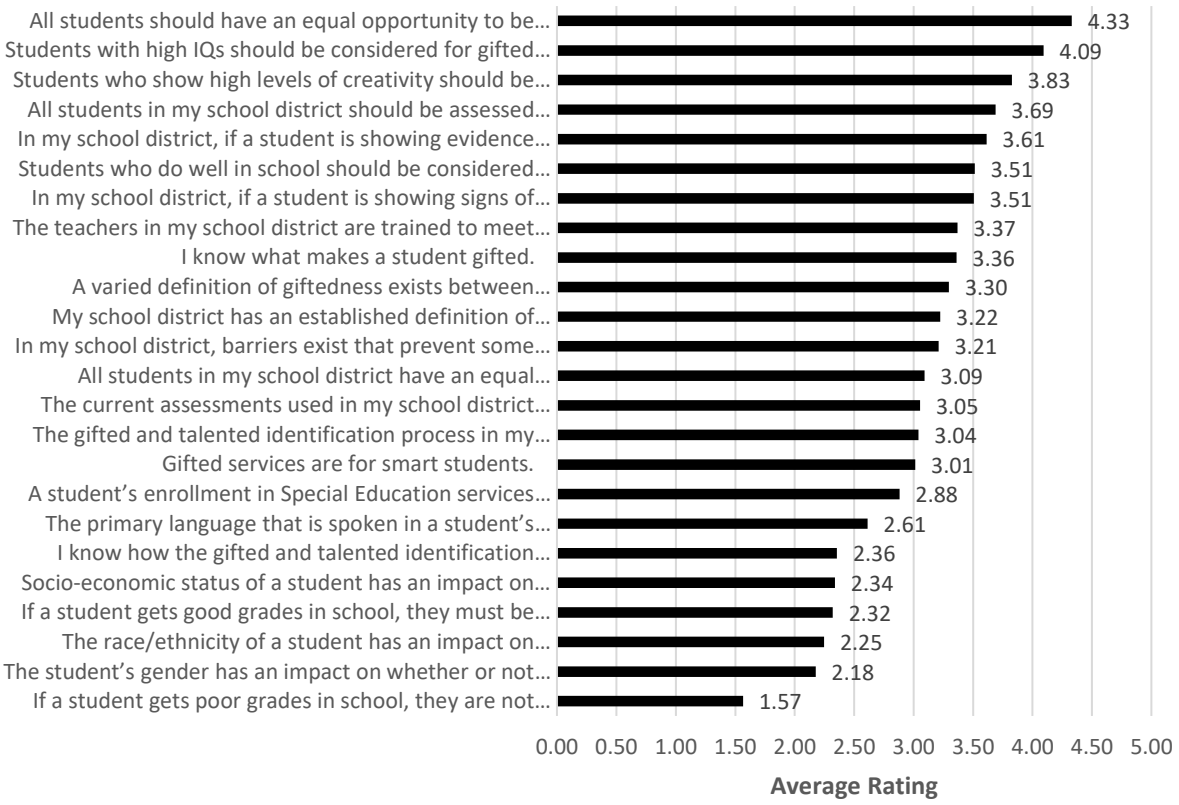

Figure 4.7: Barriers to Identification: Parent Perception

Figure 4.8 exhibits the average score given by all teacher respondents (n = 67) for each of the statements. Collectively, the teacher respondents most strongly agreed with the statements, “All students should have an equal opportunity to be identified for gifted and talented services” (4.48), “Students who show high levels of creativity should be considered for gifted and talented services” (4.05), and “Students with high IQs should be considered for gifted and talented services” (3.97). The teacher respondents most strongly disagreed with the statements, “If a student gets poor grades in school, they are not smart” (1.34), “If a student gets good grades in school, they must be smart” (2.12), and “The student’s gender has an impact on whether or not they will be identified for gifted and talented education” (2.15).

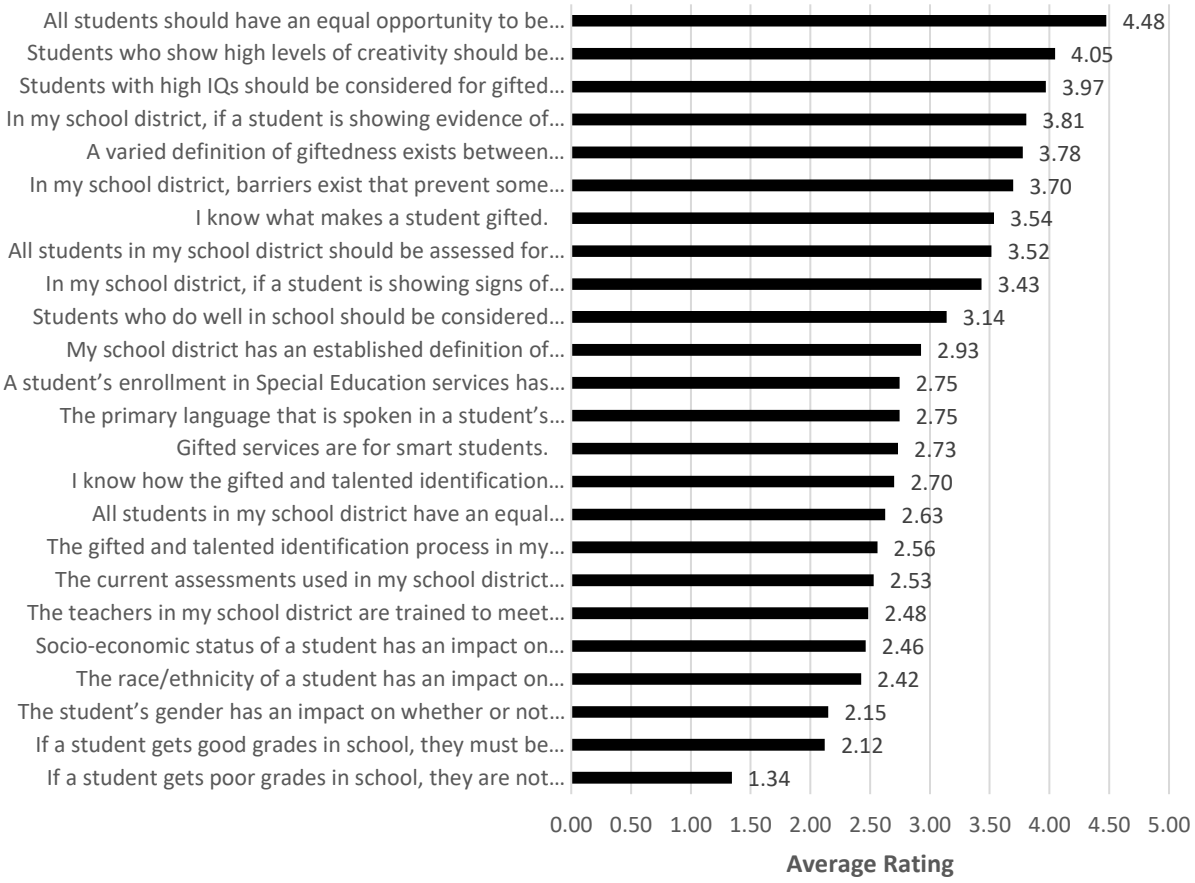

Figure 4.8: Barriers to Identification: Teacher Perception

Figure 4.9 shows the difference between parent and teacher respondents' ranking of twenty-four identified statements about barriers when arranged from highest average rating to lowest average rating. It also displays the stakeholder group that ranked each statement higher in terms of agreement. The statement, "The teachers in my school district are trained to meet the needs of gifted students" had the largest difference in ranking between the two groups (11), followed by "In my school district, barriers exist that prevent some gifted students from being identified as gifted" (6), and "A varied definition of giftedness exists between stakeholders in my school district" (5). The statements with the smallest difference in ranking were "All students

should have an equal opportunity to be identified for gifted and talented services," "My school district has an established definition of giftedness," "Socio-economic status of a student has an impact on whether or not they will be identified for gifted and talented education," and "9. All students should have an equal opportunity to be identified for gifted and talented services." Each of these characteristics had a difference in ranking of zero, meaning they were ranked in the same place by both teachers and parents.

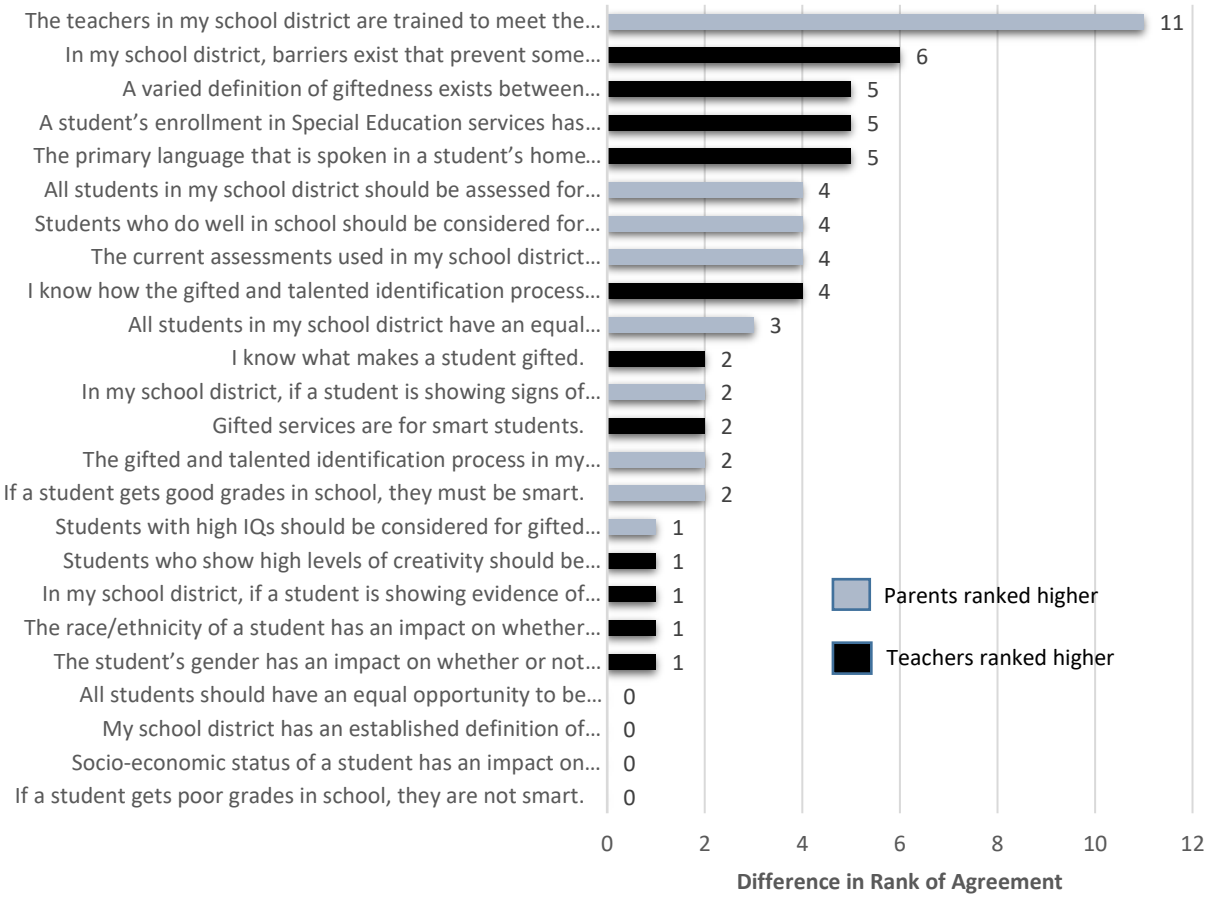

Figure 4.9: Barriers to Identification: Difference in Parent and Teacher Ranking

Figure 4.10 displays the difference between parent and teacher respondents' actual average rating score for each potential barrier to identification. It also indicates which stakeholder group rated each characteristic higher in terms of agreement. The statements with the largest difference in average rating were "The teachers in my school district are trained to meet the needs of gifted students" (.89), "The current assessments used in my school district adequately identify gifted students" (.52), and "In my school district, barriers exist that prevent some gifted students from being identified as gifted" (.49). The statements with the smallest difference in average rating were, "The student's gender has an impact on whether or not they will be identified for gifted and talented education" (.03), "In my school district, if a student is showing signs of giftedness, his/her teacher will recommend that they be evaluated for gifted services" (.08), and "Socio-economic status of a student has an impact on whether or not they will be identified for gifted and talented education" (.12).

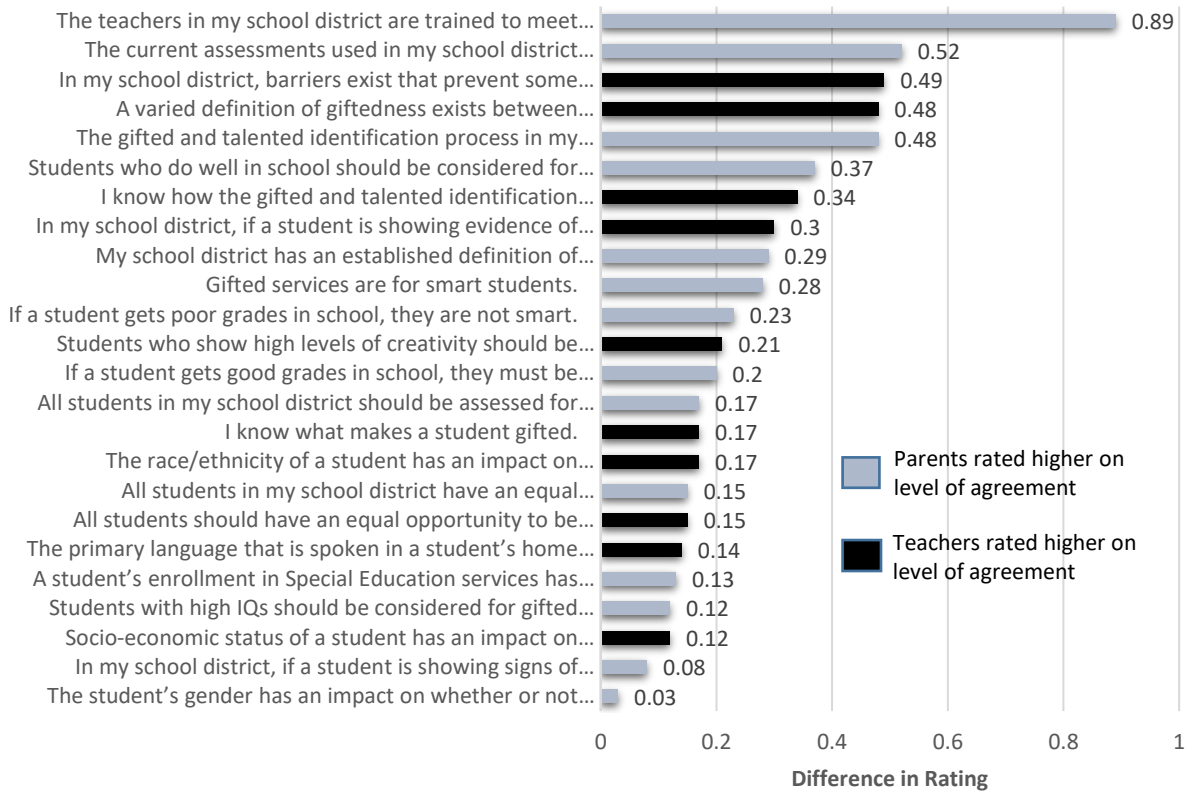

Figure 4.10: Barriers to Identification: Difference in Parent and Teacher Rating

Qualitative Survey Data

The qualitative data from the survey will be organized by analyzing the responses to the two open-ended questions: "How do you define giftedness?" and "What barriers do you believe exist that could prevent a student or group of students from qualifying for gifted and talented programming?" The responses to the open-ended questions are depicted in visual representations called word clouds. In these word clouds, the more frequently a term is used in the response to the question, the larger it appears on the word cloud. This allows key themes from the response to be easily identified. Figure 4.11 is a word cloud that depicts the responses to the question, "How do you define giftedness?" The most prominent themes that emerged from the responses

to this question were ability, level, areas, learning, academic, peers, problem, higher, creative, and talent.

Figure 4.11: Open Response - How do you define giftedness?

Figure 4.12 is a word cloud that depicts the responses to the question, “What barriers do you believe exist that could prevent a student or group of students from qualifying for gifted and talented programming?” The most notable themes that emerged from the responses to this question were gifted, program, standardized, identified, missing, test, scores, tutoring, parents, teacher, assessment, numbers, issues, and services.

Figure 4.12: Open Response - What barriers do you believe exist that could prevent a student or group of students from qualifying for gifted and talented programming?

Interview Results

Following the survey, twelve participants were chosen from volunteers to participate in a semi-structured interview (see appendix B). The participants consisted of both teachers and parents in School District A. The interview consisted of 15 open-ended questions designed to gather information directly related to the four research questions.

Participant Demographics

The demographic data of the interview participants were collected using their responses from the stakeholder perception survey. Table 4.5 shows the number and percentage of participants representing teachers and parents, respectively. 33.3% (n = 4) of the participants were teachers, 58.3% (n = 7) were parents and 8.3% (n = 1) were both teachers and parents in the school district.

Table 4.5: Role of Interview Participants

Role	Responses (n = 131)	Response Percentage
Teacher	4	33.3
Parent	7	58.3
Teacher & Parent	1	8.3

Table 4.6 shows the demographic data of each of the twelve interview participants including grade level(s) taught (teachers) or grade levels for students (parents) as well as whether their children have received gifted services. For parent respondents' (n = 8), 12.5% (n = 1) only have children that currently attend school in the primary grades. Similarly, 12.5% (n = 1) of the parent participants only have children that currently attend school in the middle grades. Another 12.5% (n =1) have students that attend the primary grades and intermediate grades, 12.5% (n = 1) have students in both primary and high school and 12.5% (n =1) have students who attend both middle and high school. Finally, 37.5% (n = 3) have students who attend both Intermediate and middle grades. Most parent participants (n = 7) have had at least one child who has received gifted education services.

For teacher participants, (n = 5), 40% (n = 2) teach in the primary grades, 40% (n =2) teach high school, and 20% (n = 1) teach in the intermediate grades.

Table 4.6: Interview Participant Demographic Data

Participant	Role	Grade Level(s) Taught	Child(ren) Grade Level	Gifted Service History
#1	Parent	N/A	Intermediate (3-5) & Middle (6-8)	Yes
#2	Parent	N/A	Primary (K-2)	Yes
#3	Parent	N/A	Primary (K-2) & High (9-12)	Yes
#4	Parent	N/A	Primary (K-2) & Intermediate (3-5)	Yes
#5	Parent	N/A	Middle (6-8)	Yes
#6	Parent	N/A	Middle (6-8) & High (9-12)	Yes
#7	Parent	N/A	Intermediate (3-5) & Middle (6-8)	Yes
#8	Teacher	High (9-12)	N/A	N/A
#9	Teacher	High (9-12)	N/A	N/A
#10	Teacher	Primary (K-2)	N/A	N/A
#11	Teacher	Primary (K-2)	N/A	N/A
#12	Parent & Teacher	Intermediate (3-5)	Intermediate (3-5) & Middle (6-8)	No

Qualitative Interview Data

The qualitative data gathered from the interview will be organized around the four research questions from the study. This will allow for a focused analysis of the main research objectives.

Research Question #1: "How do teachers and parents in School District A define the concept of giftedness?"

During the interview, parent and teacher participants were asked "How do you define giftedness?" Most participants cited some form of exceptionality when asked how they define giftedness. One parent described this as "a talent at least one segment above the mean." The area of exception, however, was described differently by the participants. Most participants cited an

above-average intellectual ability as one key defining trait of giftedness. One teacher described this as "surpassing their peers in either cognitive ability or reasoning." A parent explained this as students "surpassing their peers in either cognitive ability or reasoning." Four participants cited superior performance, either in academic work or standardized tests as a basis for giftedness. A teacher respondent stated that "students that excel academically" can be gifted. A parent stated that giftedness is "often defined by a series of standardized tests." Three of the twelve participants mentioned curiosity as a factor that contributes to giftedness. A parent participant expresses that an "above average curiosity in the things around us" was an indicator of a child's giftedness. In addition, creativity was revealed to be a factor in how respondents determined a student's giftedness. Three of the interview participants mentioned this as a component of their giftedness definition. Interestingly, all three were teachers. One teacher stated that giftedness is "a level of creativity that a student has in a particular area." Two of the twelve participants cited motivation as a quality of a gifted student. One parent described this as a "motivation to understand." Three participants mentioned that giftedness can be displayed in multiple areas or disciplines. One teacher participant asserted that there can be a "multitude of things that they really excel in or have strengths beyond a normal high-achieving student. Additional factors that were mentioned by participants but did not necessarily constitute patterns in responses were pace of learning and interest level.

When asked how they developed their definition of giftedness, participants' responses were distinctly split based on their role as either a parent or a teacher. Two of the six parent respondents cited their experience with their own child's giftedness as the origin of their definition. One parent stated that her definition is based on "what my children go through as a gifted child or children." Three parent participants mentioned that their definition of giftedness

was at least in part based on people that they know, either personally or as a result of celebrity, that they and others deem as particularly intelligent. One parent stated that their definition derives from thinking about "the brightest and smartest people that you know, whether or not they were peers growing up or famous people that are considered smart." Two parents mentioned that their own experience of being gifted has shaped their definition. One parent described that her definition came from, "my understanding of what I went through in a program similar as a gifted student." The origin or teacher respondents' definition of giftedness primarily consisted of their experiences in teaching in the classroom and/or their teacher training. All five of the teachers stated that their definition of giftedness has been shaped by their experience in the classroom. One teacher stated that her definition came from her "experience working with different students and different gifted programs." Two of the five teacher participants mentioned their training as a factor that contributed to their definition. One teacher said, "I've done a lot of training over the years in gifted education, and I learned that students who are truly gifted…They have a need in a different way than a general education student."

Further data were gathered regarding participants' definitions of giftedness by asking them to identify what talents and/or strengths should not be considered when determining qualification for gifted services. When answering this question, three parent respondents displayed a level of uncertainty. One of the parents in part, responded, "I don't know how to answer that question exactly." Four of the twelve interviewees thought that sports or athletic ability should not be considered when determining if a student is gifted. A parent respondent stated, "I don't think sports talents are considered. They're a gift in a different dimension, but they don't belong in the classroom setting per se." Two respondents identified academic achievement as a factor that should not necessarily be considered when determining giftedness.

They stated that “Straight A’s definitely shouldn’t determine” and “I think that high achievement, like if that was the only factor – I don’t think that that – it should be the only factor that is looked at.” Two of twelve respondents, one parent, and one teacher, believed that parent input should not be a primary factor that is considered in gifted determination. The parent respondent recounted a previous experience where, “so many parents were like, “My kid’s brilliant”. I think certainly listening to parents, but not letting the loudest parents in the room sway it too much.” One of twelve respondents cited cultural traits as factors that should not be considered. This interviewee stated that “Race, creed, color kinds of things. I think that absolutely has to be out of the equation. We have to work to be super neutral on this.” Finally, one respondent conveyed that there is nothing that shouldn’t be considered when determining a student’s qualification for gifted services. This parent respondent declared, “I don’t think that there is any strength or talent that shouldn’t be considered. You need to look at the whole person…” Participants’ views on what should not be considered when determining giftedness can offer insight into their definition of giftedness.

Research Question #2: “How do teachers’ and parents’ definition of giftedness impact which students are identified for gifted and talented services?”

When asked explicitly how their definition of giftedness impacts whether they would refer their child (parent) or a student (teacher) for gifted and talented services, most respondents’ answers closely mirrored their definition. One parent who cited “surpassing their peers in either cognitive ability or reasoning” in their definition of giftedness stated that they would look for how their child does “in comparison to peers based on test scores, cognitive abilities…” Another parent who spoke of being “inquisitive about the world” and having a “desire to learn,” felt that her decision to refer her children was because “they’re both really good with math and science.

They both show a real desire in that. They always ask a lot of questions in those areas." A third parent participant who in part, defined giftedness as "if someone has the interest, extreme interest or natural ability to think a certain way" spoke about wanting his child to be "very interested" in gifted services if he were to choose to refer them. This parent went on to say that it is "important that they'd be able to do it but then also they would have to have an interest."

Similar to parents, teachers' decision to refer a student for gifted and talented services appears to connect closely to their definition of giftedness. One teacher whose definition included "problem-solving, creativity. Just even like fact knowledge or understanding, depth of understanding" stated that their referral of a student would rely on "level of depth of thinking, the creativity that I see in a classroom would help to identify the ones that maybe got missed on some kind of achievement test." Another teacher who described giftedness as a student's ability to "excel academically and critical—with critical thinking and creativity above what is standard in that grade level" expressed that "if a student's level of learning is beyond being in a group with other peers in a very natural rotation or even beyond what I have the knowledge of where to go next with them" that she would consider referring that child for gifted services. A third teacher described giftedness by saying that "it's based on ability, like where you are ability wise." She goes on to clarify that ability means that "a majority of the concepts that they're covering in that class connect and resonate with them and it's easy for them to process the information and connect the dots." When asked about how their definition of giftedness would impact their decision to refer a student, this teacher stated that "I would probably refer those kids that I see having that ability."

Interview participants' responses regarding the factors that should be considered when determining if students should receive gifted services and how those factors should be assessed,

reveal elements of their definition that assists in answering the research question, "How do teachers' and parents' definition of giftedness impact which students are identified for gifted and talented services?" When asked what factors should be considered when determining if a child is gifted, participants responded with a wide variety of ideas. Five of the twelve interviewees cited a student's level of interest in a particular topic or a gifted program as an important factor to consider. A teacher stated that "a kid's interest is huge because if they're not interested in it, even though they may be gifted in it, I don't think it's right to push them…" Four of the participants felt that academic work, including grades or classwork, should be considered. One teacher stated, "I do believe academic grades need to be considered, where they are academically. Most of the time, you have kids who are high achievers. I do think you also have to look at projects that you're working on in the classroom…" Three participants, all teachers, felt that students' problem-solving skills should be a factor when determining giftedness. One teacher stated, "…problem solving. Also, like an interest in problem solving. Do they have an interest in trying to work through it and kind of stay…super dedicated to it." Numerous other factors were mentioned once by interviewees including critical thinking, engagement, classroom behavior, emotional maturity, speed of work completion, curiosity, questioning ability, creativity, collaboration skills, performance ability, and work ethic.

When asked about how these factors could be assessed to determine if a student qualifies for gifted services, most respondents cited a mix of standardized tests and teacher observation/input. Eight of the twelve interview participants felt that standardized tests were important in determining students' qualification for gifted services. One parent stated that "There's got to be some sort of testing…test scores probably have to factor in." A teacher responded that "there is probably multiple different factors including standardized test scores

whether that be MAP testing here, reading levels." Seven of the twelve interviewees thought that teacher observation and input should be considered. One parent identified that "input from the teachers who are there with your kids every single day" would be critical in the identification process. Six of the interviewees believe that the school should employ a specific gifted assessment and that the scores for that assessment should be a determining factor for qualification. Two participants referred specifically to Intelligence Quotient (IQ) testing and one proposed the idea of administering the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT). Others spoke more generally about an assessment to identify giftedness. One parent participant mentioned that there could be a "test to determine who was on the higher end of the spectrum of giftedness" in a particular area. A teacher participant proposed the idea of an assessment that consisted of "a real-world problem that maybe they would need to apply something." One final assessment approach that was mentioned by three of the participants, all of whom were parents, was parent observation/input. One parent asserted that "If parents want to come forward and advocate for their kid is another piece of it…if parents come forward and say, "Hey, I really think maybe you need to take a closer look," that helps as well."

Exploring further the idea of how teachers' and parents' view of giftedness impacts the referral process, Interviewees were asked, "As a teacher/parent, how do you make decisions regarding a student's/your student's potential for giftedness?" Five respondents spoke of gathering data through observation of a child's behavior and strengths and how that might compare to other children that they know. One parent described. "It's observation and interaction, looking to see what you kids gravitate to; what type of books they're reading; what level they're reading; the questions; how they are asking for more. If your child comes home and asking for more difficult work at school." A teacher remarked, "I determine it just through

classroom observation. The biggest part. How they—I think there's a lot of components. How they interact with their peers during learning, how they interact and hold conversations with others, how engaged they are in lessons…" Three of twelve interviewees cited test scores as a factor they would consider when referring their child or student. Two parent participants said that teacher feedback would be an important consideration. One said, "I think this would be something that would come up in a conference…they'd look at testing they'd done and say, okay, your child is kind of advanced in reading and I know that." Three respondents remarked that feedback from the students themselves would be considered when determining whether to refer. Additional factors mentioned once by respondents were academic achievements, classroom performance, work ethic, and previous recommendations for gifted programming.

To further examine perceptions related to parent and teacher referral, and to reveal how their definitions of giftedness may impact that referral, interviewees were asked, "What role do you believe the teacher and the parent have in the gifted identification process." All twelve respondents indicated that teachers should play a large role in determining whether a student qualifies for gifted education services. A parent interviewee expressed that "the teacher has probably the best perspective on how a child is engaged in a classroom and how they are progressing as compared to others in the classroom." Another parent stated that "the teacher plays a big role in that. I think the teacher knows the child very well and the teacher's with the child, at least in the elementary school all the time." A teacher respondent expressed that the teacher "should play a big role. I don't think anyone knows the specific kids better than their teachers do…" Another teacher said that "Teachers know their students best. That is part of our job in building that relationship with them." All twelve interviewees also agreed that parents should play a role in the gifted identification process, although a number of participants, mostly

teachers, indicated that the parent's role should be secondary to teachers. One parent suggested that parents should be "talking to your school district and asking questions. We have to advocate for our kids." Another parent asserted that parents should be "reaching out and saying, hey, do you have a program? Or is there a way we can have more knowledge on this?" A teacher respondent stated that "the parent obviously knows their child really well too, but I do think just as a parent, that we have some of our own biases about our kids and we all think that they're special. So I feel a parent is less objective." Another teacher said, "I think a parent should be able to inquire about it [gifted programming]…I don't believe a parent should be able to come out and say my student needs to be in this pull-out program because they see their kid only, not compared to all kids in the building."

Finally, participants were asked, "Who receives gifted services in School District A?" The purpose of this question was to examine whether their perception of how the actual referral process is conducted in School District A matches how their personal definition of giftedness would impact their decision to refer. Four of twelve interviewees thought that a certain percentage of top-performing students receive gifted services. One parent stated, "I would say the top 10 percent of the standardized tests." Three participants thought that those students who have supportive or involved parents at home are more likely to receive gifted services. A teacher stated that "the attitudes at least of the teachers is that the students who receive gifted and talented services are students who have parents who strongly advocate for them." Two interviewees cited high socioeconomic status as something that is likely to impact a student's qualification for gifted services. A parent stated that "if you've had a good financial start in life, you've probably had a good pre-K. You've probably had parents that were able to sit down and read with you. You've probably had parents that have been able to help you a lot." Two

participants suggested that students who score high on tests receive gifted services in School District A. Other single responses to this question included students who are tutored, those who show promise, students who meet the criteria, and those who have been identified by a teacher.

Research Question #3: "What elements of School District A's gifted and talented identification process may create barriers to equity?"

Parent and teacher respondents were asked several questions that provided perceptual data on the potential barriers to gifted identification in District A. Interviewees were asked explicitly, "Do you believe that barriers exist that prevent some students from qualifying for gifted services in School District A?" All twelve interview participants believe that there are existing barriers that impact some students' ability to be identified for gifted services. When asked, "What might those barriers be?" Participants cited a number of potential obstacles. Six of the twelve participants cited some form of teacher bias as a possible barrier. This bias was related to race, behavior, or their traditional view of intelligence. One parent asserted that:

> whoever the decision-maker is, it would be that person's bias. So, if it's the-if it's like I said it is the teacher of the classroom. If that teacher doesn't like the kid for whatever reason, I think it's the-it would land with the power of the person who's making that decision.

Five of the twelve interviewees stated that students with a disability may be less likely to qualify for gifted services. A teacher participant asserted that:

> if a student has a different kind of disability, like I mentioned with dyslexia, or if they have a different kind of disability, where they receive another service, generally, I don't even think we look, necessarily at their scores, because they don't meet what we would think of as a gifted learner.

In addition, five participants cited testing as a potential barrier to identification. One parent stated that "…if they possibly don't do well on testing. So much of it is based on test scores and some kids just don't do well with standardized tests. That is a barrier." Four participants named socioeconomics as a conceivable barrier to students' identification for gifted services. A parent expressed:

> because (School District A) is so socioeconomically pushed to the high end of that spectrum, I think those that are on the low side are easily missed because we're, as school district, you end up trying to help those families meet other, almost daily needs, and it can be easy to push aside that there might be talent there.

Offering additional data to explore the question of barriers to identification, three participants suggested that parents' lack of understanding of the gifted program or identification process could serve as a barrier. A parent interviewee stated that "We have barriers for parents not understanding what potentially their child could be doing versus what they are doing." One participant suggested that this lack of understanding or awareness could be due to a difference in home language. Other possible barriers mentioned by interviewees included parental support, student behavioral issues, student mindset, and students' understanding of the process for gifted identification.

To more closely examine perceptions of barriers related to information and access, interview participants were asked, "Are you clear about the details of District A's gifted referral and identification process? If so, how did you access that information? If not, what information do you need". In response to this question, nine of the 12 participants stated that they were not clear on the process, two teachers were somewhat clear, and one parent was clear. The single participant that was clear on the process stated that:

> We asked some questions when we were seeing some things within our kids. At the time talked to (gifted teacher) when that was in her purview and we walked through the process and understood what was going in with her observations and review of test skills on an annual basis.

When explaining how they gained the information about the gifted referral process, one of the teachers that was somewhat clear stated, "Well, just from what I've been told from the gifted teacher. I guess more of like what I've seen with who the gifted ed teacher identifies and pulls students from." The responses from those participants that were not clear about the gifted identification process, related to what they need to understand the gifted identification process, can be found in the section addressing methods to reduce barriers in chapter four.

To gain further understanding of the perception of barriers to gifted identification, interview participants were asked, "What factors should disqualify a student from receiving gifted services?" Three participants, all parents, stated that behavioral issues should serve as a disqualifying factor. One parent said of students with behavioral issues, "…if a teacher is having to spend so much time to bring that one child's attention back – I hate to say disqualify, but perhaps that's not the classroom for them…" Two participants shared a contrasting view of behavior and giftedness. One parent suggested that a student may have "…been known to be a troublemaker or have discipline issues. That's probably the kid that needs it [gifted services] the most." Four interview participants felt that there should be no extraneous disqualifying factors to receiving gifted services if they meet the set criteria for qualification. A teacher participant insisted:

> I don't think there should be any factors that disqualify them. In all honesty-I can think about my previous classes where I serviced a class of gifted students, sometimes they are

the kids with a little more energy or a little more quirkiness. Sometimes, they're not always the easiest, because they have ideas that are hard for them to let go of. But that's what makes them unique and so creative.

Two participants asserted that low test scores should eliminate students from gifted programming. One parent stated that "I think it would be hard then to test all of them [students] for gifted services if they're at the bottom quartile of tests…" Two participants indicated that a student's inability to keep up with the academic work within a gifted program should lead to their withdrawal from those services. A parent participant stated that if a student is, "unable to keep up and it's causing – maybe it's just too hard…then I think that would be what would need to take them out of it." Additional disqualifying factors that were identified by single interviewees were maturity, stress/anxiety, low academic skills, low level of independence, low work completion rate, poor grades, no desire to receive services, and situations where the core curriculum is meeting the academic needs of the student.

To examine perceptions related to perceived barriers in the gifted identification process, interview participants were asked, "How is giftedness determined in this district? Why do you think that is?" Seven of twelve interview participants stated in at least a portion of their response that they did not know or were unsure of the answer to the question. In addition, seven participants thought that giftedness is determined by test scores. One parent stated, "From my experience, it seems to be, look at this number; look at this number. Oh so you're off the charts here…" Seven participants felt that teacher referral was a piece of gifted identification in School District A. One teacher mentioned that "we send in names of students that we see as gifted in our current rooms." Five participants mentioned a combination of test scores and teacher referral. Two interviewees suggested that parent request is a factor in determining a student's giftedness.

Administrators and counselors were each mentioned once as school staff who have a role in the determination process. To investigate areas related to curriculum and instruction that may serve as barriers to meeting the needs of gifted students, interviewees were asked, "Does the current core curriculum in School District A meet the needs of gifted learners? Why or why not?" Four participants responded that they did not believe that the core curriculum met the needs of gifted learners. One parent stated that "almost by definition, core curriculum doesn't meet the needs of gifted learners." This parent went on to say, "I think core curriculums have trouble keeping pace with the rate at which gifted kids learn." Additional reasons cited were that the core curriculum needs more opportunities for real-world application, discussion, and flexibility. One interviewee responded that they do believe the core curriculum is effective in meeting the needs of gifted learners. The remaining participants' ideas, however, displayed less certainty and/or identified specific pieces of the curriculum that were or were not effective. Two parent respondents felt that the math curriculum met the needs of gifted students, but the language arts curriculum did not. By contrast, one teacher respondent thought that the language arts curriculum was effective, but the math was not. Six interviewees remarked how the key to effectively meeting the needs of gifted students with the core curriculum was to ensure that it is differentiated. One teacher asserted that teachers "can take that curriculum and look at the kids that sit in front of him or her and make sure they're adjusting it to meet the needs of those kids because I don't think that any set curriculum is truly going to meet the needs of any learner."

Research Question #4: "How might School District A effectively eliminate barriers to equity in their gifted and talented programming?"

Parent and teacher interview participants were asked several questions that provided data that assisted in exploring how barriers to equity in the gifted programming for School District A

might be reduced or eliminated. Participants were asked explicitly, “If there are barriers, how might they be reduced or eliminated?” In response, three parents acknowledged the difficulty the school has in impacting barriers that stem from a child’s home. One parent remarked:

> if you’re having challenges meeting the daily needs of your family, even setting a time aside to go meet the academic gifted needs of your kids, or identifying that, are hard, and when parents are playing a role in that gifted identification process and that interaction with the school district, it’s hard to push that.

Despite these challenges, three parent participants felt that better communication with families about giftedness, gifted identification, and gifted programming would be beneficial in reducing the barriers that stem from home. A parent interviewee stated, “Maybe everybody gets more information sent to them at different points or just saying [to parents], “Hey, these classes are available if you think your child should be considered for them.” with a little bit more information.” “Direct outreach” for those families that are not native English speakers was also suggested by one parent. Four of the 12 participants thought that communicating to students about options and resources could assist in reducing barriers to gifted identification. One teacher stated, “The kids need to know. I don’t think the kids understand…they’re on this track…the kids don’t know how kids are selected.” Four participants, all teachers, believe that more teacher training and communication regarding the gifted identification process is essential in reducing barriers. One teacher stated that teachers should be introduced to, “the things that you should look for in your classroom that could identify a gifted student that may not be things we think about all the time.” Another teacher asserted:

I think that there should be more communication with the teachers about how a kid is selected for the honors program or the gifted and talented program. How they can approach whomever they approach to say that maybe this kid should be in there."

Five of the 12 interviewees suggested that barriers to gifted identification could be reduced or eliminated by using identification metrics outside of standardized test scores. One parent stated that the school district could, "ensure that the process is multidimensional and looking at all aspects of the child, rather than just looking at one thing, like just looking at test scores." A teacher suggested having, "some kind of identification tool that is backed by gifted and talented research." Another parent described the idea of having a "gifted and talented committee that their sole purpose is to find the appropriate and qualified people for these gifted programs…you do it through testing scores. You do it through interest. Maybe through interview…" Additional ideas to help reduce or eliminate barriers that were proposed by participants were ongoing assessment of students, implementing motivating strategies, and assisting students in exploring interests, as well as scholarships for enrichment programs for economically disadvantaged students and testing accommodations for students with disabilities.

To gain further insight into participants' perceptions about how barriers to equity in School District A's gifted and talented programming can be reduced or eliminated, they were asked the question, "What should gifted and talented services look like in School District A?" Participants responses to this question were diverse and included ideas regarding structure, instructional focus, and qualification criteria. Four of the 12 participants stated that gifted services should be provided using a pull-out model, where students are periodically removed from their core classroom and taught in another space, by another teacher. One parent said gifted students should have, "a meeting once a day or multiple or maybe three or four times a week and

it should be a separate classroom where those kids go." One participant thought that gifted services should be an entirely separate program describing it as "a secondary accelerated program for people that would really challenge kids." Another interviewee suggested that the services should include a combination of pull-out and in-class work. In class, "there should be daily things for the gifted and talented students within the classroom. So like things the teacher should put into place as enrichment and challenging work." In terms of the specific instructional focus of gifted services, two participants mentioned that problem solving should be a focus of services offered to gifted students. One teacher thought that groups of students should work "together using those communication skills to solve problems whether it be in math, reading or writing." Two interviewees thought that adding more work on top of the core curriculum would be effective for gifted students. As one parent described, "it would be in addition to their other schoolwork." Two participants described the need for gifted students to be presented with advanced content. Other ideas proposed by single interviewees were hands-on experimentation, creative endeavors, and inquiry-based learning. Only three participants mentioned criteria for qualification when asked about what gifted services should look like. One parent asserted that services should be for "those who are talented in both traditional reading, writing, arithmetic type curriculum, but then sports, athletics, within the scope of our PE programs, and the arts, especially fine arts." Another parent suggested that "a bit more diversification within gifted and talented would be beneficial. Sometimes it seems like there's one path for gifted and talented…I don't think a one size fits all approach works for everyone." Finally, a teacher stated, "I believe that gifted learning should be servicing students that are truly gifted, no matter what their grades are."

Finally, to gather information about how the barriers to equity in gifted and talented programming for School District A could be reduced or eliminated, the responses to the second part of question number seven, in which respondents who answered "no" to the question, "Are you clear about the details of School District A's gifted referral and identification process?" - were asked, "If not, what information do you need?" Nine of 12 participants responded that they were not clear on the referral process. Most of those interviewees stated that they would like a specific explanation of the criteria by which students are selected. One parent participant articulated, "I would want to know how they are chosen. How are they identified? Like is there a test? Or does the teacher just pick them? Or do parents try to sign them up to get looked at?" Another parent said, "I would like to see a rubric on how it is decided." One teacher responded, "I would want to know what pieces of information are gathered on each student to determine whether they receive that pull-out service or not." Another teacher suggested that professional development would be helpful. They stated, "that would be a really helpful training or a part of the mentoring program to help teachers to be able to know what avenues to go down to help their students that they see might fit into that category."

Both the quantitative and qualitative data gathered in this mixed methods study offered significant insight into parents' and teachers' perceptions about giftedness and gifted identification and services in School District A. Survey and interview responses revealed information critical to answering the four identified research questions. Chapter Five will summarize the study's findings, provide recommendations for future research, and identify the implications on practice for School District A and the larger educational community.

CHAPTER 5 – DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the problem of practice that exists within School District A's gifted and talented programming. The impetus for this research was to explore ways to more equitably identify and serve K-12 students. This study sought to review the perception of stakeholders in School District A with an eye toward potential barriers that exist for specific subgroups of students being identified for gifted and talented services. The research for this Problem of Practice focused on exploring the following questions:

- *How do teachers and parents in School District A define the concept of giftedness?*
- *How do teachers' and parents' definition of giftedness impact which students are identified for gifted and talented programming in School District A?*
- *What additional elements of School District A's gifted and talented identification process may create barriers to equity?*
- *How might School District A effectively eliminate barriers to equity in their gifted and talented programming?*

A mixed method approach guided by constructivist philosophy was used to conduct this research. This approach gathered perceptual information using interviews and surveys. Data were collected and analyzed to develop an understanding, a subsequent theory, and a potential solution to the problem of practice.

Chapter Five includes a discussion of the results for each research question, a revisiting of the limitations and delimitations of the study, implications for practice in School District A, and recommendations for future research.

Research Question #1: "How do teachers and parents in School District A define the concept of giftedness?"

Most parents and teachers in School District A believe they know how to define giftedness. When survey respondents were asked to respond to the statement, "I know what makes a student gifted," the average score was 3.44 out of five, with five indicating strong agreement. Interestingly, although most people believe they know how to define giftedness, teachers' and parents' definitions align in some specific ways but differ in others.

Common Themes in Definition

When asked to define giftedness, most participants cited some form of exceptionality. The quantitative and qualitative data revealed that there are several prominent themes in how stakeholders define giftedness - above average intellectual ability, superior performance in either grades or standardized tests relative to peers, curiosity, problem solving skills, enthusiasm for learning, creative thinking, and perseverance were rated highly and provide some insight into how parents and teachers perceive giftedness. Interestingly, the themes in stakeholders' definitions include both traditionally held ideas of giftedness related to natural ability and intelligence: intellect, grades and test scores, problem solving skills; and non-traditional elements: curiosity, creativity, perseverance, and enthusiasm. Many non-traditional gifted characteristics can be categorized as skills that can be developed rather than innate traits.

Variability in Definition

As described in the review of literature in Chapter Two, the concept of giftedness can be challenging to define because it can encompass many factors of a person's academic, physical, social, and emotional ability and performance. This difficulty to define giftedness results in significant variability in the way that different organizations, schools, and individuals view and

describe the concept. Parents and teachers in School District A believe that there is inconsistency in how giftedness is defined in the district. When asked to rate their agreement with the statement, "A varied definition of giftedness exists between stakeholders in my school district" the average rating given was 3.52 out of five where five indicates strong agreement. Further analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data show that although there are some characteristics that teachers and parents most strongly agree are indicators of giftedness, several areas exist where teachers' and parents' definitions diverge. It is clear that parents and teachers in School District A do not share a common definition of giftedness. The characteristics that were rated most different between teachers and parents when placed in rank order were classroom behavior (10), flexibility (6), empathy (5), parental support (5), and classroom participation (4). Of these characteristics, teachers place more importance than parents on classroom participation, flexibility, and empathy than did the parents. Parents place higher importance on classroom behavior and parental support.

Definition Development

School District A does not publish or communicate a specific definition of giftedness and therefore stakeholders are left to infer a definition based on personal experience, speculation, and observation of the practices within the school. Respondents spoke of developing a context around giftedness from experiences in their own education either as regular education students or those who participated in gifted programming. In addition, as parents, they have observed their children's peers and have become familiar with programs and performance through their own children's school experience. Teachers spoke of the students they have taught, the training they have received, and the programs offered at their schools as integral components of the development of their definition of giftedness. In general, the lack of a standard, agreed upon

definition has led to the idea that giftedness may not actually be specifically definable, and that it may in fact be a socially constructed phenomenon (Pfeiffer, 2012). The traditional view of giftedness as discussed above – superior intellectual ability as evidenced by high test scores and good grades still tends to dominate most institutions and drives most individuals' perceptions. Individuals' definition of giftedness and subsequent decision to refer is likely driven by anchoring bias. Anchoring bias "occurs when we rely too heavily on either pre-existing information or the first piece of information (the anchor) when making a decision" (Meyers, 2022). Since for many people this traditional view of giftedness has been the lens by which they've seen giftedness throughout their lives and career, they have difficulty viewing alternative definitions objectively. Anchoring makes it particularly difficult to see things from a new point of view or alter one's understanding of a particular concept. In the case of giftedness, it makes it especially hard for individuals and institutions to venture outside of traditional definitions and assessment practices.

Research Question 2: "How do teachers' and parents' definition of giftedness impact which students are identified for gifted and talented programming in School District A?"

There is a clear connection between parents' and teachers' personal definitions of giftedness and the likelihood that they will nominate a student for gifted services. Predictably, nominators tend to recommend students whose skills and aptitudes most closely align with their personal view of giftedness.

Impact of Varied Definitions on Nominations

Parents and teachers in School District A strongly believe that a varied definition of giftedness exists within the school district. The data show a close connection between stakeholders' definition of giftedness and how they would determine if a child should qualify for

gifted and talented services. An individual's definition of giftedness strongly influences what factors they look for when determining who should receive gifted services. Teachers and parents alike could be failing to recommend students simply because a student's strengths or characteristics do not align with their personal definition of giftedness. These varied definitions can create a barrier to equity within the gifted and talented program in School District A. When stakeholders hold differing definitions of giftedness, a consistent approach to assessing giftedness becomes difficult if not impossible to implement. Given that the identification process includes parent and/or teacher nomination, the definition that those individuals rely on can have a profound impact on who is assessed for gifted services. In addition, nominators' individual definitions can contain their personal biases which have the potential to greatly influence who is referred for gifted services.

Impact of Varied Definition on Assessment Measures

Despite the similarities and differences among definitions of stakeholders, many parents and teachers believe that all students should be assessed for gifted and talented services. When asked to respond to the statement, "All students in my school district should be assessed for gifted services, regardless of their school performance," parents' and teachers' average response was a 3.61 on a five-point scale where five indicates strong agreement. Their opinions of which assessments should be used however do not align and are likely dependent on those personal definitions. Similar to organizations' decision making around assessments discussed in Chapter Two, and individual's opinions on which assessments should be used to gauge giftedness likely depend on their beliefs about whether intelligence is an observable fixed trait or one that can be developed over time, and whether intelligence is defined as cognitive, academic ability or includes a broader aptitude in additional, more non-traditional domains.

Interestingly, when considering the elements of giftedness that were most prominently identified in the survey and interview data, those are not elements that School District A currently directly assesses when determining giftedness, particularly creativity, IQ, curiosity, creativity, enthusiasm for learning, and perseverance. This further highlights the disconnect between perception and practice in School District A.

Research Question 3: "What additional elements of School District A's gifted and talented identification process may create barriers to equity?"

The parents and students in School District A agree that barriers do exist that impact some students' ability to be identified for gifted services. When survey participants were asked to rate their level of agreement on the statement, "In my school district, barriers exist that prevent some gifted students from being identified as gifted," the average rating was a 3.44 out of five with five indicating strong agreement. The quantitative and qualitative data also indicate that parents and teachers believe that all students should have an equal opportunity to be considered for gifted services, however, what these stakeholders believe is important could serve as a barrier for those that do not possess those traits.

Student Behavior

Parents and teachers identified additional characteristics that may prevent students from qualifying for gifted and talented services. Some believe that students who display behavioral issues in school are less likely to be identified as gifted. The idea behind this belief is likely that the student doesn't meet the traditional expectation of what a gifted student looks like and that their behavioral concerns would impede their ability to engage in high-level enrichment work.

Test Scores

In addition, low test scores and low academic performance were cited as reasons that might inhibit a student from qualifying for gifted services. Like many districts, School District A relies heavily on achievement tests to initially identify students for gifted services. "Achievement tests often generate that data from which giftedness is first recognized" (Loveless, 2020, para. 16) Parents and teachers in the district recognize this as the primary method for identification and feel that the use of standardized testing creates a barrier for some students. The general belief is that students who do not test well are at a disadvantage for being identified for gifted and talented services. Standardized tests are generally considered to be a traditional method for assessing giftedness. "Many nontraditional G/T students can be overlooked when traditional assessments provide the sole basis for placement in G/T programs" (TEA, 2015, para. 2).

Academic Grades

Parents and teachers believe that students who receive good grades should be considered for gifted services. When survey respondents were asked to rate their agreement on the statement, "Students who do well in school should be considered for gifted and talented services," the average rating was 3.34 out of five with five indicating strong agreement. Parents were more likely to agree with this statement than teachers. These results indicate that a student may be at a disadvantage for being identified for gifted and talented services if they receive moderate to poor grades in school. Interestingly, however, teachers and parents agree that receiving good grades does not automatically equate to being intelligent. When asked to respond to the statement, "If a student gets good grades in school, they must be smart," respondents' average rating was 2.23 indicating that they generally disagreed. Parents and teachers also agree that poor grades are not an indication that a student is not smart. When asked to respond to the

statement, “If a student gets poor grades in school, they are not smart, respondents’ average rating was a 1.46 signifying that they mostly disagreed. It is clear however that grades are used as an identifying characteristic of giftedness in School District A and therefore can serve as a barrier to identification for some students.

Testing Methodology

Parents and teachers do not believe the testing that is used in School District A identifies all gifted students. When survey respondents were prompted to respond to the statement, “The current assessments used in my school district adequately identify gifted students,” their average rating was a 2.81 on a five-point scale with a 1 indicating strong disagreement. A number of the characteristics that parents and teachers identified as important when determining giftedness, are not formally assessed at all, such as creativity, IQ, curiosity, enthusiasm for learning, and perseverance. Parents and teachers believe there needs to be a more consistent and comprehensive approach to assessment for giftedness, particularly given the wide range of experience and understanding of the educators that are a part of the process. As one parent described, “You’ve got, I don’t know, fifty teachers in the school. They all might have different ideas about what “gifted” looks like compared to the other teachers, so I think there needs to be some sort of rubric that they can compare kids against.” Without a broadening of assessment methods and the alignment of those methods so that they actually evaluate students on the consistent, agreed-upon criteria, many students will continue to be at a disadvantage in qualifying for gifted services.

Teacher Bias

Many teachers and parents in Schools District A feel that teacher bias could serve as a barrier to gifted identification. Participants repeatedly confirmed the importance of teacher

referral in the identification process. Given that teachers play such a prominent role in the nomination process, their personal opinions about a specific student, their definition of giftedness, or their deeply held beliefs about groups of students can influence whether a child is identified. In Chapter Two, it was stated that this practice of establishing teachers as gatekeepers to identification can be problematic. As previously discussed in this chapter, teachers' anchoring bias could be highly influential in the referral and nomination process. Relying on varied definitions and an inconsistent process will most certainly allow for bias to influence decisions. As one parent stated, "We have to own our biases and make sure that we're accounting for that in those assessments." Without a clearly articulated and standardized process that is centered on a rational and agreed-upon definition, teachers are left to make determinations that are prone to biases and inferences. These ambiguities in definition and process create conditions for teachers to self-determine nomination criteria that are rooted in their interpretation, which can be heavily influenced by personal bias. They may be nominating students based on who deserves to receive gifted programming, who would benefit most from gifted programming, or who is most likely to be successful in a gifted program. The decisions made for each of these criteria would clearly result in the nomination of different students or groups of students.

Socioeconomic Status

As referenced in Chapter Two, Elhoeris (2008) asserts that "perceptions about economically disadvantaged students combined with a lack of cultural understanding may undermine the ability of educators to recruit economically disadvantaged students into gifted education" (p. 35). This appears to be a possibility in School District A. Socioeconomic status was identified as a potential barrier by some teachers and parents. The general sentiment is that families who are less wealthy do not have the resources to provide their children with the

enrichment activities and academic support that is needed to perform at high levels. One parent asserted:

> If you've had a good financial start in life, you've probably had a good Pre-K. You've probably had parents that were able to sit down and read with you. You've probably had parents that have been able to help you a lot, so that doesn't hurt. Kids certainly have that extra boost.

Parents and teachers also feel as though families living in poverty may lack the time and resources to provide support at home for their children to excel at school or within nonacademic areas of interest.

Program Knowledge

The data indicate that only a small number of parents and teachers know how the gifted and talented identification process works in School District A. This lack of understanding and access to information likely acts as a barrier to identification since it hinders parents' and teachers' ability to follow a consistent approach to identification. Since parent nomination is a common method to prompt an assessment, students of parents who do not know the process are placed at a disadvantage. Furthermore, the lack of understanding likely indicates a shortage of communication of the process to stakeholder groups. As one parent stated in the interview, "So that's one negative I would say with (School District A) is I didn't quite understand that there was possibly an opportunity…" Families who do not speak English proficiently may be at an even greater risk of exclusion given that any communication that does occur regarding gifted education would not be accessible to them.

Race/Native Language

Interestingly, parents and teachers do not generally hold the perception that the factors of race or native language significantly influence students' ability to qualify for gifted services in School District A. These factors were rarely cited in the interviews and rated low in terms of agreement on the barrier focused survey responses. Despite this perception, the district demographic data, achievement data, and observational data presented in Chapter One indicate that the process for identifying and servicing gifted and talented children in School District A is inequitable for students of color and for students whose native language is not English. This disconnect between perception and the reality of the program enrollment indicates a need for increased awareness and intervention.

Research Question 4: "How might School District A effectively eliminate barriers to equity in their gifted and talented programming?"

Develop a Common Definition of Giftedness

Given that parents and teachers believe that a varied definition of giftedness exists within School District A, the formation of a specific definition for giftedness is essential in ensuring consistency in all facets of gifted programming. Teachers and parents communicated a need for clarity in the identification process and service details. A common and consistent definition that is communicated to stakeholders would serve as a basis for improved understanding of all program elements.

Implement a Comprehensive Assessment Approach

Parents and teachers feel strongly that each student in the school district should be assessed for gifted services. Universal screening is not currently a practice in School District A.

Failing to assess all students can certainly place a barrier in front of students who do not meet the current requirements of identification, but might possess exceptionalities in other areas.

In addition, parents and teachers think that having a more comprehensive, multidimensional approach to identification would be effective in reducing barriers to identification. Rather than relying solely on standardized tests or teacher referral, the district would adopt a consistent process that includes academic and cognitive tests, parent and teacher referral, interviews, and checklists. Parents and teachers believe that by using multiple measures, it is more likely that students will be accurately identified for gifted services.

Improve Communication with Parents

Parents in School District A believe that more frequent and specific communication to the community about the gifted identification process and gifted services would be helpful in reducing barriers, particularly for those students whose families may be at risk for reduced access due to socioeconomics or native language. This communication should include a specific definition of giftedness that the district uses for programming, a clearly articulated process for assessment, including the measures used, a description of gifted services, program contacts, and ideas for how they can support the process. If parent nomination is going to continue to be part of the identification process, then the district should provide parents with specific "look fors" to use in determining whether their child may benefit from gifted services.

Increase Teacher Training

Teachers in School District A believe that they need better and more focused training on identifying and serving gifted students. When teacher survey respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement on the statement "The teachers in my school district are trained to meet the needs of gifted students," the average rating was a 2.48 out of five with a one indicating strong

disagreement. Adequate training for teachers would include guidance on administering assessments and interpreting the data for identification and for formative instructional purposes. It would also include education on the district's definition of giftedness and the process for nomination, assessment, and qualification. If teacher nomination will continue to be an integral part of the identification process, then the district should provide teachers with specific "look fors" to use in determining if their students may qualify for gifted services. As mentioned previously, without providing teachers with a clearly articulated process and criteria, they are left to make determinations of giftedness based on personal definitions and inferred criteria that can be heavily influenced by their individual biases.

Refine the Core Curriculum

Parents and teachers indicated that the core curriculum does not adequately meet the needs of gifted students. Although pull-out gifted services and advanced courses are designed specifically for advanced students, the core curriculum must also be designed in a way that takes into consideration methods and content to advance gifted students' learning. The core curriculum should be structured in a way that allows differentiation of content. Small group instruction and opportunities to modify the pace of content delivery are essential to this goal. These structures allow for flexibility so that students have an opportunity to work at a pace and be provided with instruction that suits their learning needs. The core curriculum should also employ methods that allow for all students, including gifted students, to advance and expand their thinking and understanding such as classroom discussion, open-ended problems, critical thinking exercises, and real-world application opportunities. Designing instruction in this way allows for barriers to be reduced because it enables teachers to closely monitor the thinking and learning of all

students, helping them identify those that may perform in ways that align with the district's criteria for giftedness that lie outside of test scores and grades.

Limitations & Delimitations

There are a number of limitations to this research that could not be controlled. One significant limitation of this research is that it may not be generalizable. The research was conducted in a very specific context and the findings reflect the reality of that context. The characteristics of this research's location will not match other settings and therefore the findings may not apply to the problems found there. The data gathered in this research, however, could be used to provide context to another setting to explain a similar phenomenon that exists.

Another limitation in this study is a result of the sensitivity of the topic. Social pressures exist around the topic of equity and therefore may impact the accuracy and honesty with which participants approach their participation. This phenomenon is known as social desirability bias. According to the American Psychological Association (n.d.), social desirability bias is the "tendency of individuals to present themselves in a manner that will be viewed favorably by others." The American Psychological Association (n.d.) also describes that this bias can lead to the "tendency of participants to give answers that are in accordance with social norms or the perceived desires of the researcher rather than genuinely representative of their views." The setting for this research is heavily populated by upper-middle class to upper-class Caucasian families. Because they reside in a mostly mono-cultural setting, and due to divergent viewpoints regarding equity and diversity, participants may feel social pressure to not openly identify areas of inequity, especially as it applies to race and native language.

Two main delimitations were set for this research study. The data collection methods excluded focus groups while including surveys and interviews. The researcher believes that

social pressures and insecurities may have impacted participants' participation if they were offering their beliefs and perceptions in the company of other participants, and therefore skew the data.

In addition, not all stakeholder groups were included in this research. The researcher chose to focus on collecting the perceptions of those stakeholders that he felt were closest to the student experience in the district. Therefore, the research included teachers and parents. The research did not include the perceptions of administrators, support staff, volunteers, etc. because they have a more limited role in students' direct educational programming.

Implications for Practice in School District A

The research from this study combined with the body of literature that was reviewed in Chapter Two offers ideas for steps that School District A can take to create a more equitable and consistent process for identifying and servicing gifted and talented students. Those steps are outlined below.

- Develop a common and specific definition of giftedness that can be used to guide all other program development in gifted education. To develop the definition, utilize the Minnesota Department of Education (2020) and National Association for Gifted Children (2010) definitions as central resources and tailor the district's definition based on local needs and values. Considerations should be taken regarding how the definition can be created in a way that doesn't reinforce historical, culturally biased norms. The development process should include feedback from multiple stakeholders including parents, teachers, administrators, and students. Attention should be given to the consideration of traditional as well as non-traditional domains of giftedness.

- The established, agreed-upon definition for giftedness should be communicated to all parents and teachers. Particular attention should be given to families whose primary language is something other than English. Steps should be taken to ensure that they receive information in their native language.
- Increase access by developing methods to improve communication to teachers and parents about the district's definition of giftedness, the identification process and what programming looks like. This communication plan should include both active and passive measures such as clearly articulating the program on the website, emails to parents and teachers containing program information, and online and/or in-person informational sessions.
- Adopt a more comprehensive multi-tiered approach to gifted identification that aligns with the established definition and the five domains identified by the National Association for Gifted Children (n.d): intellectual, academic, creative, artistic, and leadership. One essential step would be the implementation of universal screening for all students that covers these domains. Suggestions for assessments would be the CogAt for intellectual ability, continued use of the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) to identify academic strengths, the Torrence Test of Creative Abilities, and locally developed checklists to rate artistic and leadership strengths. A good starting point for identification would be to use what Sturnberg and Subotnik (2000) identified as single cutoff: flexible criteria, meaning that the district would determine initial cutoff scores from any of the multiple assessments. When students score above these cutoff scores, they would be considered for gifted services. However, "high scores should be used to include students, but if students meet other criteria, then lower scores should not be

exclusionary" (TEA, 2005). Develop ways to look for ability and aptitude for those that do not score high on assessments, possibly the development of additional observation checklists for teachers. School leaders should be conscious of the barriers created due to limited English language proficiency. The administration of the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test (NNAT3) for English Language Learners should be considered. Furthermore, the district should explore available research-based options for assessing ELL students in their native language. District leadership should give careful thought to the human, fiscal, and time-bound resources of the organization when determining the number and frequency of assessments.

- Parent nomination and advocacy should continue to serve as a vehicle by which students can be initially considered for gifted services, however parents must be educated on the markers of giftedness and how to navigate the nomination process. If families in underserved populations are educated on the behavioral indicators of giftedness, they could more accurately and responsibly refer their children for assessment (TEA, 2015). Upon nomination, previous assessment scores, along with information provided by nominators should be considered and a determination of the need for additional assessments can be made by the gifted education coordinator. In these cases, school staff should be aware of potential barriers to identification that the student may face and determine the next steps and further assessment accordingly.
- Teacher nomination should continue to be a primary strategy for gifted identification; however steps must be taken to increase teacher training around giftedness including how to better identify gifted students using data and observation and how to support those students within the regular education classroom.

- Take measures to ensure a consistent and rigorous core curriculum exists in all grades that provides opportunities for teachers to differentiate within the classroom. It is important to remember gifted students also participate in the mainstream classroom instruction and that accommodations need to be made within that setting as well. Small group instruction and opportunities to modify the pace of content delivery should be consistently implemented. The core curriculum should also employ methods that allow for all students, including gifted students, to advance and expand their thinking and understanding such as classroom discussion, open-ended problems, critical thinking exercises, and real-world application opportunities.
- Implement a consistent talent development curriculum model in the primary elementary grades. This curriculum should be delivered to all students in the core classroom and focus on critical thinking and creative problem solving. A thinking curriculum can offer an emergent talent experience as part of a more comprehensive talent nurturing model. These models should "include experiences for students that prepare them for the formal identification process" (Siegle, et. al., 2016, p. 21). Teachers should be trained to teach and observe during these lessons to look for students' thinking and performance that can serve as data for future gifted identification. In addition to the thinking skills curriculum, School District A should consider the implementation of the Young Scholars Program to help cultivate intellectual talent in students who belong to groups that have been historically underrepresented in gifted education.
- Engage staff in cultural competency training to increase awareness of how their own biases may impact their practices in the classroom and their views of students' level of giftedness. Continue with the work that School District A staff has engaged in around

participating in the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) and subsequent consultation as well as the development of Intercultural Development Plans (IDP). Request specific guidance from the IDI consultant regarding how the information gained around bias can impact gifted identification and services. Take steps to ensure that newly hired staff participate in this work.

- Reevaluate the gifted identification plan annually by analyzing achievement data as well as program participant data. Particular attention should be paid to program participants' race, native language, gender, special education enrollment, and socioeconomic status. The makeup of students receiving gifted and talented services should closely mirror that of the overall population. Discrepancies in this data should be analyzed and further intervention should be considered. This program review should include data collection that is designed to track students in various stages of the gifted and talented referral process to observe how those demographics change over time.

Future Research

The research from this study supports further investigation of topics related to equity in gifted education both within the context of this study and more broadly.

1. This study could be replicated in different contexts, particularly in communities with more racial and cultural diversity. Data could be compared across communities to determine common or differing factors that impact perception. Data from multiple contexts could be combined to reveal a broader view of parents' and teachers' perceptions of equity in gifted education.

2. Future research on the perception of barriers to gifted identification within the School District A and beyond could involve gathering data from additional stakeholders including administrators and students.
3. Further research could be conducted regarding the impact of gender and socioeconomic status on gifted identification.
4. Within School District A, additional research could be done to more deeply explore the impact that bias related to race and native language plays in the identification of students for gifted services.
5. Additional research in the area of individuals' development of their definition of giftedness, including the impact of anchoring bias on gifted identification.

Conclusion

Giftedness in schools remains a concept that is difficult to define. That difficulty has a significant impact on how it is assessed and therefore on who receives gifted education services. Additional barriers to identification exist including factors such as teacher bias, assessment practices, stakeholders' program knowledge, and socioeconomic status. School District A would be wise to collectively develop a new, agreed upon, and widely communicated definition of giftedness and take steps to align their programming with that definition. In this way, the district can reform its practices to best meet the needs of all students and create an equitable process for identifying and providing services to gifted children.

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Appendices

Appendix A- Likert Scale Survey for Stakeholders in District A

Gifted Education Survey

Researcher: Adam Lamparske

Anonymous Demographic Data

Please circle one answer for each statement.

I am a…	Parent	Teacher
If teacher: I teach… **If parent: I have children in…**	Primary (K-2) Intermediate (3-5) Middle School High School	Primary (K-2) Intermediate (3-5) Middle School High School
If teacher: I have been teaching in my current school district for… **If parent: I have had children in the my current school district for…**	0-3 years 4-7 years 8-11 years 12-15 years Over 15 years	0-3 years 4-7 years 8-11 years 12-15 years Over 15 years
If parent: My child/I receive(s) gifted education services.	Yes No	

Stakeholder Perception – Definition of Giftedness

When considering whether a student should receive gifted services, how important are the following factors?

Please place an "X" in one box in each row indicating the degree with which think the characteristic is important.

	Not at all Important	**Slightly Important**	**Unsure**	**Important**	**Very Important**
1. Parental Support					
2. Maturity					
3. Creative Thinking					
4. Speed of Work Completion					
5. Turns in Work on Time					
6. English Language Proficiency					
7. Oral Vocabulary					
8. Answers most questions correctly (accuracy)					

9. Follows directions					
10. Classroom Behavior					
11. Cultural Background					
12. Artistic Talents					
13. Classroom Participation					
14. Works Quietly					
15. Completes Work Independently					
16. Works well with peers					
17. Organization Skills					
18. Socioeconomic Status					
19. Technology Proficiency					
20. Good Grades					
21. Problem Solving Skills					
23. Athleticism					
24. Attention					
25. Flexibility					
26. Perseverance					
27. Curiosity					
28. Empathy					
29. Intuitiveness					
30. Enthusiasm for learning					

Open Response: How do you define giftedness?

Stakeholder Perception – Gifted Identification

Please place an "X" in one box in each row indicating the degree with which you agree or disagree with the statement.

	Strongly disagree	**Disagree**	**Unsure**	**Agree**	**Strongly agree**
1. I know what makes a student gifted.*					
2. My school district has an established definition of giftedness.*					
3. Students who do well in school should be considered for gifted and talented services.*					

4. Students who show high levels of creativity should be considered for gifted and talented services.*					
5. Students with high IQs should be considered for gifted and talented services.*					
6. Gifted services are for smart students.*					
7. If a student gets good grades in school, they must be smart.*					
8. If a student gets poor grades in school, they are not smart.*					
9. All students should have an equal opportunity to be identified for gifted and talented services.**					
10. A varied definition of giftedness exists between stakeholders in my school district *					
11. The race/ethnicity of a student has an impact on whether or not they will be identified for gifted and talented identification.**					
12. Socio-economic status of a student has an impact on whether or not they will be identified for gifted and talented education.**					
13. The primary language that is spoken in a student's home has an impact on whether or not they will be identified for gifted and talented education.**					
14. The student's gender has an impact on whether or not they will be identified for gifted and talented education.**					
15. A student's enrollment in Special Education services has an impact on whether or not they will be identified for gifted and talented education.**					
16. All students in my school district have an equal opportunity to be identified for gifted services.**					
17. ALL students in my school district should be assessed for gifted services, regardless of their school performance.**					
18. I know how the gifted and talented identification process works in my school district.**					
19. In my school district, barriers exist that prevent some gifted					

students from being identified as gifted.**					
20. The teachers in my school district are trained to meet the needs of gifted students.**					
21. In my school district, if a student is showing signs of giftedness, his/her teacher will recommend that they be evaluated for gifted services.**					
22. In my school district, if a student is showing evidence of giftedness, parents can contact the school to inquire about gifted services.**					
23. The current assessments used in my school district adequately identify gifted students**					
24. The gifted and talented identification process in my school district is effective in identifying gifted students.**					

*Definition of giftedness
**Additional potential barriers to gifted identification

Open Response: What barriers do you believe exist that could prevent a student or group of students from qualifying for gifted and talented programming?

If you would be willing to participate in a one hour interview on this topic, please provide your email address. _____

Appendix B- Interview Protocol for Stakeholders in District A

Name of Interviewee: _____ Teacher/Parent

Date & Time of Interview: _____

Script: "This is Adam Lamparske. Today is [day and date]. The time is [time] I am here in/at [location] with [name of interviewee]. He/she is a [parent/student/teacher] in School District A. We are here to discuss gifted education in the district. For the record, do I have your permission to record the interview?

1. *How do you define giftedness?* ◆
2. *How did you develop your definition of giftedness?* ◆
3. *How does your definition of giftedness impact whether you would refer a student (teacher)/your child (parent) for gifted and talented services?* ■
4. *What factors do you think should be considered when determining if a child is gifted? How would those be assessed?* ◆■●
5. *What talents and/or strengths might a student possess that should not be considered when determining qualification for gifted services?* ◆■
6. *Does the current core curriculum in your school district meet the needs of gifted learners? Why or why not?* ●❖
7. *Are you clear about the details of your school district's gifted referral and identification process? If so, how did you access that information? If not, what information do you need?* ●
8. *What role do you believe the teacher plays in the gifted identification process? Parent?* ■●
9. *How is giftedness determined in your school district? Why do you think that is?* ■●

10. *What factors should disqualify a student from receiving gifted services?* ■●

11. *Who receives gifted services in your school district?* ■●

12. *What should gifted and talented services look like in your school district?* ●❖

13. *Do you believe that barriers exist that prevent some students qualifying for gifted services in your school district? What might those barriers be? Who is impacted by those barriers?* ●

14. *If there are barriers, how might they be reduced or eliminated?* ❖

15. *Is there anything else you think would be helpful or important for me to know about this topic?* ◆■●❖

◆ - Research Question 1
■ - Research Question 2
● - Research Question 3
❖ - Research Question 4

Appendix C- IRB Approval Letter

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS

To:	Adam Grant Lamparske
From:	Douglas J Adams, Chair IRB Expedited Review
Date:	03/08/2021
Action:	**Exemption Granted**
Action Date:	03/08/2021
Protocol #:	2101309829
Study Title:	Factors Contributing to Barriers to Equity in Gifted and Talented Identification

The above-referenced protocol has been determined to be exempt.

If you wish to make any modifications in the approved protocol that may affect the level of risk to your participants, you must seek approval prior to implementing those changes. All modifications must provide sufficient detail to assess the impact of the change.

If you have any questions or need any assistance from the IRB, please contact the IRB Coordinator at 109 MLKG Building, 5-2208, or irb@uark.edu.

cc: John C Pijanowski, Investigator