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What Do Parents Really Want? Parent Perspectives on Gifted Education

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What Do Parents Really Want? Parent Perspectives on Gifted Education

By
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Abstract

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In this research study, the correlation between the strategies that previous research had indicated as effective for gifted education and the programming sought by parents of gifted children was examined. Survey results and interviews with parents revealed several strategies that parents wanted to be implemented in gifted education as well as powerful practices that would enhance gifted education if implemented by school leaders. The problem of underachievement among gifted students is also discussed as well as strategies to reverse it.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

President Barack Obama once said, "If we want America to lead in the 21st century, nothing is more important than giving everyone the best education possible – from the day they start preschool to the day they start their career" (Office of the Press Secretary, 2012, para. 15). The underachievement of gifted students was an area of distress for many parents and educators (Siegle, 2006). Underachievement also impacted our society because many gifted students may become scientists, civic leaders, and entrepreneurs (Finn, 2012; Rubenstein, Siegle, Reis, McCoach, & Burton, 2012). In fact, according to Siegle (2013), "When The National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented conducted a national needs assessment on issues related to gifted education, the underachievement of gifted students was the highest area of concern (Renzulli, Reid, & Gubbins, 1991)" (p. 3). "Underachievement is detrimental for any student, but the consequences for high-ability students may be even greater" (Snyder, Malin, Dent, & Linnenbrink-Garcia, 2014, p. 230). America's brightest students deserved to receive appropriate programming and instruction, so they could reach their full potential (Olszewski-Kubilius & Clarenbach, 2012). In his book *The Global Achievement Gap,* Wagner (2014) discussed the type of education many students in the United States received. Wagner stated,

> What I have seen in some of our best public schools over the past decade is that while Johnny and Juan and Leticia are learning how to read, at least at a basic level, they are not learning how to think or care about what they read; nor are they learning to clearly communicate ideas orally and in writing. They memorize names and dates in history, but they cannot explain the larger significance of historical events. And they may be learning how to add, subtract, and multiply,

but they have no understanding of how to think about numbers. Not knowing how to interpret statistics or gauge probability, many students cannot make sense of graphs and charts they see every day in the newspaper. They are required to memorize (and usually quickly forget) a wide range of scientific facts, but very few know how to apply the scientific method—how to formulate a hypothesis, test it, and analyze the results. Yet this way of thinking is at the very heart of many kinds of analysis and research. Finally, I observed that the longer our children are in school, the less curious they become. Effective communication, curiosity, and critical-thinking skills, as we will see, are much more than just the traditional desirable outcomes of a liberal arts education. They are essential competencies and habits of mind for life in the twenty-first century. (p.xxiii)

Approximately three million gifted and talented students walked the hallways of schools in the United States (Callahan, Moon, Oh, Azano, & Hailey, 2015). In a school environment like the one described by Wagner, one had to question if the needs of the nation's advanced learners were being met. In a report entitled, *A Nation Deceived: How Schools Hold Back America's Brightest Students,* the authors wrote the following about advanced learners:

These children perform better than any politician dares to expect. They are the top scorers, the ones who break the curve. They are the kids who read shampoo bottles at age three, and read newspaper editorials at age five. They can add up the cost of groceries faster than a cash register. They shock their parents and wow their grandparents. But when they enter school, things change. They're often the most frustrated students in the classroom. They're bored in kindergarten, and they're bored again in first grade. Year after year, they learn little that they

haven't learned already. They hope things will get better, but things rarely do.

For many of them, nothing changes. America's school system keeps bright

students in line by forcing them to learn in a lock-step manner with their

classmates. Teachers and principals disregard students' desires to learn more—

much more—than they are being taught. (Colangelo, Assouline, & Gross, 2004,

p. 1)

The United States was at a tipping point in education, and America needed its brightest

students to succeed if America was going to succeed. Johnsen (2013) identified five

problems that educators dealt with related to gifted education. The challenges included

assessment and accountability, administrator support, collaboration with other colleagues,

professional development on best practices for teaching gifted students, and family and

parent education (Johnsen, 2013). According to Blair (2010), many educators did not

have adequate training or knowledge of the best practices for serving gifted students.

Blair stated,

Teachers and administrators attend professional development sessions, receive

guidance from mentors, read books, and study research presented in journal

articles-all toward the goal of improving their instruction. However, few

educators are allowed opportunities or have been able to take the time

independently to focus on students who are gifted. In fact, almost all teacher

training and professional development is directed toward the opposite end of the

academic spectrum, leaving educators with few ideas on how best to serve the

needs of the gifted students in their heterogeneous classrooms. (p. 28)

Given that educators lacked training or adequate knowledge, the question became what

must educators do differently to prevent gifted students from underachieving?

The Problem: The Underachievement of Gifted Students

"Underachievement is among the most frustrating and bewildering education issues parents and educators face" (Siegle, 2013, p. 1). The underachievement of gifted students had been well documented; and this was problematic for the students, their families, and society at large. "Downward trends for gifted learners are concerning because these students could have bright futures as national leaders, entrepreneurs, inventors, and influencers" (McClarty, 2015, p.3). In addition, the funds and staff that were allocated for gifted education varied depending on location (Kettler, Russell, & Puryear, 2015). In fact, "In the more than 40 years since the issuance of the Marland Report in 1972, federal policy and legislation for gifted education has remained at the margins of educational funding when compared with other funding priorities" (Jolly & Robins, 2016, p. 147).

Underachievement had been a major focus for educational researchers who studied gifted education (Siegle, 2013). Gifted students had a variety of talents, interests, and effort levels; and they could underachieve for a variety of reasons (Siegle, 2013). For example, many gifted students battled unhealthy perfectionism which could cause underachievement (Rimm, 2007). "Gifted education has had a relatively long history in the US, and has existed in one form or another for almost one hundred and fifty years" (Mandelman & Grigorenko, 2013, p. 125); however, after 150 years, educators continued to have difficulty meeting the learning needs of gifted students as Siegle (2006) pointed out when he stated,

> Unfortunately, many gifted students do not view their school experience as
> meaningful. For instance, they may not find school intellectually stimulating,
> because they have already mastered the content or can master it quickly.

Repetition bores many of these students, and once they have learned to expect boredom in class, they will fail to embrace new learning experiences when they arise. Other gifted students find school topics uninteresting regardless of the level of challenge, because they have developed a well-defined area of interest that is not matched by what happens in school. This leaves them "turned off" to what is taught. Still others do not appear to be interested in anything, either because their early school experiences failed to nourish their natural curiosity or because they doubt their ability to do well. (para. 2)

Despite the long-term existence of gifted education, a major problem for educators and the future of the United States had and would continue to be the underachievement of gifted students unless something was done differently to serve this student population. The United States and its families were competing globally and many gifted students would determine the future of America. Mandelman and Grigorenko (2013) stated,

With ever increasing international competition and a global knowledge economy, the US needs to keep pace with the world around us. Historically it has taken events such as the launch of Sputnik to spur US education officials to talk about gifted education. We are at such a point again. US school children are falling behind, as illustrated by international academic assessments such as TIMSS, PISA, and PIRLS (Provasnik, Gonzales, & Miller, 2009). The US is not the leader in any of the subject areas (reading, math and/or science) assessed by these international efforts. The US ranking continues to slip in these areas with every new administration of these assessments. (p. 125)

The declining achievement levels on international assessments could have been the result

of the shift in American focus with regard to education. According to Jolly and Matthews (2012),

> In addition to research conducted over the past 25 years, the past decade has also witnessed a dramatic shift in the focus of public schools toward struggling, low-achieving students and efforts to bring this population to proficiency. This emphasis has had the unintended effect of causing teachers and schools to ignore the needs of the gifted and other highly able learners (Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2008). (p. 261)

In reference to the emphasis on high-stakes testing and accountability, Tretter (2010) stated,

> Among other changes, teachers report mandated use of curriculum pacing guides and the imposition of rigid timelines in the use of those curriculum guides, resulting in a narrowing of the curriculum (Scot, Callahan, & Urquhart, 2009). This shift in educational focus ensures that all students reach a minimum competency, but moves away from challenging and stretching our strongest students to cognitively grow to the best of their ability (Scot et al., 2009). In classroom situations of mixed ability students, the gifted students in such settings are likely to not have their potential tapped to the fullest possible extent, simply because of the logistical challenges a teacher in those situations must manage. (p. 17)

An example of gifted students' lack of progress was the minimal improvements that had been made in the achievement levels of gifted students on the NAEP. For example,

> The math and reading scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress of the nation's lowest-achieving 10 percent of 4th and 8th graders have risen

sharply since 2000, continuing a trend that began in the 1990s. Yet some may

wonder about the potential cost of this focus on higher-achieving students, for

whom improvements over the same time period have been modest. (Bui, Craig,

& Imberman, 2012, p. 71)

Hanushek, Peterson, and Woessman (2010) investigated the performance of United States

advanced learners in mathematics in comparison to other countries. Hanushek et al.

stated,

In short, the percentages of high-achieving math students in the U.S.—and most

of its individual states—are shockingly below those of many of the world's

leading industrialized nations. Results for many states are at the level of

developing countries. (p. 4)

For example, in fourth-grade mathematics on the NAEP in 2013, only 8% of students in

the United States performed at advanced; and only 9% of eighth graders performed at

advanced on the same assessment (The Nations Report Card, 2013a). In reading

performance, 8% of United States' fourth graders were at advanced on the 2013 NAEP;

and only 4% of eighth graders performed at advanced on the same assessment (The

Nations Report Card, 2013a).

The underachievement of advanced learners in the United States was also not due

to minority students bringing down the performance of White students (Hanushek et al.,

2010). For example, White fourth graders scored just above proficient as a group on the

mathematics assessment of the NAEP in 2013 and significantly below the advanced level

(The Nations Report Card, 2013b). In addition, students from families with at least one

parent who was college educated were not reaching high levels of achievement either

(Hanushek et al., 2010). For example, students with a parent who graduated from college

had average scores below the proficient level on the eighth-grade mathematics portion of the NAEP in 2013 (The Nations Report Card, 2013b).

There were also achievement gaps among our nation's advanced learners. According to a position statement from the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC, 2015) entitled Addressing Excellence Gaps in K-12 Education, the education system had focused on bringing students up to a minimum level of proficiency since the signing of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001, while our brightest students had been underachieving. This created excellence gaps. The Addressing Excellence Gaps in K-12 Education (NAGC, 2015) position statement indicated,

> The available data suggest that the singular focus on the most struggling learners has resulted in meaningful progress in closing minimum-competency achievement gaps (Rampey, Dion, & Donahue, 2009). At the same time, schools have not addressed gaps between groups of students at advanced levels of achievement, commonly referred to as excellence gaps. These excellence gaps are found in every state and on national assessments of math and reading, yet in spite of the implications for the nation, they have received almost no attention. (p. 1)

Finally, the underachievement of the United States' brightest students could have had an impact on our economy in the future. According to Olszewski-Kubilius and Clarenbach (2012),

> Data from the 2009 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) shows that the U.S., in comparison with countries such as New Zealand, Shanghai-China, Canada, Singapore, Finland, and Japan, produces smaller percentages of students who reach the highest achievement levels in reading (1.5% compared to between 1.8% and 2.9%), math (2% vs. 3% to 27%), and

science (1% vs. 3% to 4.6%). These results are especially alarming given

concerns about how to prepare students to become the innovators and creative

producers of the future needed to meet our country's economic, technological,

and security needs. (p. 6)

The problem of underachievement among gifted students was a "major area of

concern in gifted education" (Siegle, 2013, p. 3). Gifted students had been and continued

to be a marginalized group (Chu & Myers, 2015). They were often overlooked due to the

focus on struggling learners or students close to proficient (Rakow, 2012). Public

education had in large part neglected gifted students, and this was problematic because

many of them were our future leaders (Finn, 2012).

The Underachievement Problem: Contributing Factors

There were many factors contributing to the underachievement of gifted students

including a lack of national policy regarding service requirements for gifted students,

lack of funding, use of the same program approach for all gifted students, lack of specific

student achievement goals to gauge progress, and limited implementation of research-

based strategies (Callahan, Moon, & Oh, 2014). In addition, the unhealthy desire to be

perfect could be a major roadblock for gifted students and could cause underachievement

(Rimm, 2007).

With regard to national policy, advanced learners continued to be grouped with

other students based on age rather than ability (Plucker & Callahan, 2014). Specifically,

Plucker and Callahan (2014) stated, "This is based on the assumption that individuals of a

similar age have had roughly equivalent opportunities to learn and educational

experiences, thereby leaving them with similar content yet to be mastered" (p. 394).

Balls, Eury, and King (2011) stated the following about high-performing schools: "The

school creates a personalized environment that supports each student's intellectual, ethical, social, and physical development. The school groups adults and students in small learning communities characterized by stable, close, and mutually respectful relationships" (p.22). It did not appear that the majority of gifted students were attending schools with this type of environment. A national survey of gifted programs conducted by Callahan et al. (2015) found that

> The reported delivery systems suggest a "one-size-fits-all" approach that runs counter to the research findings that gifted students are not a homogeneous group with the same learning needs (e.g., Kenny, Archambault, & Hallmark, 1995; Reis & Renzulli, 2009), and that Advanced Placement programs at the high school level are not a fit for all gifted high school students (Gallagher, 2009; Hertberg-Davis, Callahan, & Kyberg, 2005). (p. 7)

> Perry Zirkel of Lehigh University, a lawyer who has written widely about legal issues for the gifted, points out that 50 years after *Brown v. Board of Education*, our country still has not achieved equality in the classroom. Brown began the journey to legally end grouping by skin color. Today, altering attitudes about acceleration is a journey to end grouping by birth date. (Colangelo et al., 2004, p. 40)

"The time has come to put aside the outdated notion that flexible achievement groupings designed to meet students' needs are the same as tracking and cannot also reflect principles of social justice" (Rakow, 2012, p. 40).

Another national policy factor that contributed to the underachievement of gifted students was the emphasis on minimum proficiency on state assessments and attempting to close the achievement gaps. Gifted students were often overlooked due to the focus on

struggling learners or students who were close to proficient (Rakow, 2012). According to

Jolly and Matthews (2012),

>In addition to research conducted over the past 25 years, the past decade has also
>
>witnessed a dramatic shift in the focus of public schools toward struggling, low-
>
>achieving students and efforts to bring this population to proficiency. This
>
>emphasis has had the unintended effect of causing teachers and schools to ignore
>
>the needs of the gifted and other highly able learners (Thomas B. Fordham
>
>Institute, 2008). (p. 261)

State and federal guidelines, especially No Child Left Behind legislation passed in 2001

by the federal government, brought many students up to proficiency, but expectations for

raising the achievement levels of the highest performing students had been virtually

nonexistent (Xiang, Dahlin, Cronin, Theaker, & Durant, 2011). Fisher and Frey (2012)

stated,

>Evidence of increased graduation rates and a slow but steady improvement in
>
>closing the achievement gap are emerging. But "closing the gap" should be more
>
>than simply holding the highest achievers at a constant while trying to elevate
>
>those in the lowest quartile. (pp. 298-299)

The lack of funding for gifted education programs as well as disparities in funding

from school district to school district was contributing to the underachievement problem.

Olszewski-Kubilius and Clarenbach (2012) stated, "state-level funding for gifted and

talented programs is on the decline, which, coupled with small local school budgets, puts

more gifted education services at risk" (p. 8). The absence of a federal mandate for gifted

education was problematic. According to a report produced by NAGC and The Council

of State Directors of Programs for the Gifted (2015),

> Without a federal mandate to identify or serve the needs of gifted learners, state and local education agencies are the authorities in determining programs and services for gifted learners in the 2014-15 school year. Although decentralization allows for states to respond to the specific needs of their population, it results in a wide disparity in services across and within states. (p. 11)

An example of the lack of sufficient funding for gifted education was evident in the 2012-2013 school year when only four states fully funded their gifted education mandates (NAGC, 2013). A research study by Kettler et al. (2015) found,

> Data in this study indicated that locale, school size, and economic disadvantage were the strongest predictors of variance in funding and staffing gifted education programs. Rural schools, small schools, and schools with larger economically disadvantaged populations allocate proportionally less fiscal and human resources to gifted education services. Racial/ethnic diversity, property wealth, and overall expenditures per student accounted for relatively little of the variance in funding and staffing gifted programs. (p. 99)

Disproportionate funding for gifted education programs existed from state to state and between counties within states (Kettler et al., 2015). "It cannot be ignored or discounted that whether gifted children's abilities are noticed and developed depends largely on where they live" (Olszewski-Kubilius & Clarenbach, 2012, p. 8).

Many teachers had difficulty providing instruction, assignments, projects, and questions that engaged and challenged gifted students, which was also part of the underachievement problem. Culross, Jolly, and Winkler (2013) stated,

> Over 25 years ago, John Feldhusen, Theron Proctor, and Kathryn Black (1986) observed that educators had difficulty appropriately providing challenging work

for gifted students. They noted that whereas some teachers aptly accommodated

their advanced students' needs, many did not, and other teachers were unable to

effectively differentiate due to school policy and systematic restraints. Presently,

this failure continues to have a negative academic and affective impact on many

gifted and talented students. (p. 36)

The lack of engagement and rigor in the classroom were two more contributing factors to

the boredom experienced by advanced learners (Colangelo et al., 2004). "Many gifted

students have the skills to be successful; they simply are not choosing to engage and

apply those skills because they do not see the meaningfulness in the tasks they are being

asked to do" (Siegle, 2013, p. 127). Gifted students needed teachers who were able to

differentiate their instruction, so their learning needs were met; however, it was the "type

of differentiation that general classroom teachers may not have been trained to provide"

(Manning, Stanford, & Reeves, 2010, p. 145). In order to differentiate for gifted

students, "The teacher must be familiar with above-grade-level standards, in-depth

content beyond the grade-level text, advanced and extended resources, and alternative

instructional strategies" (Rakow, 2012, p. 37); however, as Siegle (2013) pointed out,

very few gifted students had classroom experiences that were differentiated. The highest

level of Bloom's Revised Taxonomy was the creating level; and, according to Dean,

Hubbell, Pitler, and Stone (2012), "Almost every model and iteration of what constitutes

21st century learning includes two concepts that have become keystones of preparing

students for future endeavors: collaborating and creating" (p. 45). Dean et al. stated,

Studies show that well-organized cooperative learning opportunities positively

affect academic as well as socioemotional achievement, self-esteem, motivation,

and engagement with school, all while helping to minimize feelings of social

isolation (Beesley & Apthorp, 2010). We can no longer expect students to learn in isolation any more than we can expect to work in isolation. (p. 46)

A learning environment characterized by student collaboration and opportunities for creative responses and products tied directly into NAGC's program standards (NAGC, 2010a). The importance of creating opportunities for higher order thinking tasks and tasks that allowed advanced learners to create new products was highlighted by Page (2010):

> During schooling years, the gifted child frequently undertakes "unnecessary practice" of content, as they achieve mastery sooner than their "nongifted" peers do (Diezmann & Watters, 2006). The Gifted learner is characterized by an ability to rapidly acquire new content, advanced reasoning, higher maturity than age peers, and heightened awareness of their surroundings and feelings (Deizmann, Watters & Fox, 2001). The unfortunate fact is that these capabilities are frequently either not noticed, or not fully utilized in the standardized curriculum. (p. 2)

In the absence of rigor and creative, collaborative learning opportunities, boredom and disengagement could result. As Page indicated,

> Gifted children have special learning needs, which if not met, can lead to frustration, a loss of self-esteem, boredom, laziness and underachievement (Crocker, 2004; after Knight & Becker (2000)). If the gifted child is not recognized, he or she quickly becomes bored and disinterested with the content taught. Diezmann and Watters (2006:3) state: "gifted students have an advanced knowledge base compared to their nongifted peers…. Thus, what is initially new content for nongifted students might be only practice material for gifted students."

If the gifted student is not identified, they quickly surpass their nongifted

classmates and become accustomed to a relaxed approach to learning, which can

create serious learning difficulties when confronted with difficult and complex

material in higher studies (Diezmann & Watters, 2006). (p. 1)

The difficulty that many teachers had with raising the achievement levels of gifted

students was not completely their fault. Part of the reason many teachers had difficulty

providing appropriate instruction and differentiated tasks was a lack of training on how to

teach gifted students effectively (Blair, 2010; Manning et al., 2010). The NAGC (2010b)

website stated,

Teacher training requirements for working with gifted students are determined at

the state and local levels. Although gifted and talented students are in every

school and classroom, few districts require that all classroom teachers receive

training to address the educational needs of advanced learners. (para. 16)

NAGC and The Council of State Directors of Programs for the Gifted (2015) conducted a

State of the States survey in 2014-2015 and, of the 38 states that reported, only three

required regular classroom teachers to receive training on gifted education after their

initial certification. In addition, according to Plucker and Callahan (2014),

Policies based on the assumption that differentiation in the general education

classroom meets gifted students' academic needs are likely to create situations in

which modifications in curriculum and instruction for the gifted learner are

absent. Yet differentiation within the regular classroom is one of the most

common forms of programming for advanced students (NAGC, 2011). (p. 394)

Teachers were told to differentiate their instruction for each student in their classrooms,

but received hardly any help to make it happen. According to Hertberg-Davis (2009),

"Although the literature on teacher change very clearly indicates that meaningful change requires sustained focus and long-term professional development (Fullan, 1993), most teachers expected to differentiate instruction receive little training or support beyond a single one-day, whole-school workshop" (p. 252). Colleges and universities were contributing to the underachievement of advanced learners as well by not teaching potential teachers about the needs of gifted students and how to meet those needs effectively with strategies such as differentiation. "Few teacher preparation programs require coursework in differentiation for gifted and advanced learners or strategies for teaching advanced classes and content" (Rakow, 2012, p. 35). Sandra Damico, former Dean of the University of Iowa's College of Education, once said, "The fact that the research on acceleration is not readily part of the training of teachers and administrators is a strike against the mission of Colleges of Education" (Colangelo et al., 2004, p. 50). This lack of training was evident by the assertion made by Wagner (2014):

> Many generations of the most successful students were often more likely to learn how to think from the conversations they had with parents at the dinner table or during family trips than from their classes. They came to school smart and motivated and left the same, and whatever "value-added" some teachers provided often was and continues to be the result of random acts of excellence—at least in public schools. (p. xxiv)

Finally, the absence of parental input contributed to the problem of underachievement among gifted students as well. Kettler (2014) stated, "The national programming standards for gifted education advocate that to effectively work with identified gifted and talented students, educators need to understand the characteristics of the students in the population" (p. 128). The parents knew their children best and they

could provide valuable information to educators about the characteristics and educational needs of their children.

> Naturally, parents observe their children's progress on a daily basis, so they are often the first to realize a child's achievement has begun to decline. Parents are also able to recognize changes in their children's attitudes toward school and learning. (Siegle, 2013, p. 21)

O'Reilly and Matt (2012) stated, "parents and teachers are a child's most important allies" (p. 126). Parents and teachers needed to communicate regularly to increase the probability of the child's success (O'Reilly & Matt, 2012). Educators may be able to effectively teach gifted students by working with parents to understand the strengths and weaknesses of their children (Siegle, 2013).

Parents played a vital role in developing the academic motivation levels of gifted children (Garn, Matthews, & Jolly, 2012). "The evidence is now clear that parents' involvement in children's learning benefits children's achievement" (Welsh, 2015, p. 91); however, the perspective of parents was practically nonexistent when it came to appropriate programming for their gifted children. After reviewing available literature, Jolly and Matthews (2012) noted, "The results from this review of the literature were somewhat surprising in that relatively few studies have been conducted about parents of the gifted" (p. 272). One would have thought that the perspective of parents would be sought since they typically know their children best (O'Reilly & Matt, 2012). Elementary gifted students would most likely achieve mastery sooner and better than their peers (Siegle, 2013). Parents were in a perfect position to inform educators about their child's rate of mastery on tasks at home and the areas in which their child excels. In fact, "Despite some instances to the contrary, most parents appear to be reasonably

accurate in their evaluation of their child's ability (McBee, 2006)" (Jolly & Matthews, 2012, p. 269). "Of course, the overarching problem lies in our apparent inability to translate the outcomes parents say they want their gifted children to obtain from schools into effective practice in the school setting" (Jolly & Matthews, 2012, p. 274).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to add to the body of knowledge about what constituted effective programming for gifted students by examining the desires of parents. In addition, the correlation between the strategies that previous research had indicated as effective for gifted education and the programming sought by parents of gifted children was examined. A report produced by the Thomas B. Fordham Institute and written by Xiang et al. (2011) stated the following about high achieving students:

> No, these aren't the kids that education-reform outfits fuss about. They aren't catalysts for campaigns to expand school choice, or initiate weighted student funding, or end last-in-first-out policies. They don't tug at the heartstrings like the needy children in our most wretched school systems. (Some of them reside there, but most don't.) But they deserve attention, too: Eight, ten, twelve, seventeen years old, with little more than a coin toss determining whether they wind up their school careers simply "above average" or among the country's top achievers and brightest hopes for the future. What will we do to bolster their odds? (pp. 3-4)

There has not been a "silver bullet" or single solution identified for teaching and meeting the needs of gifted students (Siegle, 2013); however, researchers have identified strategies that work for gifted learners. Mandelman and Grigorenko (2013) stated,

> Southern and Jones (2004) in a chapter of a comprehensive report on acceleration

titled "A nation deceived: How schools hold back America's brightest students" (Colangelo, Assouline, & Gross, 2004) list and describe 18 different types of acceleration. These include early admission to kindergarten, early admission to first grade, grade skipping, continuous progress, self-paced instruction, subject matter acceleration/partial acceleration, combined classes, curriculum compacting, telescoping curriculum, mentoring, extra-curricular programs, correspondence courses, early graduation, concurrent/dual enrollment, advanced placement, credit by examination, acceleration in college, early entrance into middle school, high school, or college. (p. 127)

There were two main approaches to acceleration, and they were skipping grade levels or progressing through content more rapidly than peers. "The primary distinguishing feature between content-based acceleration and grade-based acceleration is whether the accelerative intervention shortens the number of years that a student spends in the K-12 system" (Colangelo et al., 2010, p. 183). Acceleration in the form of skipping grade levels was a strategy to improve the achievement levels of gifted students. There were many approaches to grade skipping that included starting kindergarten early, skipping an entire grade level, grade telescoping, and entering college early (Colangelo et al., 2010). According to McClarty (2015), "Students accelerated prior to eighth grade performed better than their older, matched peers on the vast majority of high school and college outcome measures" (p. 9). Content-based acceleration could include progress through a single subject such as math faster than peers while remaining in the same class with peers, curriculum compacting, taking advanced placement or international baccalaureate courses, and participating in classes at higher grade levels when proficiency has been demonstrated with on-grade level content (Colangelo et al., 2010). "In sum, acceleration

is an effective strategy for gifted learners, and accelerated students receive additional benefit from instructional programs tailored to their abilities" (McClarty, 2015, p. 12).

Another option in the 21st century for gifted students and their parents was online learning which gave the students flexibility with the time of day when they completed tasks, the length of time to complete tasks, and the subjects included in their schedule (Blair, 2010). According to Sanderson and Greenberger (2011), "Online programming is here to stay and is changing the face of education" (p. 43). "The old model of pedagogy – teacher-focused, one-way, one-size-fits-all – makes no sense to young people who have grown up in a digital world" (Balls et al., 2011, p. 141). Online learning programs gave gifted students access to rigorous curriculum, teachers who had been trained to serve gifted students, peers with equivalent abilities, and 21st century skills (Blair, 2010; Sanderson & Greenberger, 2011). In addition, according to Zadina (2014),

> Most curricula identify progress as moving to the next grade level, not the sort of progress that releases feel-good chemicals. However, many online courses give this sense of progress because a student moves ahead to more and more challenging material in progressing through the course at his or her own rate. (p. 95)

Online learning provided the platform for gifted students to experience an education that was tailored to their individual needs.

A third practice that was implemented by many schools was "pulling out" gifted students from the regular classroom setting to receive instruction from an Academically and Intellectually Gifted (AIG) teacher. In a research study conducted by Delcourt, Cornell, and Goldberg (2007), there was evidence that pullout programs, special schools, or special programs for gifted students led to higher achievement levels in comparison to

gifted students who attended no programs or received interventions within the regular classroom. In addition, Delcourt et al. stated as part of the findings that

> Policy makers should know that students from within-class grouping arrangements received the lowest scores in all areas of achievement. Given that within-class programs are a popular model in gifted education, their curricular and instructional provisions for the gifted must be carefully maintained lest they disintegrate into a no-program format. (p. 359)

A fourth practice that was implemented in schools was for the teacher to differentiate his or her instruction, assignments, projects, and questions for gifted students. Hertberg-Davis (2009) stated,

> Within the philosophy of differentiation, gifted students are regarded as a diverse lot whose individual talents and needs cannot be met with a single "gifted" curriculum. As such, recommendations for differentiating learning experiences for gifted students include principles of providing not only challenges generally considered beneficial for gifted students (e.g., greater depth and complexity, adjusted pace, greater independence) but also curricular and instructional modifications geared toward individual student need. (p. 251)

In order to make the necessary instructional modifications for gifted students, teachers must be knowledgeable about above grade level curriculum standards and have in-depth content knowledge themselves (Rakow, 2012). Unfortunately, many teachers resisted differentiating their instruction because it took more time to plan lessons and the pressures placed on them to "teach to the test" (Hertberg-Davis, 2009). In addition to the time factor, many teachers had not received any professional development on differentiation for gifted learners, which meant they were not prepared for what they were

asked to do (Manning et al., 2010).

Research Questions

There were several research questions that were addressed in this study.

1. What did parents desire for their gifted child in a public elementary school?

2. What aspects of the current service delivery model did parents believe were effective in meeting their child's needs?

3. What aspects of the current service delivery model did parents believe were not meeting their child's needs?

4. What outcomes did parents want to see as a result of their children participating in an AIG program?

Significance

This study was significant because few researchers had studied what parents wanted in gifted education programs. "Today, nearly a century and half after the first efforts to study parents of the gifted, it appears that surprisingly little progress has been made in this area despite well over a century of formal study" (Jolly & Matthews, 2012, p. 260). If the input of parents continued to be neglected in the public education of gifted students, parents would begin to look elsewhere for educational options for their children. Tomlinson and Imbeau (2010) stated,

> A chorus of voices—representative of experts in virtually every aspect of education—continually asserts that current ideas about "how to do school" are inadequate both as a reflection of our current knowledge of teaching and learning and as a means to address the learning needs of an increasingly diverse student population. (p. 3)

Altogether, gifted children learn differently compared to their peers in several

ways, and therefore have different educational needs. Current educational

systems are often focused on the average learners and, consequently, fail to

adequately meet the educational needs of the gifted children. (van der Meulen et

al., 2014, p. 289)

Despite the research and evidence of strategies and best practices for gifted students,

many schools across America continued to provide a "one-size-fits-all" education.

Parents were uniquely positioned to assist educators in making the educational

experience of their children better. Their input could have been invaluable to educators

because gifted children's parents were very accurate in identifying the abilities and

talents of their children (Robinson, Shore, & Enersen, 2007). According to Siegle

(2013), "Students do well in school when they have a supportive academic home climate

that meshes with the academic climate in their schools" (p. 27). Regular communication

between the school and the student's family was important (O'Reilly & Matt, 2012). The

feedback that gifted students received from parents and educators could potentially cause

underachievement if the students were constantly praised for their ability rather than

praised for their effort. The student could think that if they failed, their intellectual

giftedness no longer existed (Snyder et al., 2014). The input of parents mattered in how

their children perceived their potential and ability.

Parents should help their children see the value of educational experiences, and

this often takes time. Providing environments that support feelings of autonomy,

competence, and relatedness is the key to fostering high levels of internalization

or self-determined forms of motivation. Environments that do not support

feelings of autonomy, competence, and relatedness undermine gifted and talented

children's levels of internalization. (Garn et al., 2012, p. 665)

Parents and educators needed to work together to create an optimal school/home partnership and learning environment that motivated gifted children.

At the intersection of parents' desires for their children and best practices identified by educational researchers was potentially an opportunity to enhance gifted programming and ultimately student achievement. According to Moon (2009), "In elementary school, the problems and challenges that high-ability youth experience with academic achievement and motivation depend in large measure on the educational environments they experience" (p. 275). Educational researchers such has Joseph Renzulli who created the Three Ring Conception of Giftedness and Francoys Gagne who developed the Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent emphasized that students must practice and actively use their abilities and talents in order to develop to their full potential (Siegle, 2013). The learning environment and support of educators and parents were critical. This research study was significant because it shed light on the type of educational environment that was optimal for gifted students by truly looking at gifted education through the "eyes" of the parents.

Methodology

The research study was an explanatory sequential mixed methods approach. The study included qualitative and quantitative components. According to Creswell (2014), an explanatory sequential approach involved collecting the quantitative data first, reviewing the results, and then conducting the qualitative phase and reviewing those results. The quantitative data were collected using an online survey through the SurveyMonkey website (Appendix A). Some of the questions from the quantitative survey "Opinions about the Gifted and Their Education Instrument" designed by Dr. Del Siegle and Dr. Betsy McCoach were utilized for the online survey (Appendix A).

A focus group interview format was utilized to collect the qualitative data. "Qualitative data tends to be open-ended without predetermined responses while quantitative data usually includes closed-ended responses such as found on questionnaires or psychological instruments" (Creswell, 2014, p. 14). Creswell (2014) stated, "the qualitative results help to expand or explain the quantitative results" (p. 225). The research study included interviews with focus groups of parents of AIG students. The AIG students were identified by the school system's eligibility criteria. Qualitative research is also inductive in nature (Creswell, 2014), and the parent interviews focused on the parent's individual meaning of what constituted effective programming for their children. "This up-close information gathered by actually talking directly to people and seeing them behave and act within their context is a major characteristic of qualitative research" (Creswell, 2014, p. 185).

Creswell (2014) stated, "The key idea behind qualitative research is to learn about the problem or issue from participants and to address the research to obtain that information" (p. 186). A goal in the collection of the data was the identification of themes and patterns from the responses to the questions. Once the themes and patterns were determined, they were compared with the educational research regarding effective programming for gifted students. New programming options could potentially emerge from parent responses.

Context of the Research Study

The site for this research study was five elementary schools in a city school system. The schools served students in Grades Prekindergarten through 5. The average number of students in each elementary school in the district was 417 (North Carolina School Report Card, 2015). The school system provided AIG services for fourth and

fifth graders, so the study focused on the programming for gifted students in fourth and fifth grades. The program approach that had been used by the school system for several years was a pullout model in which the gifted students attended a class with an AIG teacher. The teacher provided instruction in math and reading to the gifted students. The gifted students met with this teacher two times per week during the course of the school year. Starting with the 2016-2017 school year, the school system began implementation of a new plan for AIG services. The AIG plan included delivering services through direct instruction from the AIG teacher, the AIG teacher collaborating and/or co-teaching with the regular classroom teachers, and the use of technology and Google Classroom to provide students with differentiated assignments within the regular classroom setting (Anonymous School System AIG Plan, 2016).

There were two pathways in the school system for students to be identified as AIG. The first pathway was to be labeled as Intellectually Gifted (IG) by having a full scale aptitude score of 97% or above on a nationally normed test (Anonymous School System AIG Plan, 2016). Another option within the first pathway was to be labeled Academically Intellectual (AI) by having a full scale aptitude score of 97% on a nationally normed test and an end-of-grade (EOG) test score of 97% or above (Anonymous School System AIG Plan, 2016). The second pathway was for a student to receive a label as Academically Gifted in Math (AM), Academically Gifted in Reading (AR), or Academically Gifted in Reading and Math (AG-Reading & Math Identified) by meeting at least four of the five following criteria:

1. 93% full scale score on a Nationally Normed Aptitude test.
2. Level 5 on a North Carolina EOG test in math and/or reading.
3. 93% or above on a Nationally Normed Achievement Test.

4. 95% or above yearly average grade in math and/or reading.

5. Meets gifted criteria on a Teacher Observation Checklist (Anonymous School System AIG Plan, 2016).

In addition, there were other assessments accepted for identification as AIG, and they included Aptitude, CogAT, OtisLennon Ability test, TONI-Test of Nonverbal Intelligence, Nationally Normed Achievement Test, Stanford Achievement Test, Woodcock Johnson Test, Teacher Observation, Gifted Rating Scale, and Slocumb Payne (Anonymous School System AIG Plan, 2016). The school system would also review individual psychological testing from licensed psychological practitioners (Anonymous School System AIG Plan, 2016). Students who moved into the school system from another school system who had already been identified as AIG maintained their identification (Anonymous School System AIG Plan, 2016). Any student who moved into the school system from another state had to meet one of the criteria for placement that was outlined in the school system's AIG plan. Any potential AIG students could be retested once a year after their initial screening if different test forms and versions were available (Anonymous School System AIG Plan, 2016).

Limitations

There were some limitations to this research study. First, parent satisfaction with the current practices for gifted education and parent satisfaction with their children's AIG teacher may have impacted the ideas and opinions expressed by the parents during the focus group interviews. Second, parent awareness of research-based practices for gifted education and the options that were available for their children may have impacted the results of the focus group interviews. Third, the school system in which the research study was conducted had recently approved a new AIG plan for the school years 2016 to

2019. Parent awareness of the new AIG plan as well as their awareness of the previous AIG plan for the school system may have impacted the opinions expressed during the focus group interviews. Fourth, parent participation in the research study was voluntary, so only the opinions and ideas of those who chose to participate in the interviews informed the researcher's identification of themes. Finally, the researcher was the principal of one of the elementary schools in the school system which may have had some influence on the responses of AIG parents who had children at his school.

Delimitations

In the 2016-2017 school year, there were 95 AIG students in fourth and fifth grades in the school district where the research study took place. The research study only involved the parents of these AIG students in Grades 4 and 5 at the five elementary schools in the school district. The school district was a city school system in the foothills area of North Carolina, and the average number of students in the elementary schools in 2016 was 413 students (North Carolina School Report Card, 2016). The same anonymous survey was provided to all AIG fourth- and fifth-grade parents, and four small groups of parents were interviewed in a focus group format. Finally, the number of parents who could have participated in the survey was restricted by the requirement that their children had to be AIG fourth or fifth graders.

Definitions

AIG. "Although there is a federal definition of giftedness in the No Child Left Behind Act (P.L. 107- 110 [Title IX, Part A, Definition 22] [2002]; 20 USC 7801[22] [2004]), states have the authority to determine their own definition to guide identification and programming options" (NAGC and The Council of State Directors of Programs for the Gifted, 2015, p. 27). For this research study, the definition of AIG stated in North

Carolina legislative statute, Article 9B (NCGS § 115C-150.5), was utilized. It stated,

> Academically or intellectually gifted students perform or show the potential to
> perform at substantially high levels of accomplishment when compared with
> others of their age, experience, or environment. Academically or intellectually
> gifted students exhibit high performance capability in intellectual areas, specific
> academic fields, or in both the intellectual areas and specific academic fields.
> Academically or intellectually gifted students require differentiated educational
> services beyond those ordinarily provided by the regular educational program.
> Outstanding abilities are present in students from all cultural groups, across all
> economic strata, and in all areas of human endeavor. (North Carolina
> Academically or Intellectually Gifted Program Standards, 2012, p. 1)

Cluster grouping.

> Cluster grouping refers to the practice of identifying the top five to eight
> academically talented (or intellectually gifted) students at a grade level and
> placing them in the same classroom at that grade level with a teacher best suited
> and qualified to work with gifted students (Rogers, 2001). (Pierce et al., 2011, p.
> 572).

Grade skipping. "A student is considered to have grade skipped if he or she is given a grade-level placement ahead of chronological-age peers. Grade-skipping may be done at the beginning or during the school year" (Southern & Jones, 2004, p. 5).

Homeschooled student.

> Homeschooled students are school-age children (ages 5-17) in a grade equivalent
> to at least kindergarten and not higher than 12th grade who receive instruction at
> home instead of at a public or private school either all or most of the time.

(Redford, Battle, & Bielick, 2016, p. B-2)

National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). "The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is the largest nationally representative and continuing assessment of what America's students know and can do in various subject areas" (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017, para. 1). The NAEP was an assessment that was taken by United States students in Grades 4, 8, and 10. The NAEP provided an overall perspective about the performance of students in reading and mathematics.

> Since NAEP assessments are administered uniformly using the same sets of test booklets across the nation, NAEP results serve as a common metric for all states and selected urban districts. The assessment stays essentially the same from year to year, with only carefully documented changes. (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017, para. 2)

It allowed the policymakers, educators, and the general public to track educational progress in the United States over time.

Pullout program. The AIG students were provided services by the AIG teacher in a separate classroom.

Tracking or full-time grouping. The AIG students in a grade level were all grouped together in the same class on a full-time basis. "Classes for the gifted to which only a select few are admitted, based on their perceived ability, represents one common form of tracking employed in elementary and secondary schools" (Ansalone, 2010, p. 3).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Overview

Tomlinson and Imbeau (2010) stated the following about the learners sitting in classrooms today:

Not only do learners compose an increasingly diverse group, but they are also young people who live in a world of personalization—at least outside of school. They are accustomed to watching a particular television show when it's convenient rather than when it's broadcast. They no longer buy entire albums to "own" a particular song but rather download just the selections they like. They order computers specifically designed for their needs. They get news on demand and information they need when they need it. In school, however, we teach them as though their variance in readiness, individual interests, and particular approaches to learning were of no consequence. It is becoming increasingly difficult to pretend that batch processing of a vastly diverse student population supports them as learners or that we are preparing them for productive citizenship in a world with complexities, uncertainties, and challenges that demand the very best of each of them. (pp. 3-4)

Gifted students were members of this diverse group of students in America's schools and their underachievement was a problem. AIG students had underachieved in schools across the United States (Colangelo et al., 2004). In fact, "Some researchers have suggested that as high as 50% of gifted students underachieve at some point" in their education (Siegle, 2013, p. 1). Reversing the underachievement of gifted students was hard work; but, according to Rimm (1997), it could be done through collaboration between the student, parent, and school staff.

Rimm (1997) created the Rimm Trifocal Model to reverse student underachievement, and it typically took between 6 months and 1 year. The Trifocal Model reversed underachievement in approximately 80% of students (Rimm, 1997). According to Rimm (1997), "The Trifocal Model has been used effectively for children in kindergarten through grade 12 in regular education, special education, at-risk programs, and gifted programs" (p. 22).

> The Trifocal Model includes six steps, of which the first five apply to all underachievers. In step six, which is divided into three types of underachieving children, you will select the ideas that most apply to your underachieving child or student. (Rimm, 2008, p. 3)

Rimm's Trifocal Model had the following elements: assessment, changing expectations, communication, correction of deficiencies, role model identification, and modifications at home and school (Rimm, 2008). In addition, Shaughnessy (1999) interviewed Dr. Rimm, and Dr. Rimm stated the following about reversing underachievement: "We can reverse underachievement in children by changing expectations, providing mentors and role models for identification, expanding the school days for some children who need it, accelerating learning by goal-directed tutoring, and involving parents" (p. 203). In referring to the Trifocal Model, Siegle (2013) stated, "The underlying principle of the model is that underachievement behaviors are learned, and therefore they can be unlearned" (p. 59). Key components in unlearning the underachievement behaviors were the identification of role models for the student to emulate and tracking progress so the student could see the relationship between effort and achievement (Siegle, 2013). In summary, the Rimm Trifocal Model utilized collaboration between the student, parents, and the school staff to help reverse underachievement.

Another underachievement intervention noted in the literature was the Achievement Orientation Model that was developed by Del Siegle and Betsy McCoach (Siegle, 2013). "The model suggests that individuals' self-perceptions in three areas (self-efficacy, goal valuation [meaningfulness], and environmental perception) regulate students' motivation, and subsequently, their academic achievement" (Siegle, 2013, p. 73). When helping a student overcome underachievement, these three areas were targeted. Siegle (2013) stated,

> For many gifted underachievers, self-regulation is a byproduct of the interaction of the self-efficacy, task meaningfulness, and environmental perceptions beliefs. In the Achievement Orientation Model, we posit that self-regulation is a byproduct of being efficacious about a task, believing the task is valuable, and trusting that the environment and those in it support achievement. (p. 79)

In summary, the Achievement Orientation Model focused on self-efficacy, task meaningfulness, and environmental perceptions in order to reverse underachievement.

According to Callahan et al. (2015), "The heart of effective programming for gifted education services lies in the development and the implementation of curricula and instructional strategies that will challenge and enhance learning outcomes for these students" (p. 138). van der Meulen et al. (2014) also stated the following after a review of relevant research on the effects of special education for gifted students:

> The largest effects are found in full-time grouping and in programs with curricula that are the most adapted to gifted children. With offering more complicated knowledge and skills, a significantly larger development occurs in these children. Gifted children need to be challenged, which necessitates some form of regrouping, whether for an entire class of gifted children or a cluster group. (p.

294)

Research also indicated that service options such as acceleration were effective for AIG students (Colangelo et al., 2004). In fact, Culross et al. (2013) stated, "The majority of post-1986 research literature establishes grade acceleration's viability, and it is rational to accept that grade acceleration is often a beneficial procedure" (p. 43); however, despite the extensive research on strategies and programming options that were effective for AIG students, they have underachieved (Colangelo et al., 2004).

In addition, according to Coleman, Micko, and Cross (2015), "Studies concerning the personal experience of gifted children have been infrequent and continue to be, but through synthesis and compilation, a useful basis of understanding the gifted phenomenon could emerge" (p. 359). Parents have been extremely accurate at identifying the talents of their own children and understand the personal experiences of their children. According to Robinson et al. (2007),

> Because research has long supported the early identification and development of talents, educators must welcome and rely on parents for vital information about children's special abilities. This becomes the first kind of involvement schools should pursue and parents should offer. (p. 8)

Bicknell (2014) pointed out that "Parents need to be considered as a key source of information in the early identification process" (p. 92). Parents and educators needed to work together to form a partnership for the benefit of the gifted child (Bicknell, 2014).

A review of the literature on practices in gifted education and programming options for gifted education revealed three major themes.

1. AIG students had unique characteristics, attributes, and needs.

2. The perspective of the parents of AIG students was invaluable.

3. There was extensive research available that indicated the best practices for

AIG services.

Characteristics of the Gifted Student

Gifted students were diverse and had unique talents and abilities. "It is important

to consider all of the dimensions of a gifted child's life: academic, self-concept, social

skills and well-being, emotional health, and talent maturation" (Robinson et al., 2007, p.

15). There was not one agreed-upon definition of giftedness nor were gifted students a

homogeneous group, so generalizations were often flawed (Coleman et al., 2015).

Despite the lack of homogeneity, there were multiple ways educational researchers

defined giftedness, and even though gifted students were not all alike (Weber & Smith,

2010), there were some common characteristics that had been identified. According to a

NAGC (2010c) position statement,

> Gifted individuals are 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). (p. 1)

Another definition of AIG was provided in North Carolina legislative statute, Article 9B

(NCGS § 115C-150.5), which stated,

> Academically or intellectually gifted students perform or show the potential to
>
> perform at substantially high levels of accomplishment when compared with
>
> others of their age, experience, or environment. Academically or intellectually
>
> gifted students exhibit high performance capability in intellectual areas, specific

academic fields, or in both the intellectual areas and specific academic fields.

Academically or intellectually gifted students require differentiated educational

services beyond those ordinarily provided by the regular educational program.

Outstanding abilities are present in students from all cultural groups, across all

economic strata, and in all areas of human endeavor. (North Carolina

Academically or Intellectually Gifted Program Standards, 2012, p. 1)

In addition to the formal definitions for giftedness, there were some common characteristics that gifted students possessed and exhibited. McGee and Hughes (2011) stated, "Longitudinal studies show that children who are gifted speak their first words early, at a mean age of 9 months" (p. 101). Gifted students also tended to be advanced verbally with large vocabularies, and they had advanced oral language skills (Robinson et al., 2007). "Gifted children sometimes talk and have interests like adults" as well (Robinson et al., 2007, p. 21); however, Robinson et al. (2007) also noted that students' advanced oral skills might not coincide with advanced reading skills. Another characteristic was that gifted students tended to progress faster through curriculum standards than peers (NAGC, 2010c).

Ability and motivation were two additional characteristics that made gifted students different from their same-age peers (Coleman et al., 2015). Siegle (2013) stated that gifted students tended to perform tasks earlier and better than their same-age classmates in elementary school, and their talents might develop asynchronously. Siegle (2013) also stated that in elementary school, gifted students might perform well on ability measurements and learn at faster rates than same peers; and then as they got older, achievement and a high level of motivation in a certain area become the defining characteristics of their giftedness.

State eligibility requirements for students to participate in gifted education were another way to identify common characteristics among gifted students. NAGC and The Council of State Directors of Programs for the Gifted (2015) conducted a State of the States survey in 2014-2015, and 41 states plus the District of Columbia responded. The survey results indicated, "The most frequently required criteria include IQ scores, achievement data, nominations, a range of state-approved assessments, and portfolios" (NAGC and The Council of State Directors of Programs for the Gifted, 2015, p. 29). The survey results indicated that high IQ scores, high achievement data, high scores on state-approved assessments, and quality work within portfolios would be characteristics of gifted students (NAGC and The Council of State Directors of Programs for the Gifted, 2015).

It was important to remember as well that characteristics of giftedness might appear differently in low-income, high-ability learners (Olszewski-Kubilius & Clarenbach, 2012). According to McGee and Hughes (2011), "Advanced learners growing up in poverty or as members of a marginalized group may reveal their gifts in nontraditional ways" (p. 103). One of the recommended practices for broadening the identification of gifted students that came out of the 2012 NAGC National Summit on Low-Income, High-Ability Learners was to provide multiple entry points and multiple pathways into gifted programs (Olszewski-Kubilius & Clarenbach, 2012). Finally, it was important to note that gifted students might not perform at high levels in all academic areas, and they might only select to perform at high levels in the academic areas that were interesting to them (Siegle, 2013). In fact, gifted students might even be below average in some areas (Siegle, 2013).

Gifted students also had emotional and social characteristics that were

noteworthy, and they could sometimes have a negative impact on the livelihood of gifted students. Peterson (2009) stated, "Clinical literature has suggested that characteristics associated with giftedness, such as sensitivity, intensity, and psychomotor, intellectual, sensual, emotional, and imaginational overexcitabilities, are not only risk factors but also potentially viewed inappropriately as pathology by helping professionals" (p. 280). In addition, according to Chu and Myers (2015), "Gifted students also face socialization problems in the classroom. Like all children, gifted students have a social need to belong" (p. 47). The socialization problems could stem from gifted students not having any classmates at the same intellectual level in their classrooms (Peterson, 2009). Furthermore, gifted students might speak like an adult and have some interests like an adult (Robinson et al., 2007), which could contribute to the socialization problems in the classroom. "They also may behave like an adult one moment and be very childlike the next" (Robinson et al., 2007, p. 21).

Another common characteristic among gifted students was perfectionist tendencies. Expectations of parents and experiences at home might contribute to the development of perfectionism in gifted students (Hibbard & Walton, 2014). "Children whose parents are perfectionists tend to also be perfectionists" (Siegle, 2013, p. 53). If tasks and tests at school were too easy, over time, gifted students could develop the expectation that they should perform "perfectly" on all tasks and tests and associate good grades with high ability (Burney, 2008). Perfectionism could also cause gifted students to exhibit detrimental behaviors or have difficulty in certain areas. For example, Peterson (2009) stated, "Clinicians specializing in working with them have reported that client issues can include trauma, anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation, bullying, learning disability, underachievement, career-development impasse, and poor coping" (p. 280). In

addition,

> Perfectionists may often exhibit a set of reaction patterns that include: fear of
> failure, procrastination, dichotomous thinking, concentration on external rewards,
> workaholic tendencies, worry about the future, minimizing accomplishments, and
> a focus on mistakes (Adderholdt & Goldberg, 1999; Adderholdt-Elliot, 1987;
> Adelson & Wilson, 2009). (Siegle, 2013, p. 47)

The role of school counselors and school social workers was important for assisting gifted students with emotional and social problems. "However, currently, most counselors-in-training graduating from CACREP-accredited institutions are not required to take specialized classes in gifted and talented education" (Colangelo & Wood, 2015, p. 138). There were not many counselors who were trained and certified to address the emotional and social needs of gifted students (Colangelo & Wood, 2015). With regard to school social workers, Chu and Myers (2015) stated, "School social workers can…play a critical role amending the educational experiences for gifted students by helping these students through the role of counselor and through the role of liaison with family and community" (p. 51). Furthermore, school social workers could also work directly with minority students, so they could be successful in gifted programming and help them deal with stigmas and stereotypes (Chu & Myers, 2015).

Creativity was often a major characteristic of gifted students. One definition of creativity was provided on the NAGC website. It stated that creativity is "the process of developing new, uncommon, or unique ideas" (NAGC, n.d.a, para. 17). "Despite the fact that creativity is difficult to define, identify, and evaluate, we must not ignore this trait in talented children" (Robinson et al., 2007, p. 77). Philosophers like John Dewey and classic learning theorists like Lev Vygotsky believed that imagination played a part in

understanding (Beghetto & Kaufman, 2009). "Allowing students the opportunity to voice their interpretations and simultaneously confront multiple perspectives and interpretations creates the conditions under which classroom learning becomes internally persuasive and generative both of creativity and new understanding" (Beghetto & Kaufman, 2009, p. 312).

Another characteristic of many gifted students was underachievement. Sylvia Rimm was an expert in the area of reversing underachievement in gifted students (Siegle, 2013). Rimm (1997) provided the following definition of underachievement: "Underachievement is a discrepancy between a child's school performance and some index of the child's ability" (p. 18). For example, Siegle (2013) stated that a possible way to determine underachievement would be to review a student's achievement scores in comparison to their grades. For school leaders, teachers, school counselors, and parents, underachievement might manifest as poor grades, messy or unfinished work, defiance, blaming others for academic problems, and refusal to engage in competition (Rimm, 1997). In addition, Ritchotte, Rubenstein, and Murry (2015) indicated that underachievers might exhibit disengaged, combative, or disruptive behavior. Also, "The inability to successfully triumph when faced with a frustrating or difficult to solve challenge leaves students vulnerable to poor self-efficacy and consequently, underachievement" (Ritchotte et al., 2015, p. 105). Finally, chronic underachievement could develop in a gifted student. It could be difficult to correct because students could develop learning gaps as a result of the underachievement over several years, and in order to overcome it, they would need interventions associated with motivation and remediation (Siegle, 2013).

The Role of the Parent: An Invaluable Perspective

"Parents play a key role in developing and supporting their children's academic motivation" (Garn et al., 2012, p. 1). The United States Supreme Court recognized this in their *Pierce v. Society of Sisters* ruling that it was a basic right of parents and guardians to control the education of their child (Schimmel, Fischer, & Stellman, 2008). In addition, "More than 80 years of research and experience demonstrates that the education of any child is made more effective by sustaining and increasing the role of parents at home and in partnership with the schools" (Robinson et al., 2007, p. 7).

According to Jolly and Matthews (2012),

The complex variables at work in parenting children, in combination with the distinctive characteristics and needs of gifted children such as markedly asynchronous development, heightened sensitivity in emotional and other areas, and tendencies toward nonconformity (Neihart, Reis, Robinson, & Moon, 2002) make parenting of gifted children much more complicated and multifaceted. (p. 260)

A partnership between parents and school staff based on frequent communication and support of one another was essential to the success of the gifted child. "Instead of a one-way communication from school to home, a respectful partnership can be built when both parties make a contribution" (Bicknell, 2014, p. 84). Siegle (2013) stated, "Students do well in school when they have a supportive academic home climate that meshes with the academic climate in their schools" (p. 27).

Parenting gifted children effectively was a difficult task for many parents, and family dynamics could affect gifted students. "Students must believe that those around them value them and want to see them succeed" (Siegle, 2013, p. 79). According to

Hoover-Schultz (2005), "Family is frequently identified as an unhealthy place for many gifted underachievers" (p. 47). For example, parents with an authoritarian style and high expectations could hinder their children's performance (Garn et al., 2012). "A review of the literature (Cross, 2007) indicated that most successful gifted children come from authoritative homes, where nurturing parents had high expectations and set limits for their children" (Weber & Stanley, 2012, p. 130). Cross (2007) indicated that parents could support their gifted children through advocating for them, providing financial resources to support their child's talent development, and providing a safe home environment. Welsh (2015) also indicated,

> Family expectations and values (e.g., priority of schoolwork over TV and recreation, expectations for performance, correct use of language, monitoring of time, and parental knowledge about child progress) have been identified as one pattern of family life that contributes to a child's success in school. (p. 89)

"Parents are extremely important models in helping their children recognize the important role hard work plays in developing one's skills and feeling fulfilled" (Siegle, 2013, p. 142).

Parents and guardians played a significant role in the emotional health of AIG students, but they might struggle with exactly what to do to help. Parents often needed for the school to provide them with strategies and information about parenting in order to help their child succeed. According to Weber and Stanley (2012),

> The literature has identified topics of interest to parents of gifted children that include unique characteristics of gifted children, optimizing their child's potential, sensitivities, discipline, communication, sibling relationships, and marital communication about serving the needs of the child (Dettmann & Colangelo,

1980; Probst, 2005; Schader, 2008). Lack of information may leave the parents

confused about their roles in identification of their gifted children and in helping

their child achieve. (p. 130)

School counselors could address these items through parent workshops (Weber &

Stanley, 2012).

Bicknell (2014) stated, "Parents need to be considered as a key source of

information in the early identification process" (p. 92). Their input needed to be valued

because "Parents of gifted children are notoriously accurate in identifying their children's

abilities, especially if they have some ideas about how children normally develop"

(Robinson et al., 2007, p. 7). Robinson et al. (2007) and Jolly and Matthews (2012)

recommended the use of multiple indicators to identify giftedness. In addition, Robinson

et al. stated that schools should "Use multiple ways of identifying creative talent and

what a student needs, and include instruments that measure skills; self-report data on

feelings, interests, and aspirations; observations by parents and teachers; and evaluation

of productivity and performance" (p. 84).

Information from parents should be welcomed and included (Robinson et al.,

2007). According to the literature, parent involvement could include the development of

the selection process, making nominations, and oversight of the process. O'Reilly and

Matt (2012) stated that parents should be involved in the "development and oversight of

the selection process for gifted students" (p. 126). Jolly and Matthews (2012) noted the

importance of parents participating in the nomination process for gifted services,

especially for underrepresented student populations. "Studies of parents' perceptions of

giftedness and of gifted identification emphasize the importance of parent nomination,

especially for identifying gifted learners who are African American, Latino, or who are

English language learners of any race or ethnicity" (Jolly & Matthews, 2012, p. 273).

Jolly and Matthews also found that Black, Hispanic, and White parents had very similar

perceptions of their children's giftedness, which supported the notion that all parents

knew their children's abilities well. Parent nominations were more subjective than

objective criteria like IQ scores. "A critical problem is the attractiveness of data like IQ

scores or other quantitative data because they can be averaged, summarized, and

otherwise easily manipulated. This is not the case with most alternative identification

criteria" (Robinson et al., 2007, p. 238). However, despite the subjectivity of parent

nominations, "Studies reveal that families are good identifiers of giftedness in their

children" (Page, 2010, p. 101). Olszewski-Kubilius and Clarenbach (2012 stated that it

was imperative to identify gifted students early in the education process and provide them

with support and enrichment. In summary,

> Because research has long supported the early identification and development of
>
> talents, educators must welcome and rely on parents for vital information about
>
> children's special abilities. This becomes the first kind of involvement schools
>
> should pursue and parents should offer. (Robinson et al., 2007, p. 8)

Parents would always be the first teachers for their children. "Parents have the

most intimate background and information regarding the abilities and capabilities of their

child" (O'Reilly & Matt, 2012, p. 126). They had a strong influence on the development

of their children from birth to kindergarten, and children spend much more time at home

than at school. While at home, parents of gifted students often had to provide many

educational activities in order to satisfy their child's curiosity and desire for maximum

activity (Winstanley, 2009). During these educational activities and involvement with

their child at home, parents developed an understanding of the child's abilities.

Therefore, the input of parents in the education of their children should be seen as a valuable resource for educators.

Coleman et al. (2015) stated, "Gifted students are not a homogeneous group; thus, their experiences are likely to differ among them, making generalizations erroneous" (p. 364). Siegle (2013) also stated, "It is rare for individuals to perform at outstanding levels in more than one domain" (p. 43). Due to the fact that AIG students are not a homogeneous group, parent descriptions of the abilities and attributes of their children were invaluable information for educators; however, many parents felt isolated and experienced educators who were unwilling to listen to their ideas and opinions (Jolly, Matthews, & Nester, 2012). "Parent satisfaction seems closely related parents' decisions to pursue nontraditional educational options for their gifted children, whether these are used in addition to or even in place of the education offered in the tradition school setting" (Jolly & Matthews, 2012, p. 271). Educators needed to listen and partner with parents, because as Rimm (1997) stated, "A most lethal cause of student underachievement is parents' lack of support for schools and teachers. Disrespect for education by parents sabotages educators' power to teach" (p. 20). Parents and teachers needed to maintain open, regular communication because each person had a different perspective that could help the student be successful (O'Reilly & Matt, 2012). The advocacy role of AIG students' parents was important, and school administrators and teachers needed to be receptive to parent input (Wiskow, Fowler, & Christopher, 2011).

In order to enhance the equity in schools and promote a culture of high expectations for all students, Scheurich and Skrla (2003) stated that educators should ask the following question: "What assets does this child or this group of children bring to school with them that we can use positively to build on to be educationally successful

with this child or this group of children?" (p. 21). Parents of AIG students could assist with the answer to this critically important question. In addition, according to Wiskow et al. (2011),

> Although more teachers understand the principles of differentiating instruction, many continue to struggle with identifying exactly when and how their individual students require differentiation. To expedite the process, students must learn how to communicate what they believe an appropriate education means to them. (p. 24)

Elementary students might not be able to articulate what an appropriate education means to them. The parents of elementary gifted students could help their children by articulating what they need to the teachers.

In addition, the information parents of AIG students provided to educators could help stem the constant waiting that was experienced by AIG students in the regular classroom setting (Peine & Coleman, 2010). Coleman et al. (2015) stated,

> When children enter school, they often encounter an institution that is not oriented toward them as persons who are gifted. Gifted children encounter a place where chronological age, not competency, determines educational opportunity, and the group, not the individual, is the focus. The outcome is that gifted students describe situations of not being challenged intellectually. They describe the amounts of waiting in class and different strategies they use to occupy themselves. (pp. 372-373)

William Jeynes, a professor at California State University at Long Beach, did a meta-analysis of 77 research studies on the effects of parent involvement. He concluded that parent involvement was associated with higher student performance; and

specifically, the expectations of the parents for their children had the largest effect sizes (Jeynes, 2005). Also, according to Robinson et al. (2007), "Parents need to be actively involved in all facets of their children's lives, and most certainly in their children's education. Parent and teacher collaboration can make such involvement extremely beneficial to the children" (p. 11). The collaboration between parents and teachers could help AIG students who had trouble articulating their academic and emotional needs on their own. For elementary AIG students who had difficulty verbalizing their needs, parent descriptions of the abilities and needs of their children might help teachers with differentiating their instruction and providing an appropriate education.

"Determining the appropriate pedagogy for gifted students depends on many factors such as the nature of the content or subject matter, attributes and needs of the student population, and context" (Kaplan, 2003, p. 165). Parents might be able to provide information to assist educators with the identification of appropriate interventions for their gifted students if the school was implementing a Response to Intervention (RTI) process (Hughes & Rollins, 2009). According to Hughes and Rollins (2009), "Sharing information to and from families raises the achievement levels and effectiveness of interventions. Targeted interventions are built upon acquired information regarding interest areas and strengths" (p. 33).

Parent involvement did not have to solely include communicating with the teacher(s) or participating in school activities. The parent could also be involved through support provided to their gifted child at home. Parents could work to address Maslow's hierarchy of needs as a way of supporting their gifted children (Cross, 2007). Furthermore, Welsh (2015) found that families could help their children advance intellectually by providing an enriched home environment, stimulation, and security. "In

all cases, children benefit from having their parents involved in their education by being interested in their homework, investigating topics of interest together, communicating regularly with teachers and administrators, and championing their children in scholastic arenas" (Robinson et al., 2007, p. 9).

Support at home could also take on the form of promoting a growth mindset that allowed students to be resilient in the face of challenging work and/or failure (Yeager & Dweck, 2012). Teaching students that they could change their brain with effort was empowering to students (Zadina, 2014), and parents could help their child by emphasizing the importance of effort. Robinson et al. (2007) suggested the following:

Allow a place at home and at school where some work can remain "in progress" for a time, focusing on the process of the task instead of finishing and the potential reward (i.e., grade, praise). Provide materials and free up time to use them. Display projects, writings, paintings—any fruit of creative labor. (p. 83)

According to Moon (2009), a main developmental goal of elementary education was to teach students to be productive and diligent. Acquiring a growth mindset might also help students to develop diligence and be more productive at school.

Parents could also be involved with their gifted child by monitoring and helping with unhealthy perfectionism. Rimm (2007) stated,

Parents and teachers want children to strive for excellence. It is attainable and provides a sense of accomplishment. Excellence is advantageous whether it involves children's school grades, figure skating, music, art, gymnastics, written work, or almost any skill. Striving for perfection in an area of expertise can represent a healthy development of talent. However, when perfectionism becomes pervasive and compulsive, it goes beyond excellence. It leaves no room

for error. It provides little satisfaction and much self-criticism because the results

never feel good enough to the doer. Perfection is impossible for children who

apply unrealizable high standards to too many activities, too frequently. (p. 246)

Hibbard and Walton (2014) found that an authoritative parenting style and providing

parental warmth helped to stem tendencies of children to experience perfectionism.

Many gifted students struggled with perfectionism (Rimm, 2007), and parents could help

their children overcome perfectionist tendencies through teaching them to have a growth

mindset.

Parents who did want to be involved at school and support their children needed

support from the school as well. Jolly and Matthews (2012) stated, "Parents of children

identified as gifted by schools should be provided supports and resources regarding

academics, social and emotional development, and the differences gifted children may

exhibit in comparison with other nonidentified children of similar chronological age" (p.

269). Robinson et al. (2007) suggested providing parents with workshops, guest

speakers, and websites with gifted education information as a way to support parents and

guardians. Jolly and Matthews found that "parent familiarity with what happens in the

gifted setting varied widely, suggesting that parents could benefit from greater

communication about the gifted program" (p. 273). "Parent workshops offer an option

for providing quality information that parents need in raising their gifted children"

(Weber & Stanley, 2012, p. 129). Information about asynchronous development,

parenting skills, and how the school could meet the needs of their child could be shared

through parent workshops with skilled counselors as well (Weber & Stanley, 2012).

Finally, parents wanted to feel like they were involved by having some control in

the educational opportunities that their gifted children were provided at school. Without

some degree of control, many parents of gifted children had the means to look at other educational options for their children such as homeschool. Jolly et al. (2012) stated,

> Perceptions of a lack of choice in traditional school settings is what many of these parents reported as having pushed them to homeschool in the first place. The choices homeschooling allowed provided these parents with a sense of order and empowerment, as they were now in greater control of their child's academic future. (p. 130)

In summary, the role of the parent included parenting style, input in the identification process for gifted services, a feeling of control over their child's education, advocacy, meeting the child's basic needs according to Maslow's hierarchy, promoting a growth mindset, and setting high expectations coupled with nurturing. Some other ways parents could be involved included doing reciprocal reading with the child, providing advanced books, providing opportunities for the child to play with older children, having conversations with the child related to their interest areas, and providing more advanced learning materials and games (McGee & Hughes, 2011).

> Parents set standards for their children, and these standards determine what children view as important. School, family, and community are important "spheres of influence" on children's development. The child's educational development is enhanced when these three environments work collaboratively toward shared goals. (Welsh, 2015, p. 89)

The Educational Research on Practices for AIG Students

There were many best practices that educational researchers had identified to support the academic and the social and emotional needs of AIG students. According to Moon (2009), "First, and most important, high-ability students need an appropriately

challenging and supportive educational environment where the instruction is within their zone of proximal development—neither too easy, nor too hard" (p. 276). Some of the common ideas, strategies, and practices that emerged from a review of the literature included

1. Self-paced learning

2. Acceleration

    a. Curriculum compacting

    b. Pullout programs

    c. Grade skipping

3. Use of differentiated instruction

    a. Pre-assessments

    b. Task rigor and complexity

    c. Emphasis on higher order thinking

    d. Incorporate students' interests in the instruction and tasks

    e. Tiered Assignments

4. Teach AIG students about neuroplasticity in order to promote a growth mindset

    a. Tracking performance to increase self-efficacy and promote growth mindset

    b. Feedback and Support

5. Address the student's social and emotional needs

6. Technology and Online Learning

7. Grouping

    a. Pullout programs

   b.   Tracking

In addition to these strategies and practices, the school culture and environment played an important role. McCollister and Sayler (2010) stated "The optimal school learning environment for gifted students is one where scholastic rigor is the standard" (p. 41). Furthermore, "The school's responsibility to provide an environment where potential is realized means including a child's creative, as well as academic, potential" (Robinson et al., 2007, p. 82). For students to perform to their potential, they needed to have self-efficacy, meaningful tasks, and perceive that the adults in their lives were supportive; and a lack of any of them could lead to underachievement (Siegle, 2013). Finally, "A culture of caring is a hallmark of successful schools" (Balls et al., 2011, p. 231).

Self-paced learning. Self-paced learning was one solution to the problem of academic waiting identified in the research (Morrison, Ross, Kalman, & Kemp, 2013). According to Morrison et al. (2013), "Today, the greater emphasis being placed by educators on cognitive theory and self-constructed knowledge has altered the assumption that self-paced units must be highly rigid in content and linked to high specific mastery criteria" (pp. 208-209). With self-paced learning, the teacher played an important role by selecting appropriate materials, determining how mastery would be demonstrated, asking questions, and providing assistance to the learner as needed (Morrison et al., 2013). Self-paced units of instruction might require more preparation time by the teacher, but there were many benefits. "Both slow and advanced learners can complete the instruction according to their own abilities and under appropriate learning conditions" (Morrison et al., 2013, p. 209). The teacher could also provide more individual instructional time to each student, have the opportunity to challenge individual students with higher order

thinking questions, and provide feedback that is more specific to each learner (Morrison et al., 2013).

  Acceleration: Compacting the curriculum, pullout programs, and grade skipping. Acceleration was one of the most effective strategies for AIG students (Colangelo et al., 2004). Research continued to support the academic and social benefits of acceleration in the form of grade skipping for gifted students (Culross et al., 2013). For example, Steenbergen-Hu and Moon (2011) conducted a meta-analysis on the effects of acceleration for high-ability learners:

> The findings are consistent with the conclusions from previous meta-analytic studies, suggesting that acceleration had a positive impact on high-ability learners' academic achievement (g=0.180, 95% CI=-.072, .431, under a random-effects model). In addition, the socio-emotional development effects appeared to be slightly positive (g=0.076, 95% CI=-.025, .176, under a random-effects model), although not as strong as for academic achievement. (p. 39)

There were not many other strategies with such a large amount of empirical support than acceleration, and yet it was still not a common practice in education (Missett, Brunner, Callahan, Moon, & Price Azano, 2014). Educational research had shown the positive benefits of acceleration for gifted students.

> A longitudinal study by McClarty reported in the January issue of the *Gifted Child Quarterly*, for instance, found that students who had skipped at least one grade before eighth grade performed better on the math sections of the PSAT, SAT and most of the ACT, and earned higher high school grades than matched peers who had not been accelerated. They also earned higher grades in college. (DeAngelis, 2016, p. 59).

Colangelo et al. (2004) stated, "Acceleration is a gift of time" (p. 21). According to Downey, Steffy, Poston, and English (2009), "Each student has a unique learning rate. Teachers must be aware of these learning rates and make modifications in strategy and technique to adjust their teaching for the needs of students" (p. 164). If this reasoning is applied at the school level, acceleration would make sense. "Grade acceleration, or grade skipping, helps the under-challenged gifted child by providing more appropriate instruction, intellectual peers, and information" (Culross et al., 2013, p. 36).

Acceleration was an effective strategy for gifted students, and there were many long-term benefits for student achievement in high school and college (McClarty, 2015). According to Kulik (2004),

> Meta-analysis has shown not only that acceleration can help bright students; it has also shown that the educational contributions of accelerative programs are hard to equal. No other arrangement for gifted children works as well as acceleration, and the achievement effects of current school reform models seem negligible when compared to the effects of acceleration. (p. 21)

Many leaders and scholars such as W.E.B. DuBois and T.S. Eliot accelerated through portions of their education. "Acceleration is part of the historical fabric of American education" (Colangelo et al., 2004, p. 13).

In addition, in the current era of accountability, teachers felt pressured to make sure they covered the curricula standards; justified their instructional decisions by constantly assessing the students; and ensured that their students made it to lunch, recess, and other scheduled activities at specific times during each school day. The nature of the daily schedule for public school often inhibited teachers from providing opportunities for students to explore content at deeper levels, conduct research, move at their own pace,

and/or produce creative products. Teachers often moved at an instructional pace that met the needs of the class rather than each student's individual needs. "Waiting for others is common within the classroom, because school is designed for the masses; thus, the group is the unit of control" (Coleman et al., 2015, p. 366). Instead of waiting, these students should have been able to accelerate in specific content areas and/or grade levels as well as have had the opportunity for other advanced study opportunities (McClarty, 2015). According to Peine and Coleman (2010), "Sitting and waiting as a phenomenon is not new to those who specialize in gifted child education, although it has not been studied to our knowledge previously. Students have been complaining about it for years" (p. 242). Acceleration was a solution to the issue of waiting for gifted students. "For the child, skipping one year means one-twelfth of his or her time in school has not been wasted" (Colangelo et al., 2004, p. 13).

It was important to note that many parents and educators worried about the social and emotional impact that acceleration could have on a student; however, none of the options for acceleration has been shown to harm gifted students as a group psychologically or socially (Robinson, 2004). "Students' perceptions of school and home events, the nature of teachers' and parents' expectations and support, and the patterns of interaction between students, teachers, and parents have an impact on their academic attitudes and behaviors" (Siegle, 2013, p. 77). Students would thrive in a supportive environment, which was why the Rimm Trifocal Model stressed the importance of collaboration between the student, educators, and parents (Rimm, 1997). "Highly able learners should not only be allowed to accelerate but should also be provided multiple avenues for advanced study; across outcomes and over time, these opportunities boost gifted learners' odds of further success" (McClarty, 2015, p. 12). "As an educational

intervention, acceleration is decidedly effective for high-ability students. The research support for acceleration that has accumulated over many decades is robust and consistent and allows us to state confidently that carefully planned acceleration decisions are successful" (Colangelo et al., 2010, p. 187). Finally, Southern and Jones (2004) emphasized the importance of collaboration between parents, educators, and students in planning for implementation of strategies such as acceleration.

 Curriculum compacting. A content-based acceleration strategy was compacting the curriculum. Karen Rogers in a chapter of a report entitled *A Nation Deceived: Volume* 2 provided the following definition:

 Compacted Curriculum—tailoring the regular curriculum of any or all subjects to the specific gaps, deficiencies, and strengths of an individual student. The learner "tests out" or bypasses previously learned skills and content, focusing only on mastery or deficient areas, thus moving rapidly through the curriculum offered in the educational setting. Replacement challenges are provided to fill in the learner's classroom time. (Colangelo et al., 2004, p. 48)

Furthermore, according to the NAGC (n.d.b) website,

 This important instructional strategy condenses, modifies, or streamlines the regular curriculum to reduce repetition of previously mastered material. "Compacting" what students already know allows time for acceleration or enrichment beyond the basic curriculum for students who would otherwise be simply practicing what they already know. (para. 4)

 Pullout programs. A pullout program where gifted students were grouped together for a specified amount of time in order to engage in tasks and activities tailored to their needs was another option. For example, a pullout program might group the AIG

students together for an entire day one time each week (van der Meulen et al., 2014).

Content-based acceleration could occur in this type of pullout program for AIG students

as well. van der Meulen et al. (2014) stated,

> In a pullout program, the taught material will be differentiated according to the
> level and pace of the gifted children. As a consequence, the children will be more
> involved at their level and will not have to wait a substantial part of the lesson for
> other children to understand what they have already mastered. In a pullout
> program, gifted children do not have to compromise their aspirations or pace of
> learning to accommodate the lower-ability students. Another advantage of a
> pullout program is that the teacher does not have to focus on the basic skills, and
> can concentrate on higher-level thinking and research skills. This offers the
> children a more challenging environment, where they possibly get a more positive
> attitude towards learning. (p. 296)

Finally, Delcourt et al. (2007) found that "children in special schools, separate class

programs, and pullout programs for the gifted showed substantially higher levels of

achievement than did both their high-achieving peers not in programs and those attending

within-class programs" (p. 359).

Differentiation. "Differentiation is an instructional approach to teaching in

which educational curriculum content, instructional process, and student products are

adapted according to student readiness, interest, and diagnosis of current level of

performance on specific standards/objectives" (Downey, 2009, p. 162). According to

Moon (2009), "In elementary school, the problems and challenges that high-ability youth

experience with academic achievement and motivation depend in large measure on the

educational environments they experience" (p. 275). "In today's educational climate,

differentiated instruction is a common practice for students who need remediation; what is less common is to Differentiate Instruction for the advanced learner" (Manning et al., 2010, p. 145).

Less effective teachers who lacked a variety of instructional strategies in their "toolbox" were likely to teach to the middle or average ability based on their perceptions of the class as a whole (Downey et al., 2009). The inability of the teacher to differentiate adequately for gifted students could result in the gifted students in his/her class sitting idle. Whole group instruction often meant that the AIG student was not able to move ahead when he/she had already mastered the content of the lesson. This was where school administrators and instructional coaches could play a key role in supporting teachers with differentiation. For example, according to Robinson et al. (2007),

> By reminding teachers that there is more than one way to excel intellectually, classroom activities such as readings, assignments, tests, and homework can be applied individually to ensure that opportunities are being provided for students to use their various strengths to learn and to flourish in the classroom environment. (p. 97)

Siegle (2013) stated, "My experience working with gifted students has shown that making school more meaningful appears to be the most effective strategy to address student underachievement" (p. 79). Teachers were the linchpin in determining the experience of the gifted student, and the gifted student needed differentiation and/or compacting of the curriculum (Colangelo & Wood, 2015). "Contrary to popular belief, these students will not differentiate instruction on their own and must be guided by the professional expertise of highly trained teachers to reach their highest capabilities" (Manning et al., 2010, p. 145). According to Hertberg-Davis (2009), "Differentiation of

instruction both within the regular classroom and within homogeneous settings is critical to addressing the needs of all high-ability learners, including twice-exceptional students, underachievers, students from underserved populations, and highly gifted students" (p. 253); however, many teachers struggled with how to differentiate. According to Wiskow et al. (2011), "Although more teachers understand the principles of differentiating instruction, many continue to struggle with identifying exactly when and how their individual students require differentiation" (p. 24). Weber and Smith (2010) stated that educators should differentiate for gifted students by varying the content in terms of the sources and media utilized, the process with regard to how the students learn, and the products they can create to demonstrate mastery.

Educational researchers have identified several strategies that teachers could use to differentiate instruction for students including the use of pre-assessments, tiered assignments, creating task rigor and complexity, and utilizing effective questioning techniques.

Pre-assessments. When teachers utilized pre-assessments, they had the ability to personalize instruction for students (Weber & Smith, 2010). Pre-assessments were the foundation for appropriate differentiation, and teachers had to use pre-assessments and know above-level curriculum standards in order to differentiate for gifted students (Rakow, 2012). The concept of utilizing pre-assessments to inform instructional planning had been around for quite some time.

> In 1980, Denham and Lieberman wrote a document titled *Time to Learn*, in which they presented the *academic learning time model.* This model included the assessment of student prerequisite and entry-level skills to assist in determining the correct level of difficulty for a given student. From this preassessment,

prescriptions would be made to determine instructional goals/objectives,

activities, grouping, and scheduling for each student, while recognizing that many

of the students will be ready for the same learning. (Downey et al., 2009, p. 142)

According to VanTassel-Baska and Stambaugh (2005),

Diagnostic-prescriptive assessment was developed in the 1970s by Julian Stanley,

and has been used in programs for the gifted ever since (Benbow & Stanley,

1983). This strategy is highly effective and involves pre-assessing students,

grouping them based on need, and providing effective curricular adjustments. (p.

215)

Teachers could use the pre-assessment results to develop tiered assignments with

different levels of rigor, complexity, abstractness, and depth (Sisk, 2009). "Teachers

make the soundest decisions only after thorough pre-assessment has taken place and in

collaboration with others" (Rakow, 2012, p. 37). McCollister and Sayler (2010) stated

that curriculum designed to meet the readiness levels of the majority of students in a

classroom might not be developmentally appropriate for advanced students. Teachers

needed to use pre-assessments in order to provide instruction and assignments that are

developmentally appropriate.

Questioning. Teachers could differentiate instruction for gifted students through

the questions and problems they provided. VanTassel-Baska (2014) stated, "Research

suggests that inquiry-based strategies are the most effective modes of delivery in working

with the gifted on a differentiated curriculum" (p. 48). For example, allowing students to

engage in scientific inquiries to address a problem was a strategy teachers could use to

promote critical thinking (McCollister & Sayler, 2010). Robinson et al. (2007) stated,

"Rather than just talking to students about thinking, teachers must actively engage

students in thinking in areas such as the writing process, scientific experimentation, reading comprehension and analysis, computation, and study skills" (p. 106). An example of a prompt that would challenge fifth grade AIG students was the following sample sixth-grade prompts from the National Paideia Center/Literacy Design Collaborative:

> What is the proper role of the individual in response to a disaster? After reading passages from the Dalai Lama, John Donne, Marcus Aurelius, and William Stanford on individual responsibility, write a letter to a younger student that addresses the question and supports your position with evidence from the texts. (Dougherty, 2012, p. 23)

Kettler (2014) conducted a research study that focused on the differences in critical thinking skills among fourth graders who were identified as gifted and not identified as gifted. "Identified gifted students outperformed general education students on both the Cornell Critical Thinking Test and the Test of Critical Thinking ($d=1.52$ and $d=1.36$, respectively)" (Kettler, 2014, p. 127). Based on the findings, Kettler stated, "An implication of this study is that teachers might also want to respond to students' advanced levels of critical thinking skills with differentiated learning experiences based on a scope and sequence of critical thinking skills and applications" (p. 133). One way to elicit thinking among gifted students was the teacher's use of purposefully planned questions.

> The use of deliberate questions is a critical strategy for getting gifted students to learn about their world in more complex and in-depth ways. It provides multiple pathways for challenging the gifted through their content learning. It enhances their thinking by deliberately focusing attention on issues and problems that require solution in the real world. (VanTassel-Baska, 2014, p. 50)

Tiered assignments. Tiered assignments allowed teachers to provide the rigor, complexity, and depth that will challenge gifted students (Sisk, 2009). Educators could provide advanced readings, advanced math concepts, problems beyond the grade level, various product options to demonstrate mastery, and/or assignments that required connections to be made across subject areas as a means to create tiered assignments for gifted students (VanTassel-Baska & Stambaugh, 2005). According to Manning et al. (2010), "Teachers may group students by interest, but also have set activities at different levels of complexity (e.g., questioning levels, abstract thinking processes), resulting in varying products from different learning modalities" (p. 147).

Task rigor and complexity. According to Balls et al. (2011), "Academic rigor refers to learning in which students demonstrate a thorough in-depth mastery of challenging tasks to develop cognitive skills through reflective thought, analysis, problem solving, evaluation or creativity" (p. 150). McCollister and Sayler (2010) stated the following about the importance of educators creating tasks, questions, and/or projects with rigor and complexity:

Educators must seek to understand the unmet needs of gifted students and provide curriculum that is at the levels and complexities that match their abilities. In turn, the gifted will flourish in such an environment as they experience, transfer, and internalize the deep thinking and complex content provided. Infusing critical thinking into all content areas provides an avenue for appropriately meeting these challenges. (p. 47)

According to Zadina (2014), "Rigorous standards should apply throughout a school as a matter of pride and because rigor is rewarding. Rigor is motivating, and motivation leads to achievement" (p. 96). It was important to note that academic challenge was subjective

and students could make teachers and parents think they were engaged in rigorous work, but put forth little effort because of their intellectual ability (Snyder et al., 2014). The assignments gifted students are given needed to be at the right level of rigor and complexity. According to Zadina,

> When students have a sense that they have learned something, they feel great. Too many times, though, the learning process is so frustrating or so easy that they do not get to the reward at the end. An appropriate challenge level of about 80 percent success is rewarding: that is, a student is able to answer approximately 80 percent of the answers correctly, meaning it is not too easy or too hard. (pp. 94-95)

It was the teacher's responsibility to design tasks that were at the appropriate level of rigor and complexity so AIG students received an equitable education. Dougherty (2012) stated,

> If you believe in equality of instruction, you will be tenacious in finding instructional practices and supports to ensure students engage in rigorous assignments that prepare them to participate in and contribute to a society that values ideas, literacy, and critical thinking. (p. 71)

> Gifted students had different academic needs than the typical student. Morrison et al. (2013) stated,

> The principles of learning derived from cognitive and constructivist theories can potentially affect instructional design decisions in many ways. One important implication is reminding the designer that learners at different stages of cognitive development do not think and process information in the same manner. (p. 361)

According to the North Carolina General Statutes (NCGS) definition of AIG,

"Academically or intellectually gifted students exhibit high performance capability in intellectual areas, specific academic fields, or in both the intellectual areas and specific academic fields" (Chapter 115C, Article 9B, § 115C-150.5). Therefore, AIG students' intellectual abilities and performance could grow through exposure to tasks that are open-ended; allow for creativity; and require critical, complex thinking. Educators could design scientific inquiries for gifted students in which they researched, evaluated information, generated hypotheses, conducted experiments, collected data, and presented their findings. Scientific inquiries were rigorous, complex, and promoted critical thinking (McCollister & Sayler, 2010).

The questions that a teacher posed verbally or in assignments were another way to build rigor and complexity in the classroom environment. According to McCollister and Sayler (2010), "Appropriate questioning is an important means of differentiation and infusing critical thinking in academically rigorous learning environments" (p. 43). Educators needed to move beyond literal questions to designing open-ended, essential questions that had more than one possible answer and required students to explore texts to generate possible solutions (Dougherty, 2012). Teaching students how to think deeply and critically in order to respond to open-ended questions or to develop solutions to complex problems was beneficial to all students and especially AIG students (Robinson et al., 2007). Morrison et al. (2013) stated, "Too often, major attention is given in a course to memorizing or recalling information—the lowest cognitive level" (p. 102). According to Robinson et al. (2007),

> Emphasis in classrooms, with the support of the school administration, should be on rewarding thinking, inquiry, reflection, and the consideration of alternatives in lieu of memorization, drill, reliance on lower level recall, and tight control of

content and class work. (p. 106)

This required purposeful planning of questions and problems by the teacher. Students

needed opportunities to apply higher order thinking in their writing, scientific

experimentation, mathematics, and reading of texts (Robinson et al., 2007). "Challenging

assignments always involve reasoning or thinking about something—a topic, an idea, an

issue, or a problem" (Dougherty, 2012, p. 44). Dougherty (2012) also stated,

> When you challenge all students to think and provide them with opportunities to
>
> build their knowledge base, grow intellectually, and develop necessary skills, you
>
> transform a belief in the equality of opportunity into a "equality of instruction," a
>
> phrase attributed to Frances Wright (1829), a 19th-century social reformer who
>
> believed in the power of education to make a difference in the lives of individuals
>
> and society. Teaching all students to think strategically and critically is to teach
>
> equitably. (pp. 69-70)

Another strategy that educators could implement with gifted students to increase

rigor and complexity was teaching students how to evaluate sources and then provide

them with opportunities to practice source evaluation as part of inquiry-based projects

(McCollister & Sayler, 2010). Analyzing and evaluating sources required higher order

thinking skills, and analysis and evaluation were the higher levels of Revised Bloom's

Taxonomy (Iowa State University, 2016). "Evaluating sources for reliability increases

critical thinking, raises the level of academic rigor for students, and allows students to

develop a rich conceptual base on their topic" (McCollister & Sayler, 2010, p. 45).

Rigor and complexity were essential characteristics of appropriate tasks,

assignments, and questions for gifted students. Educators have worked hard to simplify

the learning process and make learning easier; but challenge, rigor, and exertion of effort

were what created intrinsic reward (Zadina, 2014). As stated previously, "The optimal school learning environment for gifted students is one where scholastic rigor is the standard" (McCollister & Sayler, 2010, p. 41).

Neuroplasticity and growth mindset. Siegle (2013) stated, "High levels of performance require sustained effort over time" (p. 147). According to Yeager and Dweck (2012),

> Many educational reform efforts have focused on increasing rigor in curricula and instruction, but if they do not also address resilience in the face of these more challenging standards, then making such improvements may be less effective than hoped. Our research and that of our colleagues show that if students can be redirected to see intellectual ability as something that can be developed over time with effort, good strategies, and help from others, then they are more resilient when they encounter the rigorous learning opportunities presented to them. (p. 306)

Giftedness was not given to students; their skills and talents were developed over time through their effort and hard work (Siegle, 2013).

The way in which teachers and parents communicated to students, provided praise, and provided support could affect students emotionally and academically (Garn et al., 2012). The words of parents and teachers could also inhibit the development of a growth mindset. For example, Eddles-Hirsch, Vialle, Rogers, and McCormick (2010) stated, "Teachers may unwittingly diminish gifted children's self-worth by praising them for work into which they have not put much effort" (pp. 108-109). "In other words, the messages that high-ability students receive about being gifted may lead them to believe that continued success is necessary to maintain the gifted label but may also convey that

effort plays no role in giftedness" (Snyder et al., 2014, p. 231). Instead, teachers and parents should provide students with specific feedback that acknowledges the skill and the work the student put forth to improve the skill (Siegle, 2013). Dean et al. (2012) recommended the following checklist to help students develop a growth mindset:

1. Identify optimal times to address the relationship between effort and achievement in the unit/lesson.

2. Define in student-friendly language what it means to put forth effort in the class for the unit/lesson and determine when and how to share this information with students.

3. Identify stories or examples relevant to the unit/lesson that illustrate the relationship between effort and achievement.

4. Determine when to provide opportunities for students to share their own stories about effort and success.

5. Provide ongoing opportunities for students to track their effort and relate their success to their effort. (pp. 155-156)

AIG students might not put forth much effort and still produce excellent work because they already knew the content due to prior knowledge. Tasks that lack rigor could create low achievement and boredom (Dougherty, 2012). The teacher might think the AIG student was not experiencing any problems socially or with their mindset because the assignments were not challenging and the work produced by the student was excellent (Moon, 2009).

Gifted students could often develop the perception that if they failed at a task, they had lost their giftedness (Snyder et al., 2014). Student mindsets were changeable, and students could develop resilience (Yeager & Dweck, 2012). Parents and educators

could teach students to have a growth mindset so the students understood that through

effort and work, a person could improve their talent and knowledge (Dweck, 2016). In

order to strengthen gifted students' self-efficacy, they must be provided with rigorous

work so they gained self-regulatory skills and had a sense of true accomplishment as a

result of their efforts (Burney, 2008). "Students who believe that their abilities are not

innate but have been developed are more likely to attempt challenging tasks" (Siegle,

2013, p. 83). When they completed those challenging tasks, their self-efficacy increased

as a result of their personal mastery (Balls et al., 2011).

Feedback and tracking performance. Snyder et al. (2014) recommended that

educators provide conditional feedback to students in order to make the connection

between effort and results explicit to them. One strategy for teaching gifted students to

have a growth mindset was to provide specific, contingent feedback on their assignments.

According to Dougherty (2012), "An assignment differs from other tasks because it

consists of a prompt, a rubric, and a product, which together set a clear purpose and

process for engaging in academic work" (p. 19). Rubrics provided a target for students to

grow toward with their work and helped the teacher provide specific feedback to them.

"Specific feedback provides students with an opportunity to appraise their progress by

communicating two key pieces of information: what specific skill students possess and

the recognition that they developed that skill" (Siegle, 2013, p. 41). It was also important

for teachers and parents to be specific with praise (Siegle, 2013). Parents needed to

praise the process the student took to complete a task or attain a goal, and it was

important to give rewards for the process and the product (Garn et al., 2012). In addition,

school counselors could inform parents about how to provide specific praise for

completion of tasks and how to implement other strategies to help their AIG children

succeed (Garn et al., 2012).

Parents and educators could also help their AIG students keep portfolios of their assignments and other work as a strategy to encourage them to have a growth mindset.

> Assignments are rich sources of data about learning and teaching. These artifacts of classroom events tell useful narratives about the effectiveness of instructional choices and the progress students are making on reaching learning goals. Assignments should be read as an archaeologist reads artifacts, as data-stories in which pieces of the teaching and learning puzzle emerge if you read them closely and wisely. (Dougherty, 2012, p. 153)

According to Siegle (2013), "Parents and teachers with foresight can keep samples of previous academic work and periodically review students' earlier work with the individual students to show growth and improvement" (p. 40). The review of past assignments and products the student completed well could bolster student self-efficacy related to the subject area (Siegle, 2013). "Parents and teachers can increase their students' confidence more if they help their students recognize past successes (Siegle, 2013, p. 87). Reflection about performance and how new content tied into one's life and prior knowledge were powerful strategies for all learners. According to Zadina (2014),

> Reflection is thinking about material from a more personal standpoint, such as how the material fits in with what is already known (existing neural network of the individual), what it means to one's own life, or a personal or emotional response to material. (p. 179)

It was important to give students time for reflection (Zadina, 2014).

Self-regulation. Siegle (2013) stated, "Self-regulation and study skills are important for academic success" (p. 79). According to Lin-Siegler, Dweck, and Cohen

(2016),

> Not only do students have to plan and execute the process for learning, but they
> also need to remain on task and resist the constant temptations and distractions
> that come their way, a feat that has become more and more difficult as new forms
> of media and greater amounts of texting and messaging come their way. (p. 296)

"Many gifted students may lack self-management and study skills. Because gifted students often progress through the early years of school without being challenged, they sometimes fail to develop the self-management skills that other students master" (Siegle, 2013, p. 139). School counselors, teachers, and parents could teach students the skills and habits to develop self-regulation. Students could also learn metacognitive skills to help them with self-regulation. According to Zadina (2014), "Metacognition is the act of thinking about your own thinking and is one of the skills of the prefrontal cortex" (p. 178). If a student practiced metacognitive processes, it could help the student self-regulate their attention with tasks that have a high cognitive load (Zadina, 2014).

The social and emotional needs of gifted students and the need for parent perspectives. Moon (2009) stated,

> High-ability students placed in heterogeneous classrooms develop maladaptive
> beliefs about ability and effort, and the relationship between them, that can make
> it impossible for them to engage in the hard work required to turn raw ability into
> fully honed talents later in life. (p. 275)

Gifted students could develop a habit of self-handicapping in which they made excuses for their performance or inhibited their performance through detrimental behaviors in order to avoid feeling like a failure to their parents, teachers, and themselves (Snyder et al., 2014). The work of school counselors was critically important to the achievement

and well-being of gifted students; however, it was difficult to find school counselors with adequate training to meet the needs of the gifted students they served (Colangelo & Wood, 2015). Most school counselors who attended university and college programs accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs did not take any courses to learn how to serve gifted students (Colangelo & Wood, 2015). In the face of this lack of training, any information shared by parents about their gifted children was valuable to the school counselor.

There were many myths about the resiliency and tough-mindedness of gifted students as well (Moon, 2009). AIG students often dealt with challenges such as the self-imposed or parent-imposed desire to be perfect (Siegle, 2013). Moon (2009) stated,

The myth that high-ability students do not face problems and challenges is an attractive one for school personnel. If the myth is true, teachers, principals, and superintendents have no responsibility to recognize the existence of this special population of students or to attempt to address their needs. (p. 274)

However, educational research had made it clear that the social and emotional needs of AIG students were important factors that contributed to their performance.

Gifted students were just as susceptible as other students were to bullying or other actions that could affect them emotionally. "At the heart of the gifted child's understanding of bullying is differentness" (Coleman et al., 2015, p. 369). In a research study in which parents of homeschooled students were interviewed, many indicated that their children as well as they themselves felt isolated at school (Jolly et al., 2012). Therefore, feelings of differentness and isolation were experiences of many AIG students, and educators should not make generalizations about how AIG students feel and their experiences at school (Coleman et al., 2015). In particular, minority and female

gifted students often dealt with societal stereotypes and felt peer pressure to not stand out academically (Moon, 2009). The school counselor was uniquely positioned to provide gifted students the support they needed to deal with stereotypes, peer pressure, isolation, and bullying. Educators must be cognizant of the social dynamics in the school building so students and parents feel included and accepted (Coleman et al., 2015). Peterson, Duncan, and Canady (2009) suggested the following to educators and parents to help gifted students with emotions:

> Inquiring casually about how the students are feeling or how they are managing high-stress times in the academic or extra-curricular year might be appreciated and potentially helpful. Though habits of achievement may help them to maintain high grades and high levels of extra-curricular performance, achievers might quietly experience high levels of stress from their heavy involvements in or outside of school. Low achievement and a high number of absences may also reflect personal stress in gifted students. Showing non-voyeuristic, holistic interest in gifted students as complex individuals, gently commenting when they seem "flat," not fueling ultra-competitive attitudes, and offering credible comments about personal strengths and resilience might offer crucial support at a time of vulnerability. (p. 34)

The school counselor played a critical role in creating a partnership with parents. Counselors could work with parents to ensure that they knew how to parent their gifted children. Counselors could assist gifted students and their parents with goal setting and strategies that could create habits to lead to success (Hoover-Schultz, 2005). Strategies such as emphasizing that a child only compare his/her performance to himself/herself and emphasizing to a child that he/she could become smarter through effort and talent

development were some other examples of what parents could do to support their children (Garn et al., 2012).

Technology and online learning. "The old model of pedagogy – teacher-focused, one-way, one-size-fits-all – makes no sense to young people who have grown up in a digital world" (Balls et al., 2011, p. 141). Blair (2010) stated, "Gifted online programs are the wave of the future for students requiring more rigor in their studies" (p. 30). "However, there is little empirical research that examines whether and how online environments might provide a good match for the needs of many gifted learners" (Thomson, 2010, p. 662).

Online learning was a transformation of education, and the opportunity for acceleration was very appealing to many parents (Weber & Smith, 2010). Zadina (2014) stated, "Currently our education system is not built around individual progress, while the private marketplace has capitalized on this with technology" (p. 95). The interest in blended learning that combined face-to-face classes with online tasks was increasing in popularity (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). "Online materials often provide a sense of progress through moving to another level – sounds or icons or bars that show progress, for example" (Zadina, 2014, p. 95).

Differentiation took time to plan, which was why many teachers were resistant (Hertberg-Davis, 2009). In addition, "The unique characteristics of advanced learners…often necessitate a type of differentiation that general classroom teachers may not have been trained to provide" (Manning et al., 2010, p. 145). Online learning might help teachers with differentiation. Gifted students could take coursework online as a strategy to meet their individual learning needs (Blair, 2010). Some of the benefits of online learning included teachers who had expertise working with gifted students,

teachers with extensive content knowledge, interaction with gifted peers, flexibility with pace of completing coursework, and flexibility with where and when instruction took place and assignments were completed (Blair, 2010). Additionally, Weber and Smith (2010) noted the following:

> Students who are gifted are drawn to the virtual programs because it allows them to work on their own schedules, adjust the pace as needed to suit their learning style, and be flexible about adjusting the schedule and demands to suit their own preferences – options not typically available in traditional education programs. In particular, online learning fosters pre-assessment, which has always been advocated for students who are gifted. Pre-testing determines what the student already knows and indicates educational gaps so education can be personalized. (pp. 46-48)

The flexibility of online learning could give students some control over their learning. "Schools are typically places where students have very little control, even at the college level, and yet control increases motivation" (Zadina, 2014, p. 95). According to Sisk (2009), "The opportunity to experience some sense of control of their learning motivates many less than enthusiastic gifted students" (p. 270). In addition to flexibility and control, parents of elementary students also liked the potential for accelerated learning that online programming provided (Weber & Smith, 2010).

According to Blair (2010), "The gifted students lack enough access to appropriately challenging curriculum and instruction that is designed for them" (p. 30). Teachers in traditional, regular classroom settings might be able to address this concern as well as capitalize on the interest of parents in blended instruction through the flipped classroom approach. In a flipped classroom, "Homework, inquiry, and investigation

happen in the classroom. At home students participate in preparation work including watching videos, PowerPoints, and completing readings" (Schmidt & Ralph, 2016, p. 1). "In a flipped classroom, teachers can provide gifted and talented students with advanced content beyond their grade level" (Siegle, 2013, p. 51). There were several additional benefits to a flipped classroom approach which included more time for gifted students to work together in class, more time for the teacher to provide individual feedback, and the ability to differentiate instruction (Siegle, 2013). The flipped classroom might also provide the opportunity for gifted students to engage in the inquiry and analysis that they need to challenge them. Schmidt and Ralph (2016) stated, "The flipped classroom provides more time for hands-on activities and content inquiry and analysis" (p. 1). However, there were some challenges to implementing the flipped classroom approach; and they included some students' lack of access to technology at home, the time it took for teachers to create their own videos, and student boredom if the videos were only of the teacher lecturing (Schmidt & Ralph, 2016).

It is important to note that research regarding the effectiveness of online learning programs for gifted students was lacking (Thomson, 2010; Weber & Smith, 2010). The United States Department of Education funded a meta-analysis of evidenced-based practices in online learning in 2009. "The main finding from the literature review was that few rigorous research studies of the effectiveness of online learning for K-12 students have been published" (U.S. Department of Education, 2009, p. xiv). According to Thomson (2010), "The challenges most often reported in the research literature generally fall into two broad categories: challenges due to a mismatch between students' specific learning style preferences and the online learning environment, and challenges in communication" (p. 669). However,

Online learning is here to stay and is changing the face of education. Moreover,

this new venue holds great promise for gifted students, with its ability to provide

greater access to academically rigorous curriculum, highly qualified instructors,

intellectual peers, and 21st-century skills. (Sanderson & Greenberger, 2011, p.

43)

Grouping options for gifted students. Schools have implemented many

different grouping strategies in an effort to meet the needs of gifted students. Examples

of grouping strategies included full-time grouping of gifted students, cluster grouping

within heterogeneous classrooms, pullout grouping where gifted students from

heterogeneous classrooms met with a gifted education teacher, and between-class

grouping for advanced work in a subject area (Burney, 2008). Full-time grouping of

gifted students was also referred to as tracking (Ansalone, 2010). Another option was

flexible grouping within the heterogeneous classroom (Robinson et al., 2007). The

NAGC (2010a) programming standards recommended the following evidence-based

practices related to grouping: "Educators regularly use multiple forms of grouping,

including clusters, resource rooms, special classes, or special schools" (p. 7). The NAGC

(2010a) programming standards also recommended that "educators provide opportunities

for interaction with intellectual and artistic/creative peers as well as with chronological-

age peers" (p. 6). This interaction could occur through grouping the gifted students

together.

NAGC and The Council of State Directors of Programs for the Gifted (2015)

State of the States survey conducted in 2014-2015 included responses from 41 states plus

the District of Columbia. The survey results provided information regarding the current

reality of gifted educational services in American schools. Twenty-two respondents

indicated that the following service delivery options were most frequently implemented for gifted students in Grades 1-3: cluster classrooms, resource rooms, regular classrooms, and self-contained classrooms (NAGC and The Council of State Directors of Programs for the Gifted, 2015). Twenty-two respondents also indicated that cluster classrooms, resource rooms, subject acceleration, and self-contained classrooms were the top strategies for delivery of gifted services in Grades 4-6 (NAGC and The Council of State Directors of Programs for the Gifted, 2015).

In describing the experience of many gifted students, Coleman et al. (2015) stated, "Waiting for others is common within the classroom, because school is designed for the masses; thus, the group is the unit of control" (p. 366). There were educators who supported tracking or the full-time grouping of students by ability levels because it made differentiation of instruction and management easier for them (Ansalone, 2010). "In mixed-ability classrooms with grade-level academic expectations, gifted learners are less likely to have learning experiences that attend to their more rapid rate of learning or greater capacity for information and complexity" (Burney, 2008, p. 135). Supporters of tracking believed that it simplified instruction, promoted learning, was efficient, and enhanced self-development (Ansalone, 2010). Full-time grouping could also alleviate the constant waiting that often occurred in regular classrooms for gifted students, and Cross (2007) pointed out that this would not happen in other arenas of life in which students participated.

> Children with special abilities should not be made to sit around waiting while the other kids catch on to what they already know. You would never see this in the development of athletic talent; why would we let intellectual talents languish undeveloped? (Cross, 2007, p. 50)

According to Burney (2008), social cognitive theory and the work of Albert Bandura supported the grouping of gifted students in order that they might have vicarious learning opportunities, rigorous discussions and tasks, and develop self-regulation skills and self-efficacy.

> In a heterogeneous classroom environment, by the very nature of giftedness being an exceptional level of potential or performance, it would not be likely that many potential models for advanced performance would be present. The need for appropriate models would seem to support the grouping of gifted learners for instruction. (Burney, 2008, p. 132)

However, according to Ansalone (2010), "Our analysis concludes that research does not support the assumption that tracking enhances the academic achievement of all students, promotes their affective development, or provides the basis for an educational experience that is equitable" (p. 14). Despite these findings, it is important to note that tracking was still utilized in many American schools (Ansalone, 2010).

A variation of full-time grouping occurred when gifted students attended special schools or magnet schools for the gifted and talented. According to Coleman et al. (2015), "Gifted students studying in the context of a specialized school do not describe the same issues of waiting in class, lack of challenge, academic resistance, or bullying" (p. 370). In an article published in the New York Times, Finn (2012) argued that the bias against gifted education needed to end because many students would benefit from specialized public schools.

Cluster grouping occurred within heterogeneous classrooms in a grade level. Five to eight gifted students were clustered together in a class, so they would be around their gifted peers on a full-time basis (Burney, 2008; Pierce et al., 2011). Pierce et al. (2011)

found that differentiating instruction and cluster grouping gifted students had positive gains for all students. The cluster grouping of gifted students also gave them the opportunity for vicarious learning and discussion and collaboration with intellectual peers which was supported by social cognitive theory (Burney, 2008).

Educators still had to be cognizant that even when clustered together, each individual gifted student had unique social emotional needs and talents. "Mistaken assumptions that grouping of gifted students creates a homogeneous group may also result in rejection of the need for formative assessment and/or differentiation within a group of identified gifted students" (Missett, 2014, p. 246). Brulles, Saunders, and Cohn (2010) conducted an action research project in an Arizona school district that mandated the use of cluster grouping. They found that gifted students who were clustered together demonstrated significantly meaningful achievement growth, and the demographics of the students did not matter (Brulles et al., 2010). It is important to note that "although experts in gifted education widely promote cluster grouping gifted students, little empirical evidence is available attesting to its effectiveness" (Brulles et al., 2010, p. 327).

Pullout programs occurred when gifted students from all of the regular classes were pulled together to receive instruction with a gifted education teacher (Burney, 2008). The pullout program usually only occurred for a few hours each week, and it was only for enrichment experiences (Burney, 2008). Enrichment opportunities like the Junior Great Books program could be implemented within the pullout model. "The Junior Great Books Program continues to be considered a strong choice for teaching students how to work with complex rigorous texts that invite a number of interpretations" (Robinson et al., 2007, p. 159). Burney (2008) stated that it should be a requirement that the teacher in a pullout program be trained to work specifically with gifted and talented

students. The pullout program model aligned with NAGC standard 5.1.2 which stated, "Educators regularly use enrichment options to extend and deepen learning opportunities within and outside of the school setting" (NAGC, 2010a, p. 7). However, just like exceptional children, gifted students were gifted all day long, which was why educators needed to do more than simply provide a pullout program (Rakow, 2012).

Flexible grouping occurred when students in a regular, heterogeneous classroom were grouped together for portions of instruction (Robinson et al., 2007). "Within-class grouping is generally done in reading and mathematics; these are the school subjects for which most research exists" (Robinson et al., 2007, p. 124). Differentiation of instruction would occur for each group of students. Teachers should administer pre-assessments so they could appropriately differentiate for gifted students (Rakow, 2012). Flexible grouping also allowed the teacher to provide direct instruction to the gifted students. Kaplan (2003) emphasized the importance of direct instruction for all students:

> Sometimes teachers ignore the benefits of a teacher-directed pedagogy because they believe gifted students will be limited or thwarted by such a pedagogical choice. In reality, gifted students require experiences in every type of pedagogical practice ranging from those that are teacher directed to those that are student centered. (p. 165)

A variation of flexible grouping was when students of similar ability and understanding of content were grouped together for instruction in a subject area. According to VanTassel-Baska and Stambaugh (2005), "Grouping students in the same classroom at each grade level for specific content is not only beneficial to the child, but makes it easier for the teacher to manage the differentiated learning" (p. 216). However, Plucker and Callahan (2014) noted that "policies based on the assumption that differentiation in the

general education classroom meets gifted students' academic needs are likely to create situations in which modifications in curriculum and instruction for the gifted learner are absent" (p. 394).

Ability grouping, formative assessment, and acceleration could provide the type of learning environment that challenged gifted students and met their individual needs (Missett et al., 2014). Robinson et al. (2007) provided an excellent summary of grouping strategies for gifted students,

> Program decisions that involve placing students in particular class settings include: clustering gifted children together in one classroom; assembling groups of children to participate in pullout programs of a general nature or more specific subject area instruction during certain times of a day or week—by grade level or in cross-grade groupings; assigning students to full-time gifted programs within a regular school; or drawing students from a larger area to attend magnet schools that usually have a focus such as math, technology, or the arts. Programs that occur within regular classrooms are those that change the nature of the curriculum and add enrichment opportunities. Programs that are in addition to the school schedule are those led by parent volunteers such as mentoring and Junior Great Books discussion groups; special classes offered by universities and local museums, theatres, or libraries; and clubs or organizations. It is interesting that even with this wide array of services, Rogers' (1999) research pointed to the substantial academic gains made by students who take part in any of them. (p. 216)

In addition, Delcourt et al. (2007) found that grouping in the form of attending special schools, separate classes, and pullout programs led to higher achievement for

gifted students than gifted students who did not attend special programs or participated in grouping in the regular classroom setting. The pressures placed on teachers to produce results on state assessments could inhibit their willingness to implement many of these grouping strategies. According to Johnsen (2013), "The pressure on teachers to stay 'on track' or 'in their lane' is intense—particularly when their jobs are based on the performance of their students" (p. 5). It was difficult for teachers to address the needs of each student in their care and not simply teach to prepare students for state assessments (Hertberg-Davis, 2009).

Teachers also needed to receive professional development on the research related to grouping practices and how to implement the grouping strategies effectively because many of them received no formal training on how to teach gifted students (Chamberlin & Chamberlin, 2010). Unfortunately, most professional development was geared toward strategies for struggling learners (Blair, 2010). "Given the lack of understanding of gifted education, professional development is key" (Johnsen, 2013, p. 5).

Gifted students needed some form of grouping in order to meet their learning needs appropriately. Some of the positive benefits of grouping gifted students together included opportunities for vicarious learning (Burney, 2008), opportunities for direct instruction from the teacher at their level of understanding (Kaplan, 2003), academic rigor (McCollister & Sayler, 2010), and higher level questioning (McCollister & Sayler, 2010). School leaders and teachers needed to move away from grouping students based solely on their age and, instead, group them in various ways based on pre-assessment data, giftedness, and demonstrated competency (Coleman et al., 2015).

Seminar teaching. Mortimer Adler and a group of scholars developed the Paideia Program (Robinson, 2006). Paideia Seminars were an approach to teaching that

involved students and teachers discussing and responding to questions about a text they had read or media they had watched or reviewed (Robinson, 2006). The terms Paideia Seminar and Socratic Seminar were used interchangeably by many educators (Robinson, 2006).

> Socratic seminar has come to be understood to mean any form of teaching by asking questions. However, Paideia promotes a more rigorous approach, designed to improve students' critical thinking and communication skills. We define Socratic seminar as *a collaborative, intellectual dialogue facilitated with open-ended questions about a text.* ("How to Teach a Socratic Seminar," 2015, para. 5)

Beghetto and Kaufman (2009) stated that Socratic Seminar was one possible way to get students to make creative insights and generate new understandings. Paideia Seminar can also be used with young elementary students, and artwork was good "text" for them especially if they had not yet mastered reading (Paul & Tay, 2016). According to Paul and Tay (2016), "The discussions that follow allow students to form complex connections between concrete visual representations and the abstract concepts they represent. This process can be challenging for all students, but especially for young, gifted students" (p. 106).

The flipped classroom approach (Siegle, 2014) could be used with Paideia Seminar as well since the flipped classroom approach involved reading or viewing content outside of class so that discussion or activities could be the focus in class. "The flipped classroom also provides an opportunity to group gifted students in the classroom during the school day" (Siegle, 2014, p. 52). When grouped together, the gifted students would have the opportunity to engage in Paideia Seminar and engage in dialogue based

on the text they read or media they viewed as part of the flipped classroom approach. "Flipping the classroom can be an effective instructional strategy for differentiating instruction for gifted and talented students" (Siegle, 2014, p. 55).

Robinson (2008) conducted an evaluation of nine schools that implemented Paideia Seminar teaching. The schools included elementary, middle, and high levels; and Robinson (2008) found the following:

> In summary, the overall academic impact of the Paideia Model in the nine schools was remarkable. Achievement scores were consistently as high as the test allowed at two schools across all subjects and years, while high and improving across time in two other schools. Five of the nine schools showed mixed results, with achievement in one core subject improving over time when compared to local-district peers and one subject being slightly behind. (p. 61)

In addition, a qualitative research study conducted by Robinson (2006) found that Paideia Seminar influenced thinking about the text, generated higher level reading and thinking skills, and enhanced reading comprehension as observed in writing samples.

In order to be effective, Paideia Seminars had to be well planned with thoughtful selection of a text or other resource that was debatable and had multiple interpretations; and the teacher was a facilitator (Robinson, 2006). "A goal of gifted education is to promote higher-level thinking and emphasize the levels of synthesis and evaluation as opposed to the acquisition of basic facts and skills" (Burney, 2008, p. 134). Through Paideia Seminar, students analyzed, evaluated, and synthesized together resulting in the co-construction of their knowledge (Robinson, 2006). Paideia Seminars could enhance student achievement, student motivation, and create a more respectful school culture ("How to Teach a Socratic Seminar," 2015).

Summary

Educational researchers identified characteristics that were common among gifted students. They had also identified practices and strategies that were effective for teaching and supporting gifted students such as acceleration (McClarty, 2015). "Gifted children, like all children, have the right to learn something new every day; they also have the right to learn something new in school every day" (Siegle, 2013, p. 144). Teachers were the linchpins in determining the type of education a child received (Balls et al., 2011). Parents were their child's first teacher and an important role model (Robinson et al., 2007; Siegle, 2013). Their input should be valued, and they should have an active role in the education of their gifted child (Robinson et al., 2007). "School, family, and community are important 'spheres of influence' on children's development. The child's educational development is enhanced when these three environments work collaboratively toward shared goals" (Welsh, 2015, p. 89). Balls et al. (2011) stated that a major part in achieving school success was increasing the achievement level for each student. Understanding the characteristics of gifted students, effective strategies for teaching them, and parent involvement were keys to increasing student achievement and creating a caring school culture.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The research study followed an explanatory sequential mixed methods design. This chapter provides an overview of an explanatory sequential mixed methods study, the methods and procedures that were implemented, the limitations of the study, the delimitations of the study, and a summary of the methodology.

Purpose of the Research Study

The purpose of this study was to add to the body of knowledge about what constituted effective programming for gifted students by examining the perspective of parents. In addition, the correlation between the strategies that previous research indicated as effective for gifted education and the programming sought by parents of gifted children was examined.

Research Questions

There were several research questions addressed in this study.

1. What research-based strategies did the parents of gifted students know about?

2. What strategies did parents want implemented for their gifted child in a public elementary school?

3. What type of grouping did parents desire for their gifted children?

4. What outcomes did parents want to see as a result of their children participating in an AIG program?

Mixed-Methods Research

The design of this research study was an explanatory sequential mixed methods approach. The study included qualitative and quantitative components. According to Creswell (2014), an explanatory sequential approach involved collecting the quantitative data first, reviewing the results, and then conducting the qualitative phase and reviewing

those results. "Qualitative data tends to be open-ended without predetermined responses while quantitative data usually includes closed-ended responses such as found on questionnaires or psychological instruments" (Creswell, 2014, p. 14). The qualitative data added to the quantitative data. Creswell stated, "Accordingly, in the interpretation section, after the researcher presents the general quantitative and then qualitative results, a discussion should follow that specifies how the qualitative results help to expand or explain the quantitative results" (p. 225).

The quantitative component of the research study was a survey (Appendix A) given to parents of gifted students in fourth and fifth grades in five elementary schools in a school system, and the qualitative aspect of the study involved focus group interviews with a sampling of parents who completed the quantitative survey and consented to participate. According to Creswell (2014), the questions in the focus groups allowed the researcher to probe deeper into the data collected in the quantitative phase. The follow-up focus group interviews with a sampling of parents who completed the quantitative survey were in alignment with the recommendations provided by Creswell for an explanatory sequential mixed methods design. Once the quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analyzed, the results of each were presented separately followed by a discussion of how the qualitative results enhanced the quantitative results. In summary, the "Explanatory sequential mixed methods is one in which the researcher first conducts quantitative research, analyzes the results and then builds on the results to explain them in more detail with qualitative research" (Creswell, 2014, p. 15).

Survey Design

The quantitative survey for this study was adapted from three surveys developed by other researchers, and it also included some questions developed by the researcher

specifically for this study. In reference to using existing survey instruments, Creswell

(2014) stated,

> To use an existing instrument, describe the established validity of scores obtained
>
> from past use of the instrument. This means reporting efforts by authors to
>
> establish validity in quantitative research—whether one can draw meaningful and
>
> useful inferences from scores on the instruments. (p. 160)

Some of the questions in the survey for this study came from the "Opinions about the

Gifted and Their Education Instrument" designed by Dr. Del Siegle and Dr. Betsy

McCoach. In addition, some of the questions came from a survey developed by Dr. John

Maresca. Maresca (2004) stated the following with regard to the survey questions he

developed:

> The surveys were created in part, by following the recommendations of prior
>
> researchers. Attitude surveys would allow the feelings of teachers, parents and
>
> students. Often, studies concentrated on ability grouping without learning how
>
> those involved felt about the subject.
>
> The survey was created entirely by the researcher. For that reason,
>
> permission to use the survey was not needed. The surveys were validated by
>
> sending early versions to five master's prepared educators. Each educator was
>
> asked to make changes they felt would improve the survey. The educators were
>
> asked to add/delete questions, make grammar and punctuation corrections and
>
> share thoughts about the surveys. The educators involved in this process are
>
> considered the formative committee.
>
> Once the changes were made to surveys based on the recommendations of
>
> the committee, the surveys were then sent back and asked for the approval of the

summative committee. The summative committee was the same group of

educators. Once approved, the surveys were passed out to the subjects. (pp. 39-

40)

Finally, questions from a survey developed by McCulloch (2010) were used as well.

McCulloch stated the following about the survey:

The questionnaire for this survey was based on the survey instrument developed

by Coleman and Gallagher (1992) from the Gifted Education Policy Studies

Program for The Middle School Survey Report: Impact on Gifted Students. The

questions were modified for an elementary school setting. In order to assure both

validity and reliability, the questionnaire for this study was reviewed by a panel of

experts in the field of education. The panel of experts included several district

level gifted education coordinators with over 20 years of experience, former

elementary school gifted teachers who now teach gifted endorsement classes for

educators, and a former district level director of special education with 26 years of

experience whose position included supervision of the district's gifted education

program. The survey was also reviewed by a panel of gifted teachers, general

education classroom teachers, and parents to ensure the clarity of the questions

and the user friendliness of the administration tool. (p. 46)

The survey questions had a Likert scale format with ratings from one to five. The ratings

on the survey included the following: 1=Strongly Disagree (SD); 2=Disagree (D);

3=Undecided (U); 4=Agree (A); and 5=Strongly Agree (SA). Likert scale items were

often used to measure the attitudes of people as well as how much or how little they

agreed with statements (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, & Worthen, 2011). Since parent

perspectives about gifted education programming were the focus for this research study,

Likert-scale items would provide information about the strengths of the current programming and potential changes that parents would like to see in the future.

The focus group interviews provided the qualitative data for this research study. The parents responded to the same set of questions, although questions asking for further clarification or elaboration were asked as well.

Methods and Procedures

The quantitative data were collected utilizing an online survey through the SurveyMonkey website. According to Fitzpatrick et al. (2011), "Evaluators typically find that directing respondents to a web site that contains the survey makes the respondents, particularly if they are employees or clients, feel more anonymous, since their e-mail addresses are not linked to their responses" (p. 433). All of the questions on the survey were quantitative. Parent participation in the survey was anonymous and voluntary. The researcher contacted the principals of the five elementary schools, and the purpose of the research study was explained to each principal. The school system in which the study took place had an automated phone and email message system. There were 95 fourth- and fifth-grade students who were identified as AIG at the five elementary schools in the school system in which the research study took place (J. Hambrick, personal communication, January 5, 2017). The researcher recorded a phone message that was sent to all of the parents of AIG students through the automated phone system. The phone message was accompanied by an email with the same content as the phone message. In the email, parents were provided with a link to the survey, and then it was completely voluntary as to whether they chose to participate. A 2-week window was provided for the parents to complete the online survey if they chose to participate.

According to Fitzpatrick et al. (2011),

Focus group methods have now been adapted to many different settings to obtain

information on how individuals react to either planned or existing services,

policies, or procedures or to learn more about the needs and circumstances of

participants or potential clients. In addition to reacting to issues, focus group

participants may suggest new methods or describe circumstances that pose

problems with existing programs or policies. (p. 438)

Four focus group interview sessions were held in this research study. If more than eight

parents at a school had requested to participate in a focus group interview, a computer-

generated random sampling would have been used to determine the parents who

participated in the interview sessions. Creswell (2014) stated, "With randomization, a

representative sample from a population provides the ability to generalize to a

population" (p. 158). The focus group interview sessions took place at two of the

elementary schools in order to make the locations convenient for the parents. At the end

of the SurveyMonkey survey, each participant was asked to provide their contact

information if they were willing to participate in a focus group interview. The researcher

contacted the parents who provided their contact information through the SurveyMonkey

survey. Once the participants for the interviews were confirmed, the four interview

sessions were scheduled.

The researcher led the four interview sessions and asked each question. All of the

parents had the opportunity to respond to the set of open-ended questions. Each question

was stated verbally by the researcher, and then the parents were given an opportunity to

respond. The researcher asked follow-up questions in order to seek clarification or

elaboration after some of the parents responded. The parents were not required to

respond individually to each question. In addition, the interviews were audio recorded

and transcribed. The interviews were not videotaped, and the parents were not asked to identify themselves. Finally, the audio recordings were transcribed to ensure accuracy and fidelity.

Participants and Recruitment for the Qualitative Phase

A sample of parents who had students who were identified as AIG were interviewed. At the end of the SurveyMonkey survey, each participant was asked to provide their contact information if they were willing to participate in a focus group interview. The researcher then contacted the parents who provided their contact information through the SurveyMonkey survey. Once the participants for the interviews were confirmed, the four interview sessions were scheduled.

Consent Process

The parents gave consent when they agreed to complete the quantitative survey. The following statement was included in the phone message and email message that parents received: "Your participation in the survey and/or small group interview is completely voluntary. All responses on the survey and the interview will be kept anonymous." By providing their contact information at the end of the anonymous SurveyMonkey survey, the parent was consenting to participate in a focus group interview.

Validation of Study

Validation of the quantitative survey was provided by Dr. Del Siegle who was considered an expert in the field of gifted education. Dr. Siegle was the Director of the National Center for Research on Gifted Education. He was also a Professor of Gifted and Talented Education and the Associate Dean for Research and Faculty Affairs at the University of Connecticut (Siegle, 2017). The researcher emailed the survey to Dr.

Siegle and asked him to review the survey questions. Dr. Siegle confirmed through an email reply to the researcher that the survey questions were valid for this research study (Appendix B).

For the qualitative phase, Creswell (2014) recommended eight strategies to establish the validity of qualitative research. Of those strategies, the following ones were included in this study: triangulation of data; clarifying researcher bias; presenting contradictory information; and providing rich, thick descriptions of the findings (Creswell, 2014). The identification of best practices for gifted education programming through a review of the literature, the parent surveys, and the focus group interviews provided the researcher with in-depth data and information for which to identify and justify several themes. The focus group interviews were also audio recorded and transcribed by a third party to ensure accuracy. In addition, the information that contradicted the themes established by the researcher was summarized and included in the findings.

Analysis of Data and Interpretation of Findings

Fitzpatrick et al. (2011) stated, "Analysis may be thought of as organizing and summarizing information; interpretation as applying values, perspectives, and conceptual ability to formulate supportable conclusions" (p. 446). After the parents completed the surveys, the researcher identified the frequency of responses to each question. The frequency of each type of response allowed the researcher to identify common beliefs held by parents of AIG students about the strategies, interventions, and support they wanted to be provided for their children. The researcher displayed each survey question and indicated the number of respondents that checked strongly disagree, disagree, undecided, agree, and strongly agree in a table format.

With an explanatory sequential mixed methods design, Creswell (2014) stated, "The quantitative and qualitative databases are analyzed separately in this approach" (p. 224). Furthermore, Creswell stated, "One important area is that the quantitative results cannot only inform the sampling procedure but it can also point toward the types of qualitative questions to ask participants in the second phase" (pp. 224-225). For the focus group interviews, the researcher utilized the quantitative survey question responses to develop qualitative questions that added depth to parent responses in the quantitative survey. "The key idea is that the qualitative data collection builds directly on the quantitative results" (Creswell, 2014, p. 224). After the qualitative data were collected, the researcher read the transcriptions of the focus group interviews in order to gain a general idea of the commonalities among parent responses. "In qualitative research, the impact of this process is to aggregate data into a small number of themes, something like five to seven themes (Creswell, 2013)" (Creswell, 2014, p. 195). The researcher displayed the themes in a table format as well. Finally, the researcher interpreted and indicated how the qualitative results expanded or explained the quantitative results (Creswell, 2014).

Limitations of Study

There were some limitations to this research study. First, parent satisfaction with the current practices for gifted education and parent satisfaction with their children's AIG teacher might have impacted the ideas and opinions expressed by the parents during the focus group interviews. Second, parent awareness of research-based practices for gifted education and the options that were available for their children might have impacted the results of the focus group interviews. Third, the school system in which the research study was conducted recently approved a new AIG plan for the school years 2016 to

2019. Parent awareness of the new AIG plan as well as their awareness of the previous

AIG plan for the school system might have impacted the opinions expressed during the

focus group interviews. Fourth, the researcher was the principal of one of the five

elementary schools in the school system, and he was the former principal of one of the

elementary schools in the school system as well. Fifth, parent participation in the

research study was voluntary, so only the opinions and ideas of those who chose to

participate in the interviews informed the researcher's identification of themes. Finally,

the researcher was the principal of one of the elementary schools in the school system

which may have some influence on the responses of AIG parents who had children at his

school.

Delimitations of Study

In the 2016-2017 school year, there were 95 AIG students in fourth and fifth

grades in the school district where the research study took place. The research study only

involved the parents of these AIG students in Grades 4 and 5 at the five elementary

schools in the school district. The school district was a city school system in the foothills

area of North Carolina, and the average number of students in the elementary schools in

2016 was 413 students (North Carolina School Report Card, 2016). The same

anonymous survey was provided to all AIG fourth- and fifth-grade parents and four small

groups of parents were interviewed in a focus group format. Finally, the number of

parents who could have participated in the survey was restricted by the requirement that

their children had to be AIG fourth or fifth graders.

Summary of Methodology

The purpose of this study was to add to the body of knowledge about what

constituted effective programming for gifted students by examining the desires of

parents. In addition, the correlation between the strategies that previous research indicated as effective for gifted education and the programming sought by parents of gifted children was examined. The parent surveys provided quantitative data, and the focus group interviews provided qualitative data that enriched the quantitative findings. The explanatory sequential mixed methods approach allowed the researcher to develop detailed, in-depth conclusions regarding what parents wanted their children's gifted education experience to be in elementary school.

Chapter 4: Results

Review

The purpose of this study was to add to the body of knowledge about what constituted effective programming for gifted students by examining the perspective of parents. In addition, the correlation between the strategies that previous research had indicated as effective for gifted education and the programming sought by parents of gifted children was examined. The approach taken for the research was an explanatory sequential mixed methods approach. The following questions guided this research study.

1. What research-based strategies did the parents of gifted students know about?

2. What strategies did parents want implemented for their gifted child in a public elementary school?

3. What type of grouping did parents desire for their gifted children?

4. What outcomes did parents want to see as a result of their children participating in an AIG program?

The results of an online, anonymous, and voluntary survey administered to the parents of AIG students in the fourth and fifth grades were used as the quantitative data for this study. The qualitative data for this study came from the transcriptions of four voluntary, small group interviews with parents. The small group interviews only included the parents who took the online survey and volunteered to participate.

Data Collection

There were 95 fourth- and fifth-grade students who were identified as AIG at the five elementary schools in the school system in which the research study took place (J. Hambrick, personal communication, January 5, 2017). The researcher recorded a phone message that was sent to 105 parents of AIG students through the school system's

automated phone system. The phone message was accompanied by an email with the

same content as the phone message. The phone message and/or email message were

delivered to 103 parents. The phone message was delivered to 96 parents, which was

91% of the total parents. The email message was delivered to 89 parents, which was 85%

of the total parents. Ten of the recipients of the phone message did not have an email

address. In the email, parents were provided with a link to the survey (Appendix A), and

it was completely voluntary as to whether they chose to participate. The survey was

administered through the SurveyMonkey website. A 2-week window was provided for

the parents to complete the online survey if they chose to participate. A total of 49

parents took the online survey, which was 46.67% of the total number of parents who

could have taken it. The questions in the survey targeted the following attitudes of

parents.

1. Attitudes about grouping students.

2. Attitudes about accelerating and grade skipping students.

3. Attitudes about the usefulness of the regular classroom.

4. Attitudes about differentiation.

5. Attitudes about parent involvement in the nomination process.

6. Attitudes about underachievement.

After the 2-week window, the parents who volunteered to participate in a focus

group interview were contacted by the researcher. The researcher conducted four focus

group interview sessions. Of the 49 parents who took the online survey, 19 of them

participated in the focus group interview sessions. This meant that 38.78% of the parents

who took the survey also participated in a focus group interview. In addition, 18.45% of

the 103 parents who received the phone message and/or email message took the survey

and participated in a focus group interview. Each interview session lasted approximately 45 minutes, and the parents responded to 12 open-ended questions. The focus group interview questions were designed to gather additional information from parents related to the survey results and the six constructs about their attitudes toward different aspects of gifted education programming.

The researcher posed each question, and it was optional for the parents to respond. The researcher asked follow-up questions as needed in an effort to seek clarification from a parent regarding his/her response or to seek further elaboration on a response given by a parent. The following 12 questions were posed during each interview session.

1. How should AIG students be grouped for instruction and learning?

2. How could special classes for AIG students be improved?

3. When is grade skipping appropriate for AIG students?

4. What criteria should be used to determine grade skipping?

5. What aspects of the regular classroom are beneficial for AIG students?

6. What aspects of the regular classroom are not beneficial for AIG students?

7. Can you tell me more about how parents could assist with the nomination process?

8. What would you like to see included in parent workshops?

9. Describe the differentiated instruction that you would like your child to receive.

10. Can you tell me more about the strategies that you want implemented at your child's school?

11. If you feel that your child has underachieved in the past, please describe the

factors that you feel contributed to the underachievement?

12. Describe how a student, their parent(s), and the school staff could work

together to reverse underachievement.

Results of Focus Group Interviews

The results of the focus group interviews are displayed in figures by each question

that was posed by the researcher. The researcher reviewed the transcriptions of the four

interview sessions with parents, and the researcher identified common responses given by

parents as well as unique responses. Common responses were those ideas expressed by

more than one parent. The unique responses were those expressed by only one person.

Each figure includes the question posed by the researcher, the common parent responses,

and the unique parent responses.

Question #1: How should AIG students be grouped for instruction and learning?
Common Parent Responses • Students should not miss regular classroom instruction they need due to being pulled out for AIG services. • Pull out services with an AIG teacher in a separate classroom. • Cluster group AIG students in regular classroom.
Unique Parent Responses • The school could create a rotation of classes and have AIG be one of the rotation classes. • The school system could have multi-age and multi-grade classrooms.

Figure 1. How should AIG students be grouped for instruction and learning?

Question #2: How could special classes for AIG students be improved?
Common Parent Responses • The AIG teacher needs to communicate more frequently with parents. • The AIG teacher needs to share the syllabus and explain what the students are doing in AIG classes. • The instruction for AIG students should include individualization, use of technology, rigor, projects, competition, task options, Google Classroom, and alignment with students' interests and passions. • Students should not have to make up work when they return from pullout AIG services.
Unique Parent Responses • AIG should be offered as a special class. • Parent volunteers should be allowed to help with AIG. • Each school should have a full-time AIG teacher. • The regular classroom teacher should have AIG certification/training if teaching AIG students.

Figure 2. How could special classes for AIG students be improved?

Question #3: When is grade skipping appropriate for AIG students?
Common Parent Responses • It is a child-by-child decision. • The maturity of the student should be considered. • Parent involvement in decision and support is necessary. • The academic ability should be considered. • Concerns were expressed about the child emotionally and socially if he/she skips a grade. • Concerns were expressed about the future implications for things like sports and gaps in knowledge.
Unique Parent Responses • A student does not need to be AIG in order to grade skip. • Educators and parents should find out if the student wants to grade skip. • A student's profile from an IQ test should be considered. • The student's teacher should be asked to give their opinion. • Students should have the opportunity to test out of a grade. • Teacher needs to meet the needs of the student rather than grade skipping. • The teacher will explain concepts in ways the student has not heard before.

Figure 3. When is grade skipping appropriate for AIG students?

Question #4: What criteria should be used to determine grade skipping?

Common Parent Responses
  • The maturity level of the student.
  • The academic ability of the student.

Unique Parent Responses
  • The class size of the class the student would be skipping into in the next grade level should be considered. A smaller class size would be better for grade skipping.
  • The school system must embrace grade skipping and support it.
  • Concern expressed that it's the principal's decision to place students.
  • Elementary level is the best time to grade skip.
  • A student should not have to be AIG in order to grade skip.
  • Students should be promoted to the next grade level when they demonstrate they are ready, and it does not matter what time in the school year it occurs.
  • IQ tests.
  • Multiple indicators should be utilized and not just academic ones.
  • The age of the child should be considered.
  • The physical maturity of the student.

Figure 4. What criteria should be used to determine grade skipping?

Question #5: What aspects of the regular classroom are beneficial for AIG students?

Common Parent Responses
  • The social interactions with all students
  • The regular classroom builds a student's confidence with communication with all types of people.
  • The student has the opportunity to be a mentor or peer tutor.

Unique Parent Responses
  • The class parties.
  • The play time with all peers.
  • The relationship with the regular classroom teacher.
  • The AIG student gets to be an ordinary kid.
  • The sense of community that the AIG student gets to experience.

Figure 5. What aspects of the regular classroom are beneficial for AIG students?

Question #6: What aspects of the regular classroom are not beneficial for AIG students?

Common Parent Responses
   • The behavior problems in the regular classroom.
   • Assignments that are not challenging, below their level, and/or repetitious

Unique Parent Responses
   • The emphasis placed on helping the low performing students.
   • The AIG student serving as a peer tutor.
   • If the AIG student does not have time with AIG peers for a portion of the day.
   • When AIG students are put in leadership roles, and they are not ready.
   • A lack of communication between the AIG teacher and regular education teacher to plan activities that meet AIG students' needs.
   • Some special classes such as music are not beneficial because all students receive the same instruction.

Figure 6. What aspects of the regular classroom are not beneficial for AIG students?

Question #7: Can you tell me more about how parents could assist with the nomination process?

Common Parent Responses
   • Parents do not understand the nomination process for AIG.
   • Parents need to be involved.
   • Teachers need to be involved.

Unique Parent Responses
   • The school should allow a student with the aptitude to try AIG and see how he/she does with it.
   • Do not accept parent requests.
   • Allow parent requests if children demonstrated ability on other indicators besides IQ tests.
   • Parent letters about AIG are confusing and difficult for parents to understand.

Figure 7. How could parents assist with the nomination process?

Question #8: What would you like to see included in parent workshops?
Common Parent Responses
• Resources for parents to support their children. For example, STEM activities, websites, and activities for summer vacation. • A syllabus and description of what the AIG students learn and do with the AIG teacher. • Assistance with technology and educational websites for AIG students.
Unique Parent Responses
• Help with understanding where their children excel. • More information on the AIG process.

Figure 8. What would parents like to see included in parent workshops?

Question #9: Describe the differentiated instruction that you would like your child to receive.
Common Parent Responses
• AIG students should receive different work and not extra work. The different work should be advanced, rigorous, and supplemented. Some examples shared by the parents included Google Classroom, task options, YouTube videos, logic problems, puzzles, projects, competitions, research, and writing.
Unique Parent Responses
• Parents want to learn more about differentiated instruction. • The school should continue pull out classes for AIG students. • The regular classroom teacher should be AIG certified if he/she teaches AIG students. • AIG students should work together in small groups in the regular classroom. • Parents need to tell the teachers where their students need more challenging work. • School systems need to share best practices for AIG services.

Figure 9. The differentiated instruction that parents want their child to receive.

Question #10: Can you tell me more about the strategies that you want implemented at your child's school?
Common Parent Responses
• More options for AIG students.
Unique Parent Responses
• More ways for students to be identified AIG, especially for English Learners. • Group all the AIG students in one regular education classroom.

Figure 10. The strategies that parents want implemented at their child's school.

Question #11: If you feel that your child has underachieved in the past, please describe the factors that you feel contributed to the underachievement?
Common Parent Responses • The teacher does not have a good relationship with the student. • A teacher who is not organized. • A teacher who does not communicate with parents. • A teacher who does not plan for AIG students. • The teacher's own attitude. • Some teachers are cranky and miserable. • Some teachers do their own thing rather than teach the curriculum. • Some teachers do not embrace AIG. • No opportunity for students to learn about topics that interest them. • AIG students doing the same work as regular students. • Too much emphasis on tests and EOGs. • Student wants to go beyond basic level but does not get the opportunity to go deeper. • Students not having a voice in what they learn. • Not enough emphasis on each subject area. • A lack of projects. • The students do not write enough. • Self-guided learning. • The focus is on low performing students.
Unique Parent Responses • A student lacks motivation. • The student does not feel cared about because the school does not provide what he/she needs. • Teacher does not have the tools he/she needs to teach AIG students effectively. • A student's peer relations and peer pressures.

Figure 11. The factors that parents feel contributed to their child's underachievement.

Question #12: Describe how a student, their parent(s), and the school staff could work together to reverse underachievement.
Common Parent Responses • Regular communication between the AIG teacher and parents. • Regular communication between the regular classroom teacher and parents. • The teachers should send students' work home on a regular schedule to parents. • The teachers should send updates or newsletters to parents.
Unique Parent Responses • AIG work should receive a grade like other subject areas. • Students should have opportunities for STEM activities and projects. • The AIG teacher needs to follow through on what she says she is going to do with the students. • The teacher should find out exactly what each student needs. • Extra tutoring could be provided. • Leveled or ability-grouped classes should be created for a portion of the school day. • Provide opportunities for parents to volunteer at the school. • Cluster group advanced students in the lower grades. • A lunch buddies program. • A reading buddies program.

Figure 12. Strategies that parents believe would reverse underachievement.

Frequency Distribution

The results of the online survey are displayed in tables. The results are displayed according to parent attitudes about grouping students, accelerating and grading skipping students, the usefulness of the regular classroom, differentiation, parental involvement in the nomination process, and underachievement. The parental attitude targeted by the questions is stated above each table.

Table 1 displays information related to parent attitudes about grouping students. Table 1 indicates that 65.31% of the parents agreed or strongly agreed that placing gifted students in special classes would be a way to meet their needs. In addition, 83.34% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that students would perform better if placed in groups based on ability levels. Finally, 67.34% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that placing

all of the gifted students in a grade level in one class with a specially trained teacher would be an appropriate option.

Table 1

Frequency Distribution Table 1: Attitudes about Grouping Students

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
1. The best way to meet the needs of the gifted is to put them in special classes (McCoach & Siegle, 2007)	24.49%	40.82%	22.45%	8.16%	4.08%	49
2. Students will perform better if placed in groups based on ability. (Maresca, 2004)	41.67%	41.67%	10.42%	6.25%	0.00%	48
3. Placing all of the gifted students in a grade level in the same class on a full-time basis with a teacher who has specialized training to work with gifted students is an appropriate option. (McCreary)	30.61%	36.73%	16.33%	12.24%	4.08%	49

Table 2 displays information regarding parent attitudes about accelerating and grade skipping students. The data in Table 2 indicate that 40.82% of parents were undecided about whether it was more damaging for a gifted child to waste time in class than adapt to skipping a grade. Also, 30.62% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that it was more damaging for a gifted child to waste time in class than adapt to skipping a grade. With regard to experiencing social difficulties as a result of grading skipping, 60.42% of parents were either undecided, disagreed, or strongly disagreed that students

would have difficulty adjusting socially to being with older students. In addition, 69.39%

of parents agreed or strongly agreed that curriculum compacting was an appropriate

option for gifted students. Finally, 57.15% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that

grade skipping was an appropriate option for some gifted students.

Table 2

Frequency Distribution Table 2: Attitudes about Accelerating and Grade Skipping Students

Question	SA	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
1. It is more damaging for a gifted child to waste time in class than adapt to skipping a grade (McCoach & Siegle, 2007).	14.29%	16.33%	40.82%	24.49%	4.08%	49
2. Most gifted children who skip a grade have difficulties in their social adjustment to a group of older students (McCoach & Siegle, 2007).	8.33%	31.25%	29.17%	29.17%	2.08%	48
3. A greater number of gifted children should be allowed to skip a grade (McCoach & Siegle, 2007).	8.16%	18.37%	34.69%	30.61%	8.16%	49
4. Curriculum compacting (acceleration in a subject-area) is an appropriate strategy to meet the needs of gifted students. (McCreary)	20.41%	48.98%	24.49%	6.12%	0.00%	49
5. Acceleration (grade skipping) is an appropriate option for some gifted students. (McCulloch, 2010)	14.29%	42.86%	24.49%	12.24%	6.12%	49

Table 3 displays information related to parent attitudes about the usefulness of the regular classroom. In Table 3, the data indicate that 51.02% of parents disagreed or strongly disagreed that gifted students waste their time in the regular classroom. On the other hand, 40.79% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that gifted students did waste their time in the regular classroom. In addition, 65.31% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that the regular school program suppresses the intellectual curiosity of gifted students. Also, 50% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that gifted students are not able to advance at their own learning rate when they are grouped in the same classes with students of average and low-ability levels. Finally, 42.86% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that advanced students are not challenged in mixed ability classrooms.

Table 3

Frequency Distribution Table 3: Attitudes about the Usefulness of the Regular Classroom

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
1. The gifted waste their time in regular classes (McCoach & Siegle, 2007).	14.29%	26.53%	8.16%	46.94%	4.08%	49
2. The regular school program stifles the intellectual curiosity of gifted children (McCoach & Siegle, 2007).	14.29%	51.02%	14.29%	18.37%	2.04%	49
3. Gifted students who are in classes with students of average and low ability levels for academic subjects are not able to advance at their own learning rate (McCulloch, 2010).	22.92%	27.08%	18.75%	31.25%	0.00%	48
4. Children of higher ability are not challenged in mixed ability classrooms (Maresca, 2004).	14.29%	28.57%	26.53%	28.57%	2.04%	49

Table 4 displays information related to parent attitudes about differentiation.

According to the results in Table 4, 83.68% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that differentiation by the teacher was an effective way to meet the needs of gifted students. In addition, 77.55% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that online learning programs should be included as part of the gifted education program. Only three of 49 parents or 6.21% indicated that online learning programs should not be included in the gifted education program. Also, 75.51% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that the school counselor should provide counseling services and sessions to address the social and emotional needs of gifted students. Only two of 49 parents or 4.08% indicated that the school counselor should not provide counseling services and sessions specifically for gifted students. Finally, 66.21% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that self-paced learning was an appropriate option for gifted students.

Table 4

Frequency Distribution Table 4: Attitudes about Differentiation

Question	SA	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
1. Differentiation is an effective way to meet the needs of students who are gifted. Differentiation is a teaching technique where the regular classroom teacher modifies the pace, level, or type of instruction to match the ability, interest, or learning style (McCulloch, 2010).	38.78%	44.90%	12.24%	2.04%	2.04%	49
2. Online learning programs for gifted students should be included as part of the gifted education program (McCreary).	12.24%	65.31%	16.33%	6.12%	0.00%	49
3. The school counselor should provide counseling services and sessions to address the social and emotional needs of gifted students (McCreary).	22.45%	53.06%	20.41%	4.08%	0.00%	49
4. Self-paced learning is an appropriate option for gifted students (McCreary). Self-paced learning means that the teacher identifies materials and tasks that are appropriate for the students, determines how the student will demonstrate mastery, and provides assistance (Morrison et al., 2013).	12.24%	48.98%	28.57%	8.16%	2.04%	49

Table 5 displays information regarding parent attitudes about parental

involvement in the nomination process. In Table 5, data are displayed regarding parent

desires for involvement in the nomination process for gifted education. The data show

that 85.72% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that parents should be included in the

identification of instructional strategies to be used with their gifted children. With regard

to parents assisting with the nomination process for gifted education, 42.85% of parents

agreed or strongly agreed that parents should play a role in the process, while 30.61% of

parents disagreed or strongly disagreed that parents should have a voice in the

nomination process.

Table 5

Frequency Distribution Table 5: Attitudes about Parental Involvement in the Nomination Process

Question	SA	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
1. Parents should be included in the identification of instructional strategies to be used with their gifted child (McCreary).	22.45%	63.27%	10.20%	4.08%	0.00%	49
2. Parent nominations should be included as part of the identification process for gifted education (McCreary).	8.16%	34.69%	26.53%	28.57%	2.04%	49

Table 6 displays information related to parent attitudes about the

underachievement of gifted students. In Table 6, the data indicate that 73.47% of parents

agreed or strongly agreed that gifted students become unmotivated if they are not

challenged academically on a regular basis. Also, 53.06% of parents agreed or strongly

agreed that underachievement is common among gifted students, and 26.53% were

undecided. Finally, 97.96% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that the parents, school

staff, and student had to work together to successfully reverse underachievement. It is important to note that no parents disagreed that the parents, student, and school staff should work unitedly to reverse underachievement.

Table 6

Frequency Distribution Table 6: Attitudes about Underachievement

Question	SA	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
1. Gifted students often become unmotivated if not challenged with rigorous academics on a regular basis (McCulloch, 2010).	24.49%	48.98%	16.33%	10.20%	0.00%	49
2. Underachievement is common among gifted students (Hyatt, 1994).	10.20%	42.86%	26.53%	14.29%	6.12%	48
3. In order to successfully alter underachievement, it is necessary for parents, school and student to work unitedly (Hyatt, 1994).	55.10%	42.86%	2.04%	0.00%	0.00%	49

Summary

This study was designed to elicit greater clarity as to the programming and services that the parents wanted school systems to provide for the fourth and fifth grade AIG students. The results of the online survey were designed to provide clarity about parent attitudes regarding the grouping of students, acceleration and grade skipping, the usefulness of the regular classroom, differentiation, their involvement in the nomination process for gifted education, and underachievement. The focus group interviews provided the researcher with even greater insight about parent attitudes toward gifted education and what they actually wanted from their children's schools. According to Moon (2009), "In elementary school, the problems and challenges that high-ability youth

experience with academic achievement and motivation depend in large measure on the educational environments they experience" (p. 275). The results of this study shed light on the type of educational environment parents want for their gifted children.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to add to the body of knowledge about what constituted effective programming for gifted students by examining the perspective of parents. In addition, the correlation between the strategies previous research indicated as effective for gifted education and the programming sought by parents of gifted children was examined. The approach taken for the research was an explanatory sequential mixed methods approach. The following questions guided this research study.

1. What research-based strategies did the parents of gifted students know about?

2. What strategies did parents want implemented for their gifted child in a public elementary school?

3. What type of grouping did parents desire for their gifted children?

4. What outcomes did parents want to see as a result of their children participating in an AIG program?

In order to gain clarity about parent desires for gifted education, an online survey was administered, and focus group interviews were conducted by the researcher. The online survey was taken by 49 parents, and 19 parents participated in a focus group interview session.

The questions in the survey targeted the following attitudes of parents.

1. Attitudes about grouping students.

2. Attitudes about accelerating and grade skipping students.

3. Attitudes about the usefulness of the regular classroom.

4. Attitudes about differentiation.

5. Attitudes about parent involvement in the nomination process.

6. Attitudes about underachievement.

The questions posed by the researcher during the focus group interview sessions related to grouping students, criteria for grade skipping, differentiation, parent workshop topics, support of AIG students, causes of underachievement, and reversing underachievement. The online survey results and opinions shared by parents during the interview sessions provided great insight about the strategies parents want implemented with their children as well as the type of options and programming the parents want the schools and school system to provide for their children.

Literature Review

Gifted students differed from peers in many ways according to the literature. North Carolina legislative statute, Article 9B (NCGS § 115C-150.5) stated,

> Academically or intellectually gifted students perform or show the potential to perform at substantially high levels of accomplishment when compared with others of their age, experience, or environment. Academically or intellectually gifted students exhibit high performance capability in intellectual areas, specific academic fields, or in both the intellectual areas and specific academic fields. Academically or intellectually gifted students require differentiated educational services beyond those ordinarily provided by the regular educational program. Outstanding abilities are present in students from all cultural groups, across all economic strata, and in all areas of human endeavor. (North Carolina Academically or Intellectually Gifted Program Standards, 2012, p. 1)

Based on this definition and previous research, gifted students need different instruction, assignments, and support than peers. A review of the literature on practices in gifted education and programming options for gifted education revealed three major themes.

1. AIG students had unique characteristics, attributes, and needs.

2. The perspective of the parents of AIG students was invaluable.

3. There was extensive research available that indicated the best practices for AIG services.

The three major themes identified through the review of previous research and literature came alive in parent survey responses and interview responses. The parents did know the unique characteristics, attributes, and needs of their children. During the focus group interviews, the parents clearly articulated what they wanted for their children's education.

The review of relevant literature revealed extensive educational research had been done regarding best practices for AIG services. Some of the appropriate options and services that were found in this researcher's review of literature included self-paced learning, differentiated instruction and tasks, growth mindset instruction, emotional and social needs support, opportunities to use technology and engage in online learning, and grouping AIG students for learning. In addition, acceleration was highlighted as an appropriate, effective option for AIG students. Acceleration could occur through curriculum compacting, pullout programs, and/or grade skipping. Differentiation for gifted students included many aspects. The literature emphasized the use of pre-assessments in order to determine the background knowledge of students and their understanding of the content before it was taught as a practice to assist teachers with differentiation. Following a pre-assessment, teachers designed instruction for gifted students that included rigorous, meaningful tasks, higher thinking questions, tiered assignments, technology use when appropriate, curriculum compacting, and flexible grouping. As the gifted students engaged in the differentiated learning, they also needed emotional support from the school counselor and their parents or guardians.

In addition to these strategies and practices, the school culture and environment played an important role. McCollister and Sayler (2010) stated, "The optimal school learning environment for gifted students is one where scholastic rigor is the standard" (p. 41). The school environment was supportive of gifted students' social and emotional needs and characteristics as well. The school counselor and each gifted student's parents had a significant role with supporting the student. Cross (2007) stated,

> The likelihood of underachievement is high if teachers or parents misinterpret special characteristics. A teacher should be attentive to how your child learns and how fast. A bored gifted student runs the risk of not achieving to his potential (Reis & McCoach, 2000). (p. 50)

Siegle and McCoach also emphasized the impact of the support provided by parents, counselors, and teachers in their Achievement Orientation Model (Siegle, 2013). Gifted students' self-efficacy, the meaningfulness they find in tasks, and their perceptions of support from significant adults all lead to success or underachievement depending on the degree of existence of these three areas in student lives (Siegle, 2013).

In summary, there was significant research available about the appropriate strategies, practices, and options for gifted education. There was also extensive research about the characteristics and attributes of gifted students; however, research that identified the desires and attitudes of gifted students' parents was lacking. This research study added even more depth to the knowledge of appropriate strategies, practices, and options for gifted education as well as the characteristics of gifted students. The most important aspect of this research study, which in many ways broke new ground, was the depth that the findings added to the small amount of research that existed about parent opinions of gifted education and what they wanted for their children. The perspective of

gifted students' parents was invaluable to this researcher, and they knew what they wanted from the gifted education programming provided by their children's schools.

Online Parent Survey Major Findings

The results of the online survey produced several key findings. For the purposes of this study, the researcher established the following criteria for what constituted a major finding. A major finding in the online survey was any question item where 65% of parents agreed or strongly agreed. A major finding in the online survey was also any question item where 65% of parents disagreed or strongly disagreed.

The first major finding from the survey results was 83.34% of parents agreed or strongly that students would perform better if placed in groups based on ability levels (Table 1). With regard to grouping in the regular classroom, a parent stated, "I would like to see AIG kids have peers to work with within a classroom so they're not alone" (Participant 1, interview 2, personal communication, June 5, 2017). Another parent stated,

> I feel that they should be grouped in with their classroom, and inside the classroom, maybe get some differentiated lesson or—for example, they would do a math, you know all these math students that are identified, they will do that work and then maybe something that will push them a little, not necessarily be pulled out of the classroom. I don't believe in that, because I have a child that wasn't identified as one, and she suffered a lot when she would see these other children being pulled. And now I do have one, but you know, so I've been able to see how it's affected both in different ways. (Participant 3, interview 1, personal communication, June 5, 2017)

Along this same line of thought, Participant 4 in the fourth interview session stated,

I see it as and I always think of math but giving math for example. The teacher

presenting the concept that they're going to talk about that day and making sure

that everybody is kind of on the same page with it but then getting into groups and

even by ability or you know especially with the AIG students you have to put

them in groups together I think and then have separate activities for them to do.

(Personal communication, June 7, 2017)

Another option for grouping was to place all the AIG students in a classroom with a

trained AIG teacher for at least a portion of the day, which is called a pullout program.

The survey results indicated that 67.34% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that placing

all gifted students in a grade level in one class with a specially trained teacher would be

an appropriate option (Table 1). The satisfaction of the parents with a pullout program

model depended to a degree on how it was set up at their children's schools. A parent

who was pleased with the setup at her child's school stated,

I like the fact that our kids were pulled out this year but didn't miss instructional

time. I hear in past years that when the AIG kids were pulled out that they missed

some instructional time or maybe even some review and then those AIG kids

went back in and then they would test. And the kids that were in there kind of

made better on the tests because they just reviewed it right before they got in there

or something like that so I liked that they were pulled out and that um the other

kids in their grade did the same type of stuff but at their level so I don't know is

that. (Participant 1, interview 4, personal communication, June 7, 2017)

Another parent who favored the pullout model and wanted his child pulled out even more

stated that he wanted the following:

See them pulled out and have different work but not have to do the different work

in addition to their regular class work. It shouldn't be just more work piled on top

of them. It should be you know differentiated instead of reading both books just

read the AIG level book not just extra work on top of their normal class load.

(Participant 3, interview 2, personal communication, June 5, 2017)

However, it is important to note that some parents expressed concerns about the pullout

program option. One parent stated, "I don't love pull out. I'm sorry to interrupt but I

don't love pull out for that or for resource because I feel like it does interrupt the flow of

the day even if you know it's coming" (Participant 3, interview 3, personal

communication, June 7, 2017). Another parent stated,

But to that comment you know we've experienced with our children at times there

is a tension between leaving the classroom and coming back in and people handle

that situation differently so the kids are caught in that tension. We've talked more

than once about that tension. I'd like to see something done to alieve the children

of the burden of that tension. (Participant 1, interview 3, personal

communication, June 7, 2017)

Finally, several parents expressed that if AIG services were provided through a pullout

model, they did not want their children to miss instruction in math, reading, science, or

social studies. Participant 1 in the first interview session expressed satisfaction in the

way the pullout program was implemented in the 2016-2017 school year at her child's

school. She said, "I like the fact that our kids were pulled out this year but didn't miss

instructional time" (personal communication, June 7, 2017). Participant 1 in the second

interview session also said, "I think if you are in a pull out situation then they shouldn't

be missing instruction they need to have" (personal communication, June 5, 2017).

The second major finding was 69.39% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that

curriculum compacting was an appropriate option for gifted students (Table 2). Siegle (2013) stated, "Curriculum compacting is one of the most common forms of curriculum modification for academically advanced students" (p. 99). The NAGC (n.d.b) website stated the following about curriculum compacting:

> This important instructional strategy condenses, modifies, or streamlines the regular curriculum to reduce repetition of previously mastered material. "Compacting" what students already know allows time for acceleration or enrichment beyond the basic curriculum for students who would otherwise be simply practicing what they already know. (para. 4)

This finding is in alignment with the first major finding that many parents want their children placed in groups based on ability. This second major finding adds to the first one by emphasizing the curriculum should be compacted for the AIG students. Parents also expressed concern about the repetition of content their children already knew as well as concern about the rigor of the work in the regular classroom. For example, a parent stated,

> I think if the teacher kind of mainstreams it all and doesn't differentiate it's not going to be good because they can grow just as much as a lower child can but if they're not met where they are they will not grow. (Participant 3, interview 4, personal communication, June 7, 2017)

Another parent identified the following as a negative aspect of the regular classroom: "Also, requiring them to do work that is below their level" (Participant 1, interview 3, personal communication, June 7, 2017). Participant 5 in interview two added the following two negative aspects of the regular classroom: "I think just the repetition. Over and over the same thing for a week if not longer. Yeah, that's huge and then the

misbehavior" (personal communication, June 5, 2017). Finally, another parent stated,

> So that's where I'm having a problem. Like if you want to be AIG, I mean if
>
> she's qualified AIG and proven through effort, through work, through scores AIG
>
> then let's do this. You bought out of here to buy into more challenging.
>
> (Participant 1, interview 2, personal communication, June 5, 2017)

Curriculum compacting would also be a potential solution for one of the parents who

shared the following frustrations with her child's experience during a focus group

interview:

> She really wants to focus on and we've got discipline problems and kids. And
>
> then you have a meeting and it's well they don't get what your child gets as fast.
>
> I get that but at the same time I give you her for six hours and for five of them it's
>
> repetitious. It's I've finished my work and I'm helping my teacher clean my
>
> classroom today. Are you kidding? Like your EOG is tomorrow. (Participant 1,
>
> interview 2, personal communication, June 5, 2017)

Curriculum compacting would be a potential solution to the problem of AIG students'

repetition of concepts they already know, the desire for rigor, and the need for

differentiation. It would help to ensure that gifted students have the opportunity to learn

something new in school every day (Siegle, 2013).

A third major finding was that parent attitudes about grade skipping as an

appropriate option were mixed (Table 2). The results of the online survey indicated that

57.15% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that grade skipping was an appropriate

option for some gifted students. However, the results of the online survey showed that

40.82% of parents responded "undecided" for the question, "It is more damaging for a

gifted child to waste time in class than adapt to skipping a grade. (Siegle & McCoach)"

(Appendix A). The fact that 40.82% were undecided about this item highlights the uncertainty that parents have with grade skipping. The survey results for this question were surprising to this researcher given the available research that supports content and grade acceleration as appropriate options for gifted students. In fact, according to *A Nation Deceived, Volume 1*, "Acceleration is the most effective curriculum intervention for gifted children" (Colangelo et al., 2004, p. 2). The main concerns about grade skipping expressed by parents during the focus group interviews were the difficulty of adjusting socially and emotionally, the maturity and age of the student, and the future implications when the student graduates early from high school. For example, Participant 2 in the first interview session stated,

> They are going to be in college at 16 to 17 years old. To me there's a lot of emotional growth between a 16 year old and an 18 year old. Now if you think about extra-curricular activities, there's that piece that factors into it. So I think it seriously has to be a one-on-one student decision on if we are going to accomplish it. I'm not saying that I'm against it or for it. But I had a child that that they wanted to skip a grade when she was 4 years old, and I said, "No, you're not doing that to my child. She's the top of her class. She has a grade in school. She never made a B. I still don't think that would have been the best thing for her, because I look at her try out for a sports team now, and if she were a year younger, would she be able to do what she can do? Because she would be competing with girls a year older, if she had ever gotten the opportunity to do what she's setting out to do right now. So I think you have to look at every piece of the puzzle, as opposed to just academics. (Personal communication, June 5, 2017)

Participant 3 in the first interview session also shared, "I feel like the child could be ready intellectually, but to do everything right, according to testing or what they are teaching in the classroom, but maybe emotionally they couldn't handle that skipping that grade" (personal communication, June 5, 2017). On the other hand, another parent stated that she had taught students who had grade skipped, and the students performed fine (Participant 4, interview 4, personal communication, June 7, 2017). In addition, Participant 1 in the first interview session stated,

> As a parent of a child that skipped a grade, it took a lot of conversations, and I had one child that I advocated to do it for, and we couldn't get it through. And I still believe it would have been a good thing for her. And another one that it's probably when you look at educating the whole child, it's the best thing that's happened to her. Not that she still doesn't have her struggles of, "I know this, so I'm not going to do it," and we know that by the F of her report card, in terms of feeling like she's in a place where she belongs, we no longer have that "I stick out in an entirely different place." (Personal communication, June 5, 2017)

A fourth major finding was 65.31% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that the regular school program suppresses the intellectual curiosity of gifted students (Table 3). This finding aligns with previous research. As Colangelo et al. (2004) noted, the lack of engagement and rigor in the classroom are contributing factors to the boredom experienced by advanced learners. Hertberg-Davis (2009) also noted that

> Within the philosophy of differentiation, gifted students are regarded as a diverse lot whose individual talents and needs cannot be met with a single "gifted" curriculum. As such, recommendations for differentiating learning experiences for gifted students include principles of providing not only challenges generally

considered beneficial for gifted students (e.g., greater depth and complexity, adjusted pace, greater independence) but also curricular and instructional modifications geared toward individual student need. (p. 251)

In addition, Peine and Coleman (2010) stated,

Although we have no direct data to that effect, other facts support the notion that gifted children must often be waiting. The range of achievement in a typical grade is more than 5 years (Gagné, 2005). If a teacher is teaching to the median (and we are not arguing for that), many students are unlikely to be at their instructional level. Gifted children arrive in class at the beginning of the school year knowing 40%–60% of the content (Coleman & Cross, 2005). So, it sounds reasonable that children who are gifted would experience recurrent periods of waiting. (p. 221)

The frustration experienced by parents with the waiting in class was evident when Participant 1 in the first interview session stated the following about what was not beneficial in the regular classroom:

The emphasis on struggling children in the classroom. (inaudible) Teachers have to get those students to grade level. And that's their job, so when push comes to shove, they have to pull the struggling group, and then the high (inaudible) activity is not always about them, but that higher group, they need instruction too. They don't come knowing everything. They just know a few things. (Personal communication, June 5, 2017)

Participant 1 in the second interview session also shared her frustrations about the stifling of her child's intellectual growth.

If you're asking me what is detrimental to my child who is AIG is that when you

put her in a group where she's not mixed at least for some portion of the day with

her peers she loses the challenge of conversation. She loses, she becomes the

teacher of stuff she already knows so where is, she's not being challenged and I'm

not for all the time AIG. It's beautiful in theory but when you put my child in a

position especially for my child it is not. She's not that leader yet so you're

asking her to take on a leadership role of children who are, don't get things as fast

as she does. (Personal communication, June 5, 2017)

In addition, Participant 5 in the first interview stated, "And so my question became, if I

bring in a child that's above grade level from the beginning, who's responsible for her for

7 hours a day? And nobody could answer" (personal communication, June 5, 2017).

Participant 1 in the fourth interview session also shared,

I feel like kids go get a book a lot and I don't mind. I don't think that's a waste of

time. It's never a waste of time to read but [name of a teacher] or any AIG

teacher can be a great resource and I think that needs to be part of their job

description is that they need to ask the teachers. Here are the five students I have

in your room or the two students I have in your room, can I help you get them

some material? (Personal communication, June 7, 2017)

A fifth major finding was 83.68% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that

differentiation by the teacher was an effective way to meet the needs of gifted students

(Table 4). In addition, 77.55% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that online learning

programs should be included as part of the gifted education program (Table 4). Finally,

66.21% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that self-paced learning was an appropriate

option for gifted students (Table 4). Differentiation, online learning programs, and self-

paced learning are all options that can occur in the regular classroom. This highlights the

desire that many of the parents had for keeping their children in the regular classroom with different instruction and work provided to them. During the focus group interviews, several parents shared that they wanted project-based learning opportunities, integration of technology, and instruction provided at their children's levels. With regard to differentiation, Participant 3 in the third interview session stated,

> And I think the differentiation comes into play in the regular classroom too. When they have the AIG kids because I think even the regular teacher can encourage different projects within a classroom that sort of speak to the different skill levels of each group and I mean even if you had the little pod seats and you've got four kids and you've got a high or upper high, a middle high, a low, and a really low. They still all have needs and skills and so creating things they can all contribute to. Not necessarily so this kid can carry this kid but so this kid and this kid each contribute in ways that make sense to them. (Personal communication, June 7, 2017)

Another parent stated the following about differentiation for her gifted child:

> But if you're AIG, my differentiated dream world would be a teacher who can say these are my kids that have bought out of regular ed. They don't need regular ed instruction so during my time with them in a reading group I'm doing at their level whether that's the level advanced, it's more comprehensive, it's whatever. But my dream world is they are getting at their need and I think that can come from a teacher who has been AIG certified and understands the levels and what that means. (Participant 1, interview 2, personal communication, June 5, 2017)

Participant 2 in the first interview session further described what she wanted for her child:

> This year has been very ELA-based with a lot of extra language arts type activities. Some children are much more scientifically based, and need to be math problems and just STEM activities, and science and technology, and I feel like type of situation if it is more individually-based to the student, or even groups of students. You know these activities are for the more math-based students and these types are for the more language arts students. (Personal communication, June 5, 2017)

Participant 1 in the fourth interview session also spoke about what technology integration could look like for AIG students. Participant 1 stated, "If there was something new that they wanted to learn it needs to have like your YouTube set, your YouTube video attached to it that says hey this is how you do this and then try it" (personal communication, June 7, 2017). Participant 4 in the first interview session summed up the importance of technology integration when she stated, "Technology is the future" (personal communication, June 5, 2017). The technology integration also enables self-paced learning to occur, which many parents desired based on the survey results (Table 4). Thomson (2010) found that

> Online programs—with their capacity to provide expanded access to advanced courses, as well as a more flexible, more individualized, and more student-centered approach to learning—have the potential to be a particularly good option for serving gifted students. (p. 662)

Self-paced learning would also allow gifted students to explore topics that interest them. In reference to concepts that are taught in class, Participant 4 in the first interview session said, "These kids a lot of times want to read more things about it and learn more things

that go beyond that basic level" (personal communication, June 5, 2017). An example of a gifted student's desire to explore a topic in greater depth was shared by Participant 3 in the second interview session. He said,

> Maybe a little self-guide. Like our daughter seems to be interested in World War II and the Holocaust right now for some reason. That's what she's reading. Or have some opportunity to kind of pick what they want. Say okay you're doing this book you know say why don't you pick up an appropriate book or here's a list of a 100 appropriate books, you know pick what interests you. (Personal communication, June 5, 2017)

A sixth major finding from the online survey results was 75.51% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that the school counselor should provide counseling services and sessions to address the social and emotional needs of gifted students (Table 4). Only two of 49 parents or 4.08% indicated that the school counselor should not provide counseling services and sessions specifically for gifted students. An area that school counselors could assist students with is teaching test-taking strategies to reduce their anxiety. School counselors could also teach gifted students strategies for dealing with stress. For example, Participant 4 in the third interview session shared the following about his son: "If he's taken out during reading then he's stressed out because he's missing that and then has to come back" (personal communication, June 7, 2017). Participant 3 in the third interview session also shared the following: "A lot of kids though are dual diagnosed. Are dual learners. Or what is it? Not dual (Inaudible) Well they're AIG but they may also have a learning disability" (personal communication, June 7, 2017). Moon (2009) found that "twice-exceptional students tend to experience more frustration and lower self-efficacy for school tasks than either average-ability students

with disabilities or high-ability students without disabilities, and both these factors are

associated with underachievement" (p. 275). School counselors could provide valuable

assistance and interventions for these students who are both AIG and have special needs

in other areas. Many parents also expressed the desire for more frequent communication

from school staff about their children and what they are learning, and the school

counselor could help all stakeholders with this communication. Finally, students who

grade skip will face issues related to peer relations, age differences, puberty, and

differentness. Coleman et al. (2015) stated, "At the heart of the gifted child's

understanding of bullying is differentness" (p. 369). The school counselor can provide

counseling sessions for students who grade skip to help them deal with these issues

appropriately. In addition, "High ability students of color and gifted females face

stereotype threats to talent development, which arise from the social context in which

students live and can have negative effects on academic achievement" (Moon, 2009, p.

275). For example, Participant 4 in the third interview session stated the following about

her son and his experience:

> He's an African-American male and he was already smart and I don't know what
>
> level of thinking that people think that you've got it already. He has it. But I
>
> wanted him to be stretched and pulled and challenged. And I did not like him just
>
> sitting over here because he has it. He can write his name and he knows his
>
> alphabet and he knows how to read and he has it and all these other behaviors are
>
> going on over here. And, and I just didn't like it at all. (personal communication,
>
> June 7, 2017)

Coleman et al. (2015) stated, "To be gifted in schools today yields feelings of

differentness, but to be a minority member and gifted seems to amplify sentiments even

further" (p. 366). School counselors can help all students, but especially minority students, deal with the various issues that come with stereotypes, standing out, and being different.

> Counseling interventions attempt to change any personal or family dynamics affecting gifted students' underachievement. Rather than attempting to force gifted students to be more successful, counseling interventions help them decide goals and help reverse any habits that are blocking the road to success. (Hoover-Schultz, 2005, p. 48)

Gifted students need school counselors who are trained on how to support them. "To be a vital part of the future of talent development in the United States, counselors must be prepared to work with gifted individuals" (Colangelo & Wood, 2015, p. 139).

A seventh major finding was 85.72% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that parents should be included in the identification of instructional strategies to be used with their gifted children (Table 5). The parents' strong opinion in this area is supported by previous research studies. For example, Hughes and Rollins (2009) stated, "Sharing information to and from families raises the achievement levels and effectiveness of interventions. Targeted interventions are built upon acquired information regarding interest areas and strengths" (p. 33). Participant 3 in the fourth interview session said,

> I do think the parents um also need to nicely but tell the teacher um I don't think they're being challenged and teachers do hear that but tell us where you think they're not being challenged. You know okay I think the math is too easy. Are you doing something different? (Personal communication, June 7, 2017)

Also, during the fourth interview session, two parents expressed interest in the use of Google Classroom. Participant 4 said, "Or how the Google Classroom is setup, then they

can get a Chromebook and there's activities on that then they can be working on" (personal communication, June 7, 2017). Participant 1 followed this comment with, "And see that's a really good thought. They don't feel like that's extra work and they can decide what they want to do" (personal communication, June 7, 2017). In the first interview session, parents mentioned math competitions, projects, and STEM activities as possible strategies for their AIG students (personal communication, June 5, 2017). Parents in the second interview session mentioned as possible strategies pullout programs, online homework, and placing all AIG students in one class at each grade level with a certified AIG teacher (personal communication, June 5, 2017). Parents in the third interview session said that grouping AIG students in one classroom, flexible grouping in the classroom, not pulling AIG students out of class, rotating classes and allowing AIG students to rotate to an AIG class during the day, a full-time AIG instructor at each school, and projects were possible ways to meet the needs of AIG students (personal communication, June 7, 2017). Parents in the fourth interview session mentioned logic problems, Google Classroom, YouTube videos, science fair projects, grouping AIG students together for a portion of the day, guest speakers, and writing as possible ways to enrich the educational experiences of AIG students (personal communication, June 7, 2017). The strategies and practices identified by the parents during the focus group interviews are supported by research studies. For example, Robinson et al. (2007) stated that educators should do the following: "Use multiple ways of identifying creative talent and what a student needs, and include instruments that measure skills; self-report data on feelings, interests, and aspirations; observations by parents and teachers; and evaluation of productivity and performance" (p. 84).

An eighth major finding was that the data indicated that 73.47% of parents agreed

or strongly agreed that gifted students become unmotivated if they are not challenged academically on a regular basis (Table 6).

> For example, high-ability students in unchallenging educational environments may look problem-free because they are performing above grade level, when, in fact, they are developing maladaptive motivational beliefs that will sabotage their resilience when they encounter more challenging coursework in the future. (Moon, 2009, p. 274)

Participant 1 in the fourth interview session stated the following about challenging gifted students:

> And I think that's just the same if you don't meet a low kid where they are, they're not going to grow but if you don't I mean meet a high kid where they are, they're not going to grow either and they're going to be stagnate and they're going to be bored. (Personal communication, June 7, 2017)

In addition, Participant 4 in the fourth interview session said,

> And I'm always pushing for more math because I just feel like in the at least for my child in the classroom she doesn't get enough. There just doesn't seem enough challenging work for her in the math so those math bowls are really good but any other type of thing that can you know expand their math. (Personal communication, June 7, 2017)

One of the focus group interview questions stated, "What aspects of the regular classroom are not beneficial for AIG students" (Appendix A)? Participant 1 in the third interview session stated, "requiring them to do work that is below their level" was not beneficial (personal communication, June 7, 2017). In alignment with these two parent comments, Siegle (2013) stated,

Even if students believe they have the skills (self-efficacy) to do well in school, if

they do not see their schoolwork as meaningful, they will not complete it. Many

gifted students do not see the work they are doing in school as meaningful for

several reasons. They may already know much of what is being presented to

them (Reis et al., 1993). Generally, gifted students are able to process

information faster and at a much higher level than other students (Davis et al.,

2011). They may also find the work they are given is not intellectually

stimulating (McCoach & Siegle, 1999). They also often have specific passion

areas they enjoy exploring (Renzulli & Reis, 1997), but are seldom given

opportunities to pursue their interests in school. (p. 76)

Participant 1 in the first interview session said the following was not beneficial in the

regular classroom:

The emphasis one struggling children in the classroom. (inaudible) Teachers have

to get those students to grade level. And that's their job, so when push comes to

shove, they have to pull the struggling group, and then the high (inaudible)

activity is not always about them, but that higher group, they need instruction too.

(Personal communication, June 5, 2017)

Coleman et al. (2015) stated, "This clash of gifted students' traits and typical schooling

results in the lived experience being described as having components of waiting for

others, not being challenged, academic resistance, and sometimes being bullied" (p. 366).

The ninth major finding was that 97.96% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that

parents, the school staff, and the student had to work together to successfully reverse

underachievement (Table 6). It is important to note that zero parents disagreed with the

statement in the survey that the parents, student, and school staff should work unitedly to

reverse underachievement. According to Rubenstein et al. (2012), "Students' perceptions of school and home events, the nature of teachers' and parents' expectations and support, and the patterns of interaction among students, teachers, and parents have an impact on academic attitudes and behaviors" (p. 680). Furthermore, Siegle (2013) indicated that

> Students' beliefs about how well they can perform are first and foremost influenced by how well they have performed in the past. Success breeds success. Significant adults in children's lives can increase students' confidence by helping them recognize past accomplishments. (p. 89)

This can happen through collaborative efforts between parents and school staff. An example of an intervention is Rimm's Trifocal Model for reversing underachievement which focuses on collaboration and communication between the family and the staff at school (Siegle, 2013). The fact that 97.96% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that they could work collaboratively with school staff and their children to reverse underachievement supports the approach in Rimm's Trifocal Model.

> "Not only do consequences of underachievement have societal effects, but underachievement may also hamper the individual's life pursuit of self-actualization" (Rubenstein et al., 2012, p. 678). Communication between parents and teachers can help to redirect gifted students who are underachieving. Yeager and Dweck (2012) stated,

> Our research and that of our colleagues show that if students can be redirected to see intellectual ability as something that can be developed over time with effort, good strategies, and help from others, then they are more resilient when they encounter the rigorous learning opportunities presented to them. (p. 306)

The strategies and approach to providing support for an underachieving gifted student could be discussed during parent-teacher conferences. For example, Participant 3 in the

first interview shared the idea of having parent-teacher conferences with the parent, AIG teacher, and regular education teacher so the parent knows the AIG teacher and regular teacher are collaborating (personal communication, June 5, 2017). Specifically, she said, "And you know, if we don't have any feedback. (inaudible) parent/teacher conferences so that you know that the two teachers were working together collaboratively" (personal communication, June 5, 2017). Participant 3 in the third interview also said,

> I have been so thankful for the teachers who have come to me and have said I know your child can do better than this. Those teachers who are in it for the right reasons and those teachers who really love it. (Personal communication, June 7, 2017)

Collaboration and communication between parents and teachers are essential in order to help gifted students realize their potential.

Additional Major Findings Elicited During Focus Group Interviews

The first additional major finding came from parent responses to the question about parent workshops specially targeted toward supporting AIG students. The focus group interview question was, "What would you like to see included in the parent workshops, specifically for supporting AIG students?" Robinson et al. (2007) stated the following:

> Assume that parents, teachers, and administrators all want what is good for the children. Do not assume that everyone has all the information needed to make the best decisions. Provide a way for parents to get resource materials and access to professionals and other parents: open a small library and meeting room at school; offer workshops, speakers, Web site, or other clearinghouses for information and communication. (p. 11)

In addition, Garn et al. (2012) stated,

> Parents of children with gifts and talents face additional parenting challenges that are less commonly faced by parents of average-ability learners, and school psychologists may face the challenge of how to address these issues without having had any substantial amount of training related to the needs of these families. For example, parents of students with gifts and talents may have questions such as: how do you simultaneously acknowledge your child does possess higher levels of ability than other children, while also stressing to your child the importance of effort in learning?; how do you cultivate your child's talent without over-managing his or her development?; and how do you set appropriate goals for your child while maintaining a flexible approach that is responsive to your child's individual differences? (p. 656)

Several responses from parents during the focus group interviews aligned with these research findings by Robinson et al. (2007) and Garn et al. (2012). Participant 2 in the first interview responded,

> Maybe workshops that help you identifying where your child excels, because like was mentioned earlier with the AIG, when they pulled out here, which came out in general, even if you have kids that place on math, you can have them all together in the same room, but they're not going to have the same skills. Not all of them placed because of the same reasons. (Personal communication, June 5, 2017)

Another parent stated,

> I want a workshop on what they're doing. Like here's what your year is going to look like. Here's how your year is going to map out. Here's what we're going to

do um just so I can know what questions to ask. What's coming up next? You know we're teaching our kids to be the owner of their own schedule and the owner of their own homework. But at the same time we're still trying to guide them so if I had a workshop on here's what your AIG kid's year in for us 6th grade will be. You know here's your AIG kid's year in 5th grade. Here's what you can expect in the first 9 weeks, the second 9 weeks. I'd be all about that workshop. (Participant 1, interview two, personal communication, June 5, 2017)

Participant 3 in the second interview session added, "I'd like to have one for the summer. Like what could we do this summer to keep them building or growing?" (personal communication, June 5, 2017). In addition, the possible idea of having guest speakers was shared. Participant 3 in the fourth interview session said,

I think like you said the syllabus and breaking it down too like during the first nine weeks we're going to do this and if any parent is knowledgeable. Okay if it's a math thing if any parent is knowledgeable and can come and help us or share strategies. (Personal communication, June 7, 2017)

Furthermore, Participant 4 in the fourth interview session stated,

It takes time for the teachers to come up with like we're not expecting [AIG Teacher's Name] to come up with all of these things you know but she could even like in a parent meeting or something just ask if anybody you know is familiar with that that would want to come in. I know my husband is also an engineer and he would love to be able to do that with the kids. And I think you would have other parents interested as well that would take the time to help come up with activities. (Personal communication, June 7, 2017)

Also, Participant 2 in the first interview session expressed the desire for a workshop on

technology, and Participant 5 in the second interview session wanted to obtain online information through a workshop (personal communication, June 5, 2017). In addition, Participant 3 in the second interview session said the following about the nomination process for AIG services: "I think us parents don't even know what the process is" (personal communication, June 5, 2017). Therefore, a workshop about how students qualify for AIG services would be beneficial. In summary, workshops that address the desires of parents and their needs would help enhance the educational experience of gifted students and reduce misunderstandings and misconceptions about AIG services. Wiskow et al. (2011) stated, "Unfortunately, many within the education community do not understand the issues inherent within gifted education and thus any advocacy should focus on effective public relations efforts to correct misconceptions (Besnoy, 2005)" (p. 23). Workshops would also help to enhance the communication between parents and school staff.

The second additional major finding that resulted from several comments made by parents during the focus group interviews was the desire for an improvement in the frequency and quality of communication between the AIG teacher and parents as well as between the AIG teacher and the regular classroom teachers. Participant 4 in the fourth interview session said,

> I think there could be more communication between the parents and the teacher so that we know what's going on and I the Google Classroom I think is a good idea but I don't know how well it was used this year maybe with the I know my child didn't use it that much at home and I don't even know for sure if she was supposed to or not. I would always ask her is there something you're supposed to do on Google Classroom tonight and she'd say no and she's a very good student

(unintelligible) I think that could be a very good resource for them especially

because they could even communicate with AIGs in other schools as well and

things like that so I think that could be improved. And just making sure that the

parents know kind of what's going on. (Personal communication, June 7, 2017)

Participant 2 in the second interview session also indicated that she would like for parents

to know more about the AIG services that are provided. She said,

I think they should have like set thing maybe quarterly that reaching out. The

communication piece is big. I can remember just speaking to her probably like

maybe at EC seminars and just at the beginning of the year and that's about it um

but I think the communication piece is definitely big as far as just letting us know

what is going on. (Personal communication, June 5, 2017)

Participant 3 in the fourth interview session indicated that a syllabus from the AIG

teacher that outlined what the students would be learning would be beneficial (personal

communication, June 7, 2017).

With regard to communication between the regular classroom teacher and the

AIG teacher, a parent stated the following:

Just from experience, and again from having one child that's already in middle

school, and having one still here that's in the program, it almost seems like there's

a disconnect between the AIG teacher and the regular classroom teacher. Maybe

the two of them have to be working closely with each other because each of them

will have feedback from different things for the child, so they can both see what's

best for the student, you know. (Participant 3, interview 1, personal

communication, June 5, 2017)

Another parent expressed the desire for improved communication through parent-teacher

conferences where both the regular classroom teacher and AIG teacher attended. Participant 3 in the third interview session also said the following about her children and the importance of communication:

> I mean they will drive you crazy but every teacher who has found that little kernel of something in them has always talked about it with my husband and me and has always said you know this is where we need to channel and so I think that communication is the biggest thing and not all teachers want to do that. (Personal communication, June 7, 2017)

The importance of communication between the school staff and parents in order to support the learning of gifted students was emphasized by Participant 2 in the second interview session when he said, "I think get a program established and stick. Do what you say you're going to do. However, you're going to run AIG, run it that way and keep the parents in the loop" (personal communication, June 5, 2017).

Communication between parents and teachers is a critical piece to both preventing underachievement and reversing underachievement with gifted students. The online parent survey results showed that 97.96% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that the parents, school staff, and student had to work together to successfully reverse underachievement. In alignment with the parent survey results, Hughes and Rollins (2009) found that communication between families and school staff increases the achievement levels and effectiveness of interventions for gifted students. This result from the online survey is indicative of how critical communication between stakeholders is for a gifted student's achievement.

Limitations

There were some limitations to this research study. First, parent satisfaction with

the current practices for gifted education and parent satisfaction with their children's AIG teacher may have impacted the ideas and opinions expressed by the parents during the focus group interviews. Second, parent awareness of research-based practices for gifted education and the options that were available for their children may have impacted the results of the focus group interviews. Third, the school system in which the research study was conducted had recently approved a new AIG plan for the school years 2016 to 2019. Parent awareness of the new AIG plan as well as their awareness of the previous AIG plan for the school system may have impacted the opinions expressed during the focus group interviews. Fourth, parent participation in the research study was voluntary, so only the opinions and ideas of those who chose to participate in the interviews informed the researcher's identification of themes. Finally, the researcher was the principal of one of the elementary schools in the school system which may have had some influence on the responses of AIG parents who had children at his school.

Conclusions

This study was significant because few researchers had studied what parents wanted in gifted education programs. "Today, nearly a century and half after the first efforts to study parents of the gifted, it appears that surprisingly little progress has been made in this area despite well over a century of formal study" (Jolly & Matthews, 2012, p. 260). Progress was made through this research study. Parent survey responses and interview responses provided in this study moved the needle of progress a little more toward creating effective learning environments and programming for gifted students. Zadina (2014), a neuroscientist and former educator, stated,

> I don't think there is a profession more noble than teaching. All teachers can
> think of students whose lives were changed as a result of their impact. In some

cases, we know that we have even saved a life by altering the course of someone's life or changing his or her worldview. As if that were not enough, we now know that what we teachers do can change our students' brains, affecting the rest of their life in many ways. (p. 1)

There were several priorities this researcher gleaned from the online parent survey results and the responses of parents during the focus group interviews. The following items were identified as priorities for parents of AIG students.

1. The parents want better communication to occur between the AIG teacher and parents as well as between the AIG teacher and the regular classroom teachers. Parents want to know what the AIG teacher is teaching their children. Specifically, a desire for a syllabus from the AIG teacher was mentioned as a strategy to enhance communication and understanding (Participant 3, interview four, personal communication, June 7, 2017). The lack of communication between these stakeholders can contribute to gifted students' underachievement and improving it can be a key factor in reversing underachievement. Communication through newsletters, sending completed work home to parents on a regular schedule, a grade for AIG class if students are pulled out of the regular classroom, and giving parents of AIG students opportunities to volunteer or serve as guest speakers were mentioned as possible strategies. In addition, parent-teacher conferences, phone calls, and other media were mentioned by parents.

2. Parents of AIG students do not want their children to miss instruction in reading, math, science, or social studies if they are pulled out of the regular classroom to receive AIG services.

3. Parents of gifted students want their children to do different work, not extra work. Parents want their children to truly have differentiated instruction and tasks. The parents expressed interest during the focus group interviews of having their children engage in different work that might include project-based learning, competitions, STEM activities, the use of technology, integration of student interests and passions, options, writing, and self-paced learning. In addition, parents want their gifted students' work to be rigorous instead of repetitious and below their levels.

4. Many parents like grouping gifted students for portions of the school day through a pullout model coupled with giving gifted students opportunities to work together in small groups within the regular classroom.

5. Parents care deeply about the relationships between their children and the teachers. The regular classroom teachers and the AIG teacher were critical to the child's success. Parents indicated during the focus group interviews that the teacher can cause underachievement to occur if he/she is disorganized; does not plan specifically for gifted students; does not communicate well; and does not foster positive, motivating relationships with his/her students.

6. Grade skipping is a student-by-student decision based on factors like age, maturity, and academic ability. The online parent results showed that parent attitudes toward grade skipping were mixed. Many parents during the focus group interviews expressed concern about the future implications of grade skipping. The concerns were mainly non-academic ones such as dealing with issues related to peer relations, puberty, not being able to drive a car at the same time classmates would have that opportunity, sports, and college life. If

skipping a grade becomes an option for their children, parents want teachers to be included in the decision-making process.

7. Parents would benefit from workshops that included topics such as the nomination process for AIG, resources to use at home, what the students are learning and doing with the AIG teacher, and online learning.

Powerful Practices for School Administrators

This researcher uncovered three powerful practices that would benefit gifted students if implemented by school administrators. Balls et al. (2011) stated, "Keeping the attention on 'moving the achievement needle' upward for each student is a major lever in achieving success at the school level" (p. 230). The following practice recommendations could help move the "achievement needle" further for gifted students.

1. Enhance the quantity and quality of the information that is shared with parents about the nomination process for AIG services, what the students learn through AIG services, grade skipping, and support strategies. Workshops conducted by school staff specifically for parents of gifted students could provide an avenue for the sharing of this information.

2. Provide training to AIG teachers and regular classroom teachers on co-teaching and collaborative instructional planning.

3. Provide effective professional development for AIG teachers, school counselors, and regular classroom teachers on how to meet gifted students' social and emotional needs as well as instructional strategies for gifted students.

The comments of parents during the focus group interviews made it clear that they wanted more frequent communication with the AIG teacher and higher quality

information shared with them. The parents want to know what their children are learning

and how they can help support them at home and school. They also want to understand

the nomination process as well as the strategies and practices that work for gifted

students. It was apparent to the researcher during the focus group interviews that the

majority of the parents had not received much information about what their students

learned with the AIG teacher, and the information they had received about the

nomination process when their children were identified as AIG was difficult to interpret

and understand. Research studies that focus on how to make the nomination process and

IQ test results understandable to parents of gifted students would be beneficial as well.

Workshops for parents of gifted students could include information about the nomination

process, how to provide support for gifted students at home, technology, and explanations

of areas where gifted students excel.

In education, co-teaching is a method of collaborative instruction that has been

utilized to serve students who are identified as Exceptional Children (EC). Typically, an

EC teacher and a regular classroom teacher will co-teach in the regular classroom. The

EC teacher will plan lessons with the regular classroom teacher, teach portions of each

lesson, and provide support to EC students in the class. The collaborative instructional

planning enables the EC teacher to assist the regular classroom teacher with

differentiating instruction and tasks as well as modifying assignments and grading based

on student Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). Similarly, the AIG teacher and regular

classroom teacher could collaboratively plan instruction, and the AIG teacher could teach

portions of each lesson and assist the regular classroom teacher with differentiation of

instruction and tasks to meet AIG student needs. Further research on co-teaching models

for AIG and regular classroom teachers would be extremely beneficial because AIG

students would no longer miss instruction in math, reading, science, or social studies while they are pulled out for AIG services. One of the parents' main complaints during the focus group interviews was their children missing instruction they needed in the regular classroom while they were participating in an AIG class. In order to implement co-teaching, principals would need to ensure that AIG students are clustered into a small number of classes. According to Pierce et al. (2011),

> Cluster grouping refers to the practice of identifying the top five to eight academically talented (or intellectually gifted) students at a grade level and placing them in the same classroom at that grade level with a teacher best suited and qualified to work with gifted students (Rogers, 2001). This form of grouping makes sense in urban and other settings in which differentiation for a specialized group of students must be a regular part of their everyday programming so that achievement gains are possible for these gifted students as well as for the rest of the class. (p. 572)

If there are more than eight AIG students in a grade level, you could cluster AIG students in two classrooms. In addition, Pierce et al. (2011) found that differentiating instruction and cluster grouping gifted students had positive gains for all students. Finally, O'Neil (2012) stated,

> There are many areas to consider as you determine why your district should implement co-teaching. Over the past decade, federal legislation and subsequent state and local requirements have provided a platform for supporting the use of co-teaching. Other common rationales for implementing co-teaching are to expand the continuum of special education services, improve program continuity and intensity, increase instructional options for all students, support response to

intervention initiatives, improve student achievement and social outcomes, reduce

the stigma for students with disabilities, and provide increased support for

teachers. (Cook & Friend, 1995; Murawski & Swanson, 2001; Rea, McLaughlin,

and Walther-Thomas, 2002; Vaughn, Elbaum, Schumn & Hughes, 1998;

Murawski & Hughes, 2009). (pp. 2-3)

Just like EC students, AIG students are gifted all day long, which is why educators need

to do more than simply provide a pullout program (Rakow, 2012). AIG students and

regular classroom teachers would benefit from this same co-teaching approach in gifted

education.

Future research that leads to the design of effective professional development for

AIG teachers, school counselors, and regular classroom teachers on how to meet gifted

students' social and emotional needs as well as instructional strategies for gifted students

would be impactful. "Contrary to popular belief, these students will not differentiate

instruction on their own and must be guided by the professional expertise of highly

trained teachers to reach their highest capabilities" (Manning et al., 2010, p. 145).

According to Rakow (2012), there are not many teacher preparation programs that

provide future teachers with knowledge about how to differentiate for gifted students. In

addition, Colangelo and Wood (2015) noted that trained counselors were few in number.

Colangelo and Wood stated, "As advocates for counseling the gifted, we are frequently

asked by parents and educators where they can find counselors who are trained, certified,

or experienced in working with gifted individuals. Unfortunately, these counselors are

hard to find" (p. 139). Teachers and counselors who are appropriately trained would be

able to meet the needs of AIG students more effectively.

These three powerful practices would enhance the quality of the educational

experience of gifted students. The powerful practices would also lead to better parenting for a multitude of parents with gifted students. Communication between stakeholders through workshops, parent-teacher conferences, and electronic avenues; implementation of a co-teaching model; and providing professional development to educators are key strategies that school administrators could implement immediately to impact the achievement of gifted students.

Recommendations for Future Research

This research study uncovered many aspects of gifted education that would benefit from further research in the future. The following recommendations for future research could move the "achievement needle" further along for gifted education.

1. Research is needed to design a more comprehensive method of tracking the achievement and growth of gifted students in school.

2. Research is needed to design an evaluation instrument specifically for AIG teachers.

3. Research is needed on the effectiveness of online learning programs for gifted students, especially as technology and internet become more accessible and complex.

4. Research is needed on the effectiveness of the strategies and practices with different subgroups of students.

In this researcher's opinion, the academic growth of AIG students is not tracked and shared with the general public with the same level of transparency and emphasis as struggling students. "In the more than 40 years since the issuance of the Marland Report in 1972, federal policy and legislation for gifted education has remained at the margins of educational funding when compared to other funding priorities" (Jolly & Robins, 2016, p.

147). Also, according to Chu and Myers (2015): "Although American public schools demonstrate a concern for all types of students, the gifted population continues to be marginalized through neglect and prejudice" (p. 50). "In addition, state-level funding for gifted and talented programs is on the decline, which, coupled with small local school budgets, puts more gifted education services at risk" (Olszewski-Kubilius & Clarenbach, 2012, p. 8). Adequate funding for gifted education in every state will not happen unless researchers determine a more transparent, understandable approach to communicating the growth and achievement levels of gifted students to the general public and legislators.

Currently, it is difficult for principals to effectively evaluate the performance of AIG teachers. For example, in North Carolina, the same evaluation instrument is used for regular classroom teachers and AIG teachers even though their roles are very different. One potential avenue for future research would be the development of an evaluation instrument for AIG teachers that is based on the 2010 Pre-K-Grade 12 Gifted Programming Standards established by NAGC (2010a, pp. 1-8). There are six standards, and they include learning and development, assessment, curriculum planning and instruction, learning environments, programming, and professional development. The six standards also include overview descriptions, expected student outcomes, and evidence-based practices (NAGC, 2010a). This researcher believes that the evidence-based practices in the six standards could become indicators in an evaluation instrument for AIG teachers, and the expected student outcomes could become accountability measures for AIG teachers. The evidence-based practices contained within the six standards specifically address communication with parents and providing resources to parents (NAGC, 2010a), which were requests made by the parents during the focus group interviews for this research study. For example, one of the evidence-based practices in

standard one is, "Educators collaborate with families in accessing resources to develop their child's talents" (NAGC, 2010a, p. 1). Also, within standard five, one of the evidence-based practices is, "Educators regularly engage families and community members for planning, programming, evaluating, and advocating" (NAGC, 2010a, p. 7). Further research into an evaluation model for AIG teachers would benefit AIG teachers, principals, parents, and students.

Finally, further research into online learning programs for gifted students would be beneficial, especially since K-12 students are digital natives and technology continues to become more and more ubiquitous. As Balls et al. (2011) pointed out, "The old model of pedagogy – teacher-focused, one-way, one-size-fits-all – makes no sense to young people who have grown up in a digital world" (p. 141); however, there has been little research conducted on gifted students and utilizing online programs to effectively educate them (Thomson, 2010). "Gifted online programs are the wave of the future for students requiring more rigor in their studies" (Blair, 2010, p. 30). As gifted online programs are developed and become more available, further research in this area will be critical to ensure that gifted students receive quality, standards-aligned, and rigorous instruction and tasks.

Summary

This research study added to the body of knowledge that previously existed for gifted education by examining the attitudes, opinions, and desires of the parents of gifted students. The results of the online parent survey and the responses of parents during the focus group interviews are invaluable for current and future educators. This research study is one of the few in existence that specifically sought what parents of gifted students wanted for their children's education. Education leaders and policymakers need

to do more of what this researcher did, which is to meet with parents and listen to the ideas, strategies, and desires they have for education. Kaplan (2003) stated, "Determining the appropriate pedagogy for gifted students depends on many factors such as the nature of the content or subject matter, attributes and needs of the student population, and context" (p. 165). This research study demonstrated that parents have valuable information and insight regarding the attributes and needs of their children. The research study also demonstrated that the parents of gifted students know what type of education they want their children to receive. As the results of the online parent survey indicate and the comments made by parents during the focus group interviews demonstrate, AIG teachers, school counselors, and principals could exponentially improve parents satisfaction and increase gifted students' achievement by (a) informing parents about what their children are learning; (b) asking for parents to describe the strengths, weaknesses, interests, and skills of their children; (c) asking parents if there are strategies that work with their children; (d) addressing the social and emotional needs of gifted students through counseling and other interventions; (e) increasing the collaboration between AIG teachers and regular classroom teachers in order to differentiate instruction and tasks appropriately for gifted students; (f) designing a service delivery model that ensures AIG students do not miss reading, math, science, or social studies instruction in the regular classroom; and (g) creating options for acceleration for students who demonstrate mastery and have parents who support it. An evaluation instrument specifically for AIG teachers would enhance the instruction, collaboration, and professional growth of AIG teachers; and it would also provide a tool for principals to use to coach the AIG teachers and determine their effectiveness. Finally, co-teaching has the potential to be a game changer for gifted education, and it is an area that

definitely needs further research.

> According to Olszewski and Clarenbach (2012),
>
> It is critical to support eager, bright minds as early as possible by providing
>
> content-based enrichment in preschool and early elementary school and by
>
> identifying high achievers early and providing programming and services,
>
> including challenging content in academic domains, that help keep them at the top
>
> levels of achievement as they progress through school. (p. 19-20)

Rather than waiting until an intervention like Rimm's Trifocal Model or the Achievement

Orientation Model is needed because a gifted student has become stagnant in his/her

academic achievement or disenchanted with tasks that do not tap his/her interests or

challenge him/her cognitively; educators, parents, and students could implement the same

tenets of the Rimm Trifocal Model or Achievement Orientation Model in a proactive

manner. Communication between the gifted student and his/her AIG teacher, regular

classroom teacher, and parents about the gifted student's level of self-efficacy, the

meaningfulness of tasks, past performance, and environmental perceptions could prevent

underachievement and ensure that the gifted student experiences an appropriate,

challenging, and engaging education. It truly "takes a village" to raise and educate each

child. As the online survey results indicated, 97.96% of parents agreed or strongly

agreed that the parents, school staff, and student had to work together to successfully

reverse underachievement. The same percentage of parents would most likely indicate

that the parents, school staff, and gifted student could work together to prevent

underachievement.

> "Risk-taking is a staple of successful schools. It is inherent in every decision they

make and every initiative they pursue" (Balls et al., 2011, p. 234). We need principals

who are risk takers and who are willing to implement strategies and scheduling that ensure gifted students progress at their rate of standards' mastery. We need AIG teachers, regular classroom teachers, and school counselors to communicate frequently and collaborate regularly in the design of effective instruction and support systems for gifted students. We need school leaders and teachers who view parents as oracles of information regarding student strengths, weaknesses, interests, and needs. According to Robinson et al. (2007), "In all cases, children benefit from having their parents involved in their education by being interested in their homework, investigating topics of interest together, communicating regularly with teachers and administrators, and championing their children in scholastic arenas" (p. 9). Our society needs its gifted students to reach their potential academically. "Downward trends for gifted learners are concerning because these students could have bright futures as national leaders, entrepreneurs, inventors, and influencers" (McClarty, 2015, p. 3). Gifted students have the potential to become the scientists who find cures for diseases, the leaders who foster global peace and economic security for all people, the artists and musicians whose artwork and compositions bring joy to people around the world, the doctors who provide excellent care, the lawmakers who create legislation that moves our society in a positive direction, and the teachers who will educate future generations. At a minimum, every student deserves to make a year's worth of academic growth each year in school. Every student is unique and begins each school year at varying levels of mastery of curriculum standards in prior grade levels, but each student is capable of growing and learning. This is no different for gifted students. "Gifted children, like all children, have the right to learn something new every day; they also have the right to learn something new in school every day. Unfortunately, this is not always the case" (Siegle, 2013, p. 144). Just like

other children, gifted students deserve to make a year's worth of academic growth at each grade level.

> Children with special abilities should not be made to sit around waiting while the other kids catch on to what they already know. You would never see this in the development of athletic talent, why would we let intellectual talents languish undeveloped? (Cross, 2007, p. 50)

Gifted students deserve challenging, engaging instruction and tasks. They deserve the opportunity to research topics that interest them and create original products.

In many ways, the future prosperity of our society is dependent upon the quality of the education our gifted students receive.

> We know with risk there is a chance for reward or a possibility of failure. It is too often the latter that motivates us to seek the path that minimizes or eliminates the prospect of failure and thus limits our potential to be all we can be as a person and as a school. Risk aversion is the enemy of school reform. (Balls et al., 2011, p. 234)

Will educators, parents, and policymakers work together to reform schools and make them work for gifted students? Thousands of gifted students' lives and futures are depending on it.

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Appendix A

Parent Survey

Thank you for your participation in this parent survey. Your participation is completely voluntary.

Listed below are a group of statements pertaining to gifted education. Please rate your feeling to each statement by placing an X in the appropriate column.

SA=Strongly, A=Agree, U=Undecided, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree

Survey Statements	SA	A	U	D	SD
1. The best way to meet the needs of the gifted is to put them in special classes. (Siegle & McCoach)					
2. It is more damaging for a gifted child to waste time in class than adapt to skipping a grade. (Siegle & McCoach)					
3. Most gifted children who skip a grade have difficulties in their social adjustment to a group of older students. (Siegle & McCoach)					
4. When skipping a grade, gifted students miss important ideas (they have "holes" in their knowledge). (Siegle & McCoach)					
5. The gifted waste their time in regular classes. (Siegle & McCoach)					
6. The regular school program stifles the intellectual curiosity of gifted children. (Siegle & McCoach)					
7. A greater number of gifted children should be allowed to skip a grade. (Siegle & McCoach)					
9. Gifted students who are in classes with students of average and low ability levels for academic subjects are not able to advance at their own learning rate. (McCulloch)					
10. Differentiation is an effective way to meet the needs of students who are gifted. *Differentiation is a teaching technique where the regular classroom teacher modifies the pace, level, or type of instruction to match the ability, interest, or learning style of students. Differentiation is not assigning gifted students more work to keep them occupied while other students finish the regular assignments. Rather, differentiation provides gifted students flexibility to learn material at a faster pace or a deeper level.* (McCulloch)					
11. Allowing gifted students to receive special instruction outside of the general education classroom once a week is an effective method to meet the needs of gifted students. (McCulloch)					

12. Gifted students often become unmotivated if not challenged with rigorous academics on a regular basis. (McCulloch)					
13. Acceleration (grade skipping) is an appropriate option for some gifted students. (McCulloch)					
14. Students will perform better if placed in groups based on ability. (Maresca)					
15. Children of higher ability are not challenged in mixed ability classrooms. (Maresca)					
16. Curriculum compacting (acceleration in a subject-area) is an appropriate strategy to meet the needs of gifted students. (McCreary)					
17. Parent nominations should be included as part of the identification process for gifted education. (McCreary)					
18. Online learning programs for gifted students should be included as part of the gifted education program. (McCreary)					
19. The school counselor should provide counseling services and sessions to address the social and emotional needs of gifted students. (McCreary)					
20. Parents of gifted students would benefit from workshops on how to support their gifted child in school and at home. (McCreary)					
21. Placing all of the gifted students in a grade level in the same class on a full-time basis with a teacher who has specialized training to work with gifted students is an appropriate option. (McCreary)					
22. Self-paced learning is an appropriate option for gifted students. *Self-paced learning means that the teacher identifies materials and tasks that are appropriate for the students, determines how the student will demonstrate mastery, and provides assistance to the student as needed (Morrison et al., 2013).* (McCreary)					
23. Parents should be included in the identification of instructional strategies to be used with their gifted child. (McCreary)					
24. Underachievement is common among gifted students. (Hyatt)					
25. In order to successfully alter underachievement, it is necessary for parents, school and student to work unitedly. (Hyatt)					

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Appendix B

Validation of Study

Validity Evidence for Survey

Siegle, Del <del.siegle@uconn.edu>

Thu 3/16/2017 11:13 AM

To:Ryan McCreary <rmccreary@gardner-webb.edu>;

I enjoyed talking with you about your dissertation research. You are investigating an important and interesting topic. I agree with your committee that supplementing your interviews with a few survey items will enhance your dissertation. As we discussed during our meeting, I see the statements you developed as falling under the following constructs:

1. Attitudes about grouping students
2. Attitudes about accelerating and grade skipping students
3. Attitudes about the usefulness of the regular classroom
4. Attitudes about differentiation
5. Attitudes about parental involvement in the nomination process
6. Attitudes about underachievement

Each of these constructs represent areas of concern to parents and educators. As I noted when we met, I would remove the word "some" from Statement 13 since the degree of agreement is already built into the five-point scale you are using.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to provide content (face) validity evidence for your survey. Good luck with the research.

-Del

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