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Introduction

The majority of school corporations across the nation have a disproportionate number of African American students with exceptionalities. Disproportionality means that a group within a category is being represented more or less than what would be expected from the proportions in the general population. Disproportionate in this case means there is a higher proportion of African American students in Special Education than there is in the general student population (Green, 2005). Statistics show that minority children are referred for Special Education more often than white children and behavior is often a referral reason (Gottlieb, Gottlieb, & Trongone, 1991; Hosp & Reschly, 2003; Skiba et al., 2008). The purpose of this study is to determine whether teacher attitudes or student self-sabotage play a role in the underrepresentation of African American students in Gifted/Talented programs and the overrepresentation of African American students in Special Education.

Method

The participants were teachers from South Bend Community School Corporation. The class range includes kindergarten through twelfth grades. Teacher survey links, cover sheets, and study information sheets, were emailed to each kindergarten through 12th grade teacher in the South Bend Community School Corporation. All teachers in the corporation were sent an email with a link so that teachers could access the survey and remain confidential when they responded. Teachers completed surveys via Survey Monkey. The surveys were tallied according to those that were returned. The identifiers on the teacher survey included race, years teaching, level of education, and type of class taught. The survey asked attitude questions concerning general school attitudes of the students and referral process attitude questions of the teachers. The survey contains 23 Likert questions, and a place to write out further opinions for three questions.

Discussion

The survey was not able to answer the question of why African Americans are overrepresented in Special Education and underrepresented in Gifted and Talented programs locally or nationally. This survey does not show a definitive answer to the question of whether African American students or their parents are choosing to not be included in Gifted and Talented programs or whether African American students are knowingly neglecting their education, however based on the teacher's answers it appears that teachers feel that some students are choosing to avoid the G/T classes/curriculum/label. Also it appears many teachers feel G/T classes are not equally accessible to African American students and it seems that most teachers feel that attitude is crucial in both students and teachers in determining either G/T or special education. Most of the responses to the multiple choice questions' answers were split fairly equally in opposing viewpoints. None were unanimous, and very few answers had an obvious majority in either direction. There have been many studies which indicate poverty is a recognized factor in increased special education referrals however this study was not able to focus on that aspect.

Results

I am presenting distributions of answers rather than means because the pattern of responses was the most interesting aspect of the data.

Item	Responses of 52	Strongly Disagreed	Disagreed	Agreed	Strongly Agreed	
1. amount instruction to refer to G/T was perfect	48	31.3% (15)	54.2% (26)	14.6% (7)	0	
2. confident in decision to refer to G/T	48	16.7% (8)	37.5% (18)	39.6% (19)	6.3% (3)	
3. referral process for G/T is too subjective	46	2.2% (1)	39.1% (18)	45.7% (21)	13% (6)	
4. student's attitude affects placement into G/T	47	6.4% (3)	8.5% (4)	61.7% (21)	23.4% (11)	
5. race/culture may be predictor of G/T placement	47	23.4% (11)	38.3% (18)	29.8% (14)	8.4% (4)	
6. teachers attitude impacts referral for G/T	47	4.3% (2)	21.3% (10)	53.2% (25)	21.3% (10)	
7. students purposely avoid consideration for G/T	47	14.9% (7)	36.2% (17)	40.4% (19)	8.5% (4)	
8. African American students less likely to be referred for G/T	47	21.3% (10)	46.8% (22)	27.7% (13)	4.3% (2)	
9. all students regardless of race, given equal opportunity for referral for G/T	47	10.6% (5)	27.7% (13)	44.7% (21)	17% (8)	
10. there needs to be specific criteria for special education referrals	49	2% (1)	6.1% (3)	51% (25)	40.8% (20)	
11. referral for special education is too subjective	51	17.6% (9)	45.1% (23)	29.4% (15)	7.8% (4)	
12. race/culture may be predictor of special education placement	51	31.4% (16)	45.1% (23)	17.6% (9)	5.9% (3)	
13. teacher's attitude impacts referral for spec. educ.	51	7.8% (4)	27.5% (14)	45.1% (23)	19.6% (10)	
14. African American students more likely to be referred for special education	51	23.5% (12)	35.3% (18)	29.4% (14)	11.8% (6)	
15. student's attitude affects placement into spec. educ.	50	8% (4)	30% (15)	50% (25)	12% (6)	
How Many Times in the past 10 years have you...?	Responses of 52	None	1 time	2 times	3-4 times	4+ times
16. referred students for G/T programs	49	44.9% (22)	4.1% (2)	6.1% (3)	18.4% (9)	26.5% (13)
17. referred African American students for G/T	48	54.2% (26)	14.6% (7)	6.3% (3)	12.5% (6)	12.5% (6)
18. referred Caucasian students for G/T	49	57.1% (28)	4.1% (2)	12.2% (6)	12.2% (6)	14.3% (7)
19. referred students for Special Education	49	18.4% (9)	6.1% (3)	8.2% (4)	16.3% (8)	51% (25)
20. referred African American students for Special Education.	48	31.3% (15)	16.7% (8)	12.5% (6)	10.4% (5)	29.2% (14)
21. referred Caucasian students for Special Education	49	26.5% (13)	8.2% (4)	14.3% (7)	14.3% (7)	36.7% (18)
22. had a parent disagree with recommendation for placement in/testing for Special Education	46	52.2% (24)	19.6% (9)	8.7% (4)	10.9% (5)	8.7% (4)
23. had a parent disagree with recommendation for placement in/testing for G/T program	47	93.6% (44)	0	6.4% (3)	0	0