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A study of gifted education in Coachella, California

Tara Rae Anderson Wuertz

A STUDY OF GIFTED EDUCATION IN COACHELLA, CALIFORNIA

A Thesis

Presented to the

Faculty of

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In Partial Fulfillment

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in

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ABSTRACT

California, along with many other states are struggling with public education. One struggle that states are having to face is the education of their gifted students. Without federal law mandating what services education supplies to their gifted population every state varies.

California law states that identified gifted students must be provided 200 minutes of differentiated instruction a week. The law does not state how these 200 minutes must be met. This study examines how schools, in the Coachella Valley, are identifying and meeting the needs of their gifted students and if the schools are meeting the requirement of the law.

According to current research, a number of ways should be used to identify gifted students. In the past, identification was mostly based upon standardized scores which have been criticized as not qualifying minority groups. After students are identified there are a number of ways to meet the needs of gifted students.

This project is designed as a resource that districts and schools may use to develop a quality gifted program. A gifted program needs to start with numerous ways of

identification, differentiated instruction and end with a review of the program.

Teachers can be the most influential person in a child's life. Educators need to make sure they have access to tools for a successful program.

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I would like to thank all who helped me complete this project:

To my family, who taught me perseverance.

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One can accomplish anything if they have support of good people.

Thank You,

Tara Anderson Wuertz

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the Problem

Throughout history there have been debates about who will be educated and how they will be educated (Davis & Rimm, 1998). President George Washington proposed that the nation have a national university where the country could train its political leaders(Spring, 2004). This was seen, by some, as an elitist attempt at education because only the wealthy could afford a college education(Spring, 2004). Thomas Jefferson then proposed that we have an educational system that provides everyone an equal chance to develop abilities and rise in the social hierarchy (Spring, 2004). In the fashion of Jefferson's idea public schools were born.

Time has shown there are problems with the idealistic system that strives to give everyone an equal chance. Not everyone is born with an equal capacity of learning. The civil rights movement encompassed students with disabilities in the right to an equal education (Spring, 2004). In 1974, the United States Congress passed Public Law 94-142. In this law it is stated that all children must be provided an equal opportunity to education (Spring,

2004). Every child that has a learning disability is mandated by law to have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) that is reviewed yearly. Also, in this law, there were stipulations that teachers be trained to work with students who are handicapped. No provisions have been mandated for those students who are gifted with an accelerated capacity for learning. The Council for Exceptional Children believes this law paved the way for Public Law 95-561, passed by Congress in 1978, which defines the needs of gifted and talented students (Parke, 1989).

> (The gifted and talented are).....children and, whenever applicable, youth who are identified at the preschool , elementary, or secondary level as possessing demonstrated or potential abilities that give evidence of high performance capability in areas such as intellectual, creative, specific academic or leadership ability or in the performing or visual arts and who by reason thereof require services or activities not ordinarily provided by the school (U.S. Congress, Educational Amendment of [P.L. 95-56, IX (a)]

On January 8th, 2002, President George W. Bush passed the " No Child Left Behind Act". This act focuses on students whose skills are below grade level. This law does

not provide any support for those at grade level or individuals that are gifted. An estimated 3 to 5 percent of our students nationwide are gifted (Viadero, 2004). To qualify as gifted on intelligence tests would require a score of 125 to 130 range (Mulhern,2003). To be profoundly gifted, where a child may be seen as a prodigy would be around 150 or higher. Gifted students will learn more quickly and want more depth into topics than will the average ability students (Stevens, 1977). Gifted students will also show a greater independence and initiative than regular ability peers (McCarthy, 1977).

Despite Congress defining who the gifted are and requiring they receive special services, many of our brightest students are falling through the education system's cracks. Gifted students are usually our forgotten students, several are bored and unengaged in the classroom (Winner, 1996). Many gifted students also face depression due to lack of intellectual peers and under stimulation (De Lacy, 2004). According to the National Association for Gifted Children,(NAGC) 32 of our fifty states have mandates to identify gifted students, 37 states provide some type of gifted legislation and programs, while 12 states mandate it under their special education laws (Fine, 2001). The states' different attitudes and approaches toward gifted

education leads to inconsistent levels of funding for each states gifted program (Fine, 2001). In 1992, only 2 cents from every 100 dollars spent on education went toward gifted education. The nation spends far more on education for children with disabilities than students with gifts (Winner, 1996).

When states do require gifted education programs there are a number of ways that this education is handled (Winebrenner, 2001). One option for education is a pull-out program (Parke, 1989). Pull-out classes are often organized such that a gifted student would leave their class once or twice a week to be grouped with other gifted students to work on problem solving, projects, games, field trips and other activities (Parke, 1989). The problem with this programming approach is these classes offer little continuity and little depth (Winner, 1996).

Another option for gifted education is the gifted student is left within the regular education classroom to cooperatively learn with others in a mixed ability setting. Research shows leaving a gifted student inside a regular classroom does not have positive effects upon gifted students (DeLacy, 2004). The opposite is true when gifted students are clustered together. Significant gains can be made when grouping gifted students together and offering

differentiation, while no gains are made with mixed ability grouping (De Lacy, 2004). Clustering allows gifted students to be together, in a classroom, because research has demonstrated they do learn better in homogeneous groups (Winebrenner, 2001). Further, advocates of gifted grouping point to the fact that learning will not be hindered for the average or below average student (Yecke, 2003). One way to bring gifted students together is through magnet schools (Davis & Rimm, 1998). A magnet school will have the ability to focus more on one area of interest or may even be designed to specifically address the needs of students of superior ability (Parke,1987). Magnet schools are another option for increasing interest and reducing drop out rates (Davis & Rimm, 1998). A drawback is they are usually only found within bigger cities (Davis & Rimm, 1998).

Acceleration is still considered another viable option for the education of the gifted (Heinbokel, 2002). Acceleration will either move a student ahead in school by skipping grades or pushing them ahead in a certain area of study (Heinbokel, 2002). Many believe that the student will not be socially or emotionally stable due to peers being older in acceleration but these beliefs are unfounded in research (Heinbokel, 2002).

In 1993, the Secretary of Education, Richard W. Riley stated that our most gifted students "have special needs that are seldom met" and warned the nation that our neglect of gifted students will make it impossible for America to compete in the global economy (Jost, 1997). The problems that gifted education face are numerous. The National Research Council states that teachers will need many hours of specialized training to carry out their recommendations for the appropriate education of the gifted (DeLacy, 2004). Teachers who do not receive special training can be apathetic or even hostile toward gifted students, while teachers who have training are more supportive (Jacobs, 1972). Many teacher credentialing programs simply address teaching the gifted as a chapter in the class of teaching children with special needs. Critics state that the majority of gifted education programs are often predominately comprised of the middle to upper class students arguing that these programs are of an elitist type education (Jost, 1997). Research has also shown that many teachers do not make the significant changes in their accommodations for the gifted students (DeLacy, 2004). Despite all the obstacles of gifted education, there is an overwhelming amount of evidence that shows these children will not simply succeed on their own (DeLacy, 2004).

Statement of the Problem

California school systems that receive state aid for gifted education are required to provide 200 minutes of special services a week for gifted students under California Education Code 52206 (Jost, 1997). In the Coachella Valley, all districts identify gifted and talented students. Based on the information above this study will address whether the districts are following the best educational pathways for our gifted students. The following issues will specifically addressed. How do we identify our gifted students? What are the programs we are using to meet their needs? Are we in compliance with the 200 minutes of differentiated instruction for our gifted students? How can districts improve their service of the gifted?

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Defining Giftedness

Defining *gifted and talented* is both complicated and important (Davis & Rimm,1998). In 1972, the federal definition of giftedness was released by the United States Office of Education. By 1988 the law had been revised and still reads today:

> The term "gifted and talented students" means children and youth who give evidence of high performance capability in areas such as intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership capability, or in specific academic fields, and who require services or activities not ordinarily provided by the school in order to fully develop such capabilities.

The importance of the federal definition is that it not only recognizes academics and intellectual ability, the definition looks at creativity, artistic abilities and leadership (Davis & Rimm, 1998). The Center on Disabilities and Gifted Education reports that unfortunately, only 37 states have gifted legislation. Out of those 37 states, 26 states have full or partial mandates to serve gifted students.

Intelligence has been an area of study for years and gifted education has been evolving for many years. In 1904, Alfred Binet was asked to develop a way to predict which youngsters would succeed or fail their younger years in city schools in Paris (Barkdale, 2000). In 1916, a Stanford psychologist, Lewis Terman supervised the modification and Americanization of the Binet test, subsequently the revised version came to be known as the Stanford/Binet IQ test (Barkdale, 2000). In 1920 Lewis Terman began a longitudinal study of 1500 gifted individuals (Barkdale, Muson , Greenburrg & Sahagian, 2000). This group was and still in the largest and most studied group of gifted individuals in history. Terman's research team member found that except for a few students, superior children grow up to be superior adults (Terman, 1930). Superior adults as defined by Terman (1930) are those students who are "greater in reading, language usage, arithmetical reasoning, science, literature and the arts". Nonetheless, Terman's study discovered that gifted students have trouble adjusting socially. He found that in order to adjust they need to have every opportunity to develop a "well-balanced personality" (Terman, 1930). The higher the IQ the more acute the problem of social adjustment (Terman, 1930). Interestingly, a finding which

is still supported, is that gifted children are more trustworthy and honest, often to the point of appearing tactless (Terman, 1925).

Gifted education received public attention after Russia launched Sputnik in 1957 (Jost, 1997). Russia's scientists had outperformed American scientists which created a strong push for education in the sciences and mathematics for gifted students (Jost, 1997). However, not until 1974 was the first legislative action for gifted education passed, which gave 2.56 million dollars of federal money toward gifted education (Gallagher, 1975). This sum only designated about one dollar per identified gifted child, but it did create the National Office of the Gifted and Talented (Barkdale, Muson, Greenburg &Sahagian, 2000).

Controversies

Opponents of gifted education have long argued that homogeneous grouping for the gifted is elitist and can be seen as racist (Yecke, 2003). Much of the time low socioeconomic children and children of color are under identified (Gardner, 1992). James Gallagher,(2000) an advocate for gifted education, points out that Americans have a strange love-hate relationships with individuals that are gifted . Americans admire outstanding accomplishment with athletes and entertainers because as a whole these

individuals are seen to have worked hard for their talents. Giftedness is seen as a trait that does not have to be worked on hard because one is born with it (Burgoon &Miller, 1972). Many districts see gifted education as not worth spending money upon because it is believed those students will "make it on their own" (Baker, 2001). Or, schools fall under the assumption that bright students, with no specific provisions, will raise the performance of others in the classroom (Mulhern, 2003).

Support of Gifted Education. These arguments aside, there is stronger evidence and rationale for appropriate education of the gifted (Parke, 1989). The first argument for gifted education is the most intellectually gifted students do not having positive comment about their educational experiences (Winner, 1996). Overall, 25% of all children drop out by the time they are 16. When we look at gifted children, between 18-25% of gifted students drop out (Robertson, 1991). The percentage of gifted dropouts is argued to be higher because of the under-identification of the gifted (Renzulli, 2000). These students often drop out because they are bored and unengaged in the classroom (Winner, 1996). Regular assignments are unchallenging to the gifted students and studies are finding they are less prepared than their gifted counterparts from other countries

(Ross, 1993). Potentially, this has a great effect on our economy because neglect of these students makes it impossible for us to compete in a global economy (Riley, 1993).

Identification of Students

California as a state has held various interpretations of gifted legislation. Under the guidelines of Assembly Bill 2313, special classes for the gifted were dissolved and programs are now supposed to be integrated within the regular school day with supplemental and differentiated activities provided. Under Section 52209, school districts may employ instructors, supervisors and other personnel to provide necessary equipment and supplies. Section 52212 states that if a district would like to receive state money for G.A.T.E programing they must provide a program and an application for approval that will be reviewed every year or every three to five years based on the strength of the proposed plan. In this plan the district must name who will be responsible for the implementation, identification of students , and development of the program. In Assembly Bill 2201 Section 1, it is stated that the intent of these laws are to insure that all students, including the highly talented, receive a free and appropriate public education.

This legislation was also created to provide services and opportunities for the gifted. Unfortunately, these laws do not mandate that all school districts provide a plan, only districts that apply receive state money.

The most vocalized argument against gifted education is that it is elitist and exclusionary (Renzulli &Reis, 1991). Many studies have found that minority students are over-represented in remedial programs and under-represented in gifted programs (Maker, 1993; Gardner 1992). Furthermore, Hispanics and African Americans are under-represented and Asians are over-represented in gifted education (Robinson & Clinkenbeard, 1998). During the last decade culturally diverse groups have started to receive more attention in gifted education and research has been completed on how to increase the numbers of minorities identified as gifted (Clasen, Middleton &Connell, 1994). Often the cause of the exclusion of minority students has been the use of the most traditional definition of giftedness, a narrow concept of intelligence and the use of standardized assessment procedures (Cummins 1991: Maker 1992). Research suggests that low socioeconomic and minority students perform better on tasks that emphasize fluid over crystallized intelligence (Mills & Tissot, 1995) and spatial reasoning over verbal and mathematical (Naglieri, 1999).

Criterion for identifying gifted students have been changing. Identification in the past has relied solely on IQ tests (Maitra, 2000). Lately, there has been a significant increase in using multiple identifiers for giftedness. According to Feldhusen, and Hoover (1984) a perfect system has not yet been developed but the field is continuously moving closer to better identification. Many programs are moving away from primarily relying on teacher nomination and IQ tests to include multiple criteria for identification (Maitra, 2000). Teachers have been found with some tendency to favor well dressed and well behaved students in identification for gifted programs, often overlooking underachievers, disruptive students and unconventionally creative students (Davis &Rimm, 1998). Four other identifiers utilized in the multiple measures approach to identification include: 1. evidence of achievement, 2. creativity, 3. parental recommendation and 4. peer evaluation (Maitra, 2000).

Evidence of achievement generally consists of looking at the quality of the work a student has done, for example test scores and/or previous grades (Davis &Rimm, 1998). The problem with just looking at achievement is that it may vary from one school to the next and underachievers will not be identified (Maitra, 2000). Creativity is often thought to

be related to divergent thinking but that is not all that is looked for (Maitra, 2000). The Torrance Test for Creativity is the most commonly used creativity test (Davis &Rimm, 1998). This tests includes verbal and nonverbal aspects of creativity which are scored by fluency, flexibility, originality and elaboration (Torrance, 1966). Fluency is the number of questions answered while flexibility is the number of ideas or approaches to the problem (Davis & Rimm, 1998). Originality is the based on whether the professional grading the test has seen the answer before. Elaboration is the number of details or embellishments added to the figure (Davis &Rimm, 1998). In 1984, Torrance and Ball developed an updated scoring guide that uses 18 measures of creativity yet it is said to expedite scoring. Another option for identification may also be parental recommendation through surveys, checklists or questionnaires. Parents know their children in ways that may not be evident in school. Utilizing parent identification can round out the identification process (Davis &Rimm, 1998). The most common problem with parental identification is that parents may overestimate ability or underestimate ability in certain areas (Maitra, 2000). Peer nominations are seen as reliable but also should be used with other identifiers (Maitra, 2000). Peers often identify who they see as the smartest in

the class by watching the students they spend time with (Davis &Rimm, 1998). This technique is used in about 1 out of 4 programs today and is found to be especially powerful for identifying minority students (Cox, Daniel and Boston, 1985).

Characteristics of Gifted Students

Generally, gifted students learn more quickly than other students (Mulhern, 2003). Gifted students are often able to comprehend information at greater depth than their classmates (Mulhern, 2003, Parke 1989). Gifted children often show more independence and initiative (Mulhern, 2003). Also, they can transfer general knowledge more easily from one area of study to another (Mulhern, 2003, Parke 1989). Renzulli offers a three ring model of giftedness, where the rings contain the following classifications: above average ability, task commitment and creativity (1978). Where the circles overlap in the middle and an individual meet all three categories is when an individual would be considered gifted (Renzulli, 1978).

Different Models of Education for the Gifted. In California, 200 minutes of differentiated curriculum is to be provided to gifted students by law (Jost, 1997). How this instruction is to be delivered is not specified. There are many models of gifted education that may be employed.

Much of the time gifted students are accommodated within the regular education classroom. Differentiated education is essential for all students because all students have unique needs and styles of learning (Parke, 1989). Differentiation is particularly necessary if gifted students needs are to be met in the regular education classroom (Winebrenner, 2001).

There is growing support for inclusion in the classroom of gifted students because of limited funds and the limited amount of G.A.T.E certified teachers (Gallagher, 2000). Also, many are in favor of inclusion because ability grouping is under attack as a tracking system (Jost, 1997). In the regular classroom teachers of gifted students may also incorporate acceleration. Acceleration can be accomplished many ways. Some gifted students will be partially accelerated experiencing acceleration in certain subject areas within their regular education classroom (Coangelo & Davis, 1991).

Some gifted students will be advanced to the next grade level receiving full acceleration in all subject areas (Parke, 1989). Advancement such as this is one of the most economical approaches to gifted education (Cornell, Robinson, Shore and Ward 1991). The problem is often preparation for teachers dealing with gifted students in the

regular education classroom is limited (Winner, 1986). Acceleration alone will not address the qualitatively different learning and affective needs (Winner, 1986). A students that skips a grade will save taxpayers on the years skipped (Heinbokel, 2002). Educators and parents may sometimes oppose full acceleration, with concern for the child's emotional and social development (Southern, Jones &Ficus 1989). Many studies have addressed this concern and there has not been support showing the child to be effected in their social or emotional development (Southern & Jones 1991). Research supports that gifted students often get along better with older children who are closer to their emotional, social and intellectual levels (Heinbokel, 2002). The strongest indicators of success in acceleration will be the students interest in accelerating and showing the ability to accelerate (Gagne, 1986). Parent support is recommended but interestingly parent involvement with the acceleration process does not affect achievement (Gagne, 1986).

Another option for the education of the gifted are pull out programs (Parke, 1989). These programs have not been supported very favorably by research (Winner, 1996). Pull out programs usually consist of the students leaving their classrooms once or twice a week, for a few hours, and

grouped with other students of similar abilities working on problem solving, games, special projects and field trips (Winner, 1996). Findings indicate that little specific considerations are taken for the individual students needs in pull-out programs (Colangelo &Davis, 1991). Furthermore, these programs are critiqued for using curriculum that would benefit all students (Colangelo &Davis, 1991). A concern of this kind of program is that the home-room teacher feels that the student's needs are being met and do not take extra provisions when these students are back in the regular classroom (Parke, 1989). Another argument against pull-out programs is that students miss the work while they are out of the classroom and often have to make it up doubling the work load which may cause stress (Parke, 1989). One final criticism against pull-out programing is the programs offer little continuity and little in depth study (Winner, 1996).

The enrichment model of gifted education is designed to provide the student with curriculum that has been enhanced through breadth and depth modifications (Davis &Rimm, 1989). The goal of the enrichment model is to offer the student with curriculum that is greater in depth and breadth within the regular classroom (Coangelo &Davis, 1991). Renzulli's triad model has been implemented widely with positive

results (Parke, 1989). The three types of activities are general exploratory activities, group training activities, and individual and small group investigation of real world activities (Renzulli, 1977). The first two types of activities are designed to benefit all students with the third being appropriate for gifted students (Renzulli, 1977). With general exploratory activities the student will become aware of what topics or areas of study in which they are interested (Parke, 1989). Group training activities are concerned with the development of thinking and feeling processes, this area is important for continuation to the third level (Renzulli, 1977). Individual and small group investigations of real problems are where students use methods of inquiry to arrive at solutions (Renzulli, 1977). This gives the student an opportunity to take on the role of a professional in the field of interests (Parke, 1989).

Another popular practice for meeting the needs of gifted students is clustering. Clustering, if implemented properly, places 5 to 10 gifted students together in a classroom (Davis & Rimm, 1998). The argument for clustering is that a teacher will build challenging programs for a group rather than just one or a few (Parke, 1989). The clustered gifted students are integrated into the classroom but have opportunities for differentiated learning and

materials (Parke, 1989). Another strong argument for clustering is, without clustering, a gifted student will pretend to be less capable to fit in the regular classroom (Winebrenner, 2001). By grouping students together they have the advantage of being in contact with other students like themselves having their social/emotional needs better met (Winebrenner, 2001).

Limitations of Gifted Education Practices

The National Resource Council recognizes that teachers need many hours of specialized training to successfully implement gifted education. The National Research Center of Gifted Education has repeatedly found that teachers do not make significant enough changes to accommodate gifted students. The most often presented solution to education of the gifted is to have sophisticated personnel who are given special preparation for presenting and organizing services and curriculum, unfortunately this often does not happen (Gallagher, 2000). Most training for teachers consists of a summer workshop, a three day conference, or a brief staff development experience, which hardly would qualify a specialist (Gallagher, 2000). Professional staff development training is important because teachers who have been trained in gifted education tend to be more supportive

of gifted students and programs, whereas teachers who are not trained may be apathetic and in some cases hostile (Jacobs, 1972). Another problem with untrained teachers, is they often under identify students or identify only the students who test high (Borland, 1978).

The arguments against gifted education are many. Students who are gifted are often perceived as those who can make it on their own without any help (Baker, 2001). Districts often argue that the money is not well spent on trained personnel to service just a few students (Baker, 2001). Money will often be spent on the needs of average or below average students who are perceived as needing help to achieve equally (Colangelo & Davis, 1991). Yet, recent research suggests that only with proper stimulation of the brain will the unique genetic potential of each individual be achieved (Clark, 2001). Barbara Clark (2001) asserts that learning must be relevant and challenging to a student. To optimize education, educators must plan curriculum to meet the needs of each individual child. Data suggests the potential of brain development is essentially unlimited for most individuals (Clark, 2001). Children are not born gifted but with a vast potential with over a billion brain cells (Clark, 2001). Emphasis in research is now turning to the interaction of environment and genetics in developing

intelligence (Gallagher, 2002). There is increasing evidence that students are testing at the higher end of IQ tests, these high scores are greater than would be predicted by normal curve distribution (Silverman, 1997). This skew at the top suggests that environment is influencing scores and it is possible to increase IQ scores by improving the environment (Gallagher, 2002).

Solutions

In 1975, President Ford signed into law Public Law 94-142 which provides a free, appropriate and public education for every student between the ages of 3 to 21. Many advocates argue under this law gifted students should be protected (Kirk & Gallagher, 1989). It has also been argued that Individual Assessment Plans (IEP) can be used to develop appropriate educational plans for the gifted as they are in special education (Lewis & Kanes, 1979, Parke, 1989). Adding to protection under the law, teachers need to be specially trained and experienced to work with gifted students (Renzulli, 1981,). Research has found that students are most likely to name a teacher or a parent who most influenced their live (Bloom, 1985). Again, trained teachers are better identifiers of gifted students and are more supportive (Borland 1978, Jacobs, 1972). Materials provided should cover broad levels of interests0

with breadth and depth (Cushenberry & Howell, 1974). Last, appropriate curriculum leaves students with feelings of accomplishment and growth (Parke, 1989).

CHAPTER THREE

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The goal of this project will be to look at the present state of gifted education in the Coachella Valley. The current practices for identification, programs and teacher's educational training for teaching the gifted will be examined. Also to be studied will be how teachers feel about their current gifted program at their school and what their district could do better for support in the gifted program. After collecting data from schools around the valley, statistics will be provided on current practices.

The data will be analyzed to suggest what practices could be improved in the Coachella Valley. First, schools will examined on whether or not the schools have identified students based on national averages of 3-5%. Second, identification practices of schools will be identified to ascertain if more than one way of identification is used and what is used most often. Third, this study will investigate how many teachers have been G.A.T.E. certified and who is teaching identified gifted students.

After the data is collected, it is the goal of this project to create a model that would be useful for schools. Suggestions will be made regarding improvements

in identification practices, programs offered and teacher training that can accommodate and be implemented within the budget crisis that most school districts are facing.

CHAPTER FOUR

DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The Coachella Valley schools serve a varied population of students. Sixty-three percent of the population is Caucasian, twenty-nine percent of the population is Hispanic while the other eight percent is African American, Pacific Islander and Native American (United Way, 2002). The central Coachella Valley is considered urban. The urban population schools consist of sixty-three percent of the students are caucasian. In urban schools the average amount of English language learners is eight percent. Also within the cental valley, twenty-five percent of the students receive free or reduced lunch. In the rural areas of the Coachella Valley the schools serve a ninety to one hundred percent Hispanic population. Ninety-nine percent of the rural students qualify for free and reduced lunch. Poverty is more rampant in the rural areas with unemployment at 17.2 percent compared to 2.2 percent in the urban areas (California State University San Bernardino, 2000).

The project began with a questionnaire mailed out to the 37 elementary schools in the Coachella Valley that have a gifted program. Two elementary schools were not mailed a

questionnaire since they did not have gifted programing in place. There are three districts in the valley. Desert Sands Unified School District (DSUSD) serves the urban and central valley. Coachella Valley Unified School District (CVUSD) serves the rural areas of the Coachella Valley. Palm Springs Unified School District (PSUSD) serves mostly an urban population. All schools were contacted to gather the names of the school site G.A.T.E. coordinators. Twenty three of the thirty seven G.A.T.E. coordinators replied. The questionnaire (Appendix A) asked the coordinators to identify with what school district they were employed. It also asked them how many students attended their school and how many were identified gifted. The table below shows the data from the school districts. The average percentage of gifted identified ranges from 3 to 5 percent on the conservative side with up to 15 percent of students who can benefit from a gifted program (Parke, 1989).

Table 1. Number of Identified Students Per District

Name of School District	Total Number of Students	Identified Gifted Population in District	Percent of population identified gifted
PSUSD	5770	127	2.2%
CVUSD	7568	393	5.19%
DSUSD	4954	879	17.74%

Table 2. Number of Certified Teachers Per District

School District	Number of Students Identified Gifted	Number of G.A.T.E. Certified Teachers	Teacher to Students Ratio	Number of Teachers Working Toward Certification
PSUSD	127	10	12/1	6
CVUSD	393	15	26/1	1
DSUSD	879	62	14/1	9

The survey asked the coordinators how their district and school site identified gifted students (Appendix A). Palm Springs used the Otis-Lennon School Achievement Test (OLSAT) as the main identifier for the gifted program along with standardized test scores. A few coordinators stated that they also used teacher and parent survey. The OLSAT is a test that is supposed to predict achievement in students in school. A concern about the OLSAT is the test uses verbal thinking and reasoning skills. For an area such as the Coachella Valley where many students are English language learners (ELL) this test could exclude this population. The use of one test may explain the lower rate of identification for this school district. A teacher from PSUSD wrote,

> ...use more creative means of testing to identify students, not just I.Q.tests. Many students are G.A.T.E. material but don't make it because of testing (Anonymous, 2005).

Often the cause of under-identification is the use of a traditional definition of giftedness along with using standardized test (Cummins,1991, Maker,1992). The Raven's Progressive Matrix is a non-verbal assessment that has been successfully used for identifying gifted students without relying upon verbal skills (Winebrenner, 2001). Coachella

Valley Unified and Desert Sands both used the Raven as an identifying tool. Both of these districts use a matrix for identification (Appendix B,C) that takes into consideration state testing scores, parent checklists, teacher checklist and leadership ability. The two districts differ in creativity qualifications. Desert Sands requires a portfolio for visual arts gifted identification. For performing arts gifted identification the district requires an audition. Coachella Valley does not identify for visual and performing arts but the district gives points on the matrix for creativity which is judged by the current teacher and the site coordinator.

Next, the survey asked, once the students are qualified, how are their educational needs met? All but two school coordinators responded that they clustered their gifted students at the school sites. Few sites did mentioned that they differentiated instruction within the classroom. Clustering gifted students without differentiation does little to enhance their education and research states that many teachers do not make significant enough changes in their differentiation (De Lacy, 2004) (Appendix, D,E,F). One site had a pull out program for each child to meet the 200 minutes of differentiated instruction required by the state. Another site had a

G.A.T.E. program every Tuesday for a half hour during lunch for the coordinator to meet with the students about their Certificate of Merit project. Five schools in the valley offered enrichment programs before or after school. CVUSD and DSUSD offered G.A.T.E summer school. CVUSD will bus students to two different sites for a self contained summer school program.

When asked what the gifted coordinators wanted the schools and districts to do better to support them the answers were insightful. Funding was a concern for many of the coordinators and funding issues encompassed all the other concerns. A teacher from DSUSD responded:

> The State/District needs to allocate adequate funding to meet needs of identified students. This is the second year funds have been reduced. We would like to offer more after school enrichment classes and competition activities such as Odyssey of the Mind (Anonymous, 2005).

Another major concern was the lack of a differentiated core curriculum. The state of California requires schools to adopt certain curriculums if they are to receive state funding. This curriculum was written to raise underperforming schools up to state standards (Sacramento Office of Education). Many coordinators felt that using

this curriculum was not challenging their gifted students even when differentiation was being used.

> I would like the District to allow the G.A.T.E. teachers to use a different reading/Language Arts program. The one we use now is mandated by the state and is repetitive and does not offer depth and breadth. I have been trained in Junior Great Books which is a great program for deeper thinking (Anonymous, 2005).

Another response:

> The state adopted program is very repetitive and scripted. I feel the gifted students don't need all the repetition. They are bored (Anonymous, 2005).

Other teachers replied they would like to see more curriculum choices in the areas of math, science and social studies.

Coordinators from the Coachella Valley also expressed a concern about uncertified teachers with G.A.T.E. clusters. There is great need for a teacher to be trained to work with gifted students. Without this training teachers may hold attitudes that are negative or hostile toward gifted students (Jacobs, 1972). One teacher replied that the district "should wait until 6th grade to identify" students for the gifted program. This could be detrimental

to a child's development. After years in school without having a child's needs met they often become frustrated which can lead a future of dropping out (Renzulli & Park, 2000). Teachers who are educated in working with gifted students become more aware of the gifted population needs and have more supportive attitude toward gifted students (De Lacy, 2004). Another coordinator responded that they would:

> ...like to see teacher's attitude change about students abilities to learn. Many (teachers) do not expect enough from our bright students (Anonymous, 2005).

Not all sites required teachers who have a G.A.T.E. cluster to be certified. Another theme throughout the responses was the need for parents to become more knowledgeable about the G.A.T.E. program at the school site and what the district provides. The web site for CVUSD does not provide information in Spanish for parents of gifted students. Considering the high numbers of English language learners and the Hispanic population of this district they are not considering their primary population. Teachers from all districts would like to see informational meeting held throughout the year to discuss the programs and building relationships with the parents.

Lastly, many of the coordinators expressed the want of an organized program to be offered to all gifted students. A coordinator expressed the need to:

> ...offer structured and organized after school and summer programs in the areas of interest for G.A.T.E. students. We are not given support for the programs and need to come up with our own program to try to interest all students (Anonymous, 2005).

Overall the coordinators expressed the need for qualified gifted instructors. They also listed the need for differentiated programs for their students. There needs to be an organized program throughout the valley. Clustering needs to happen when not enough students are available for a self contained program.

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE

Coordinator Questionnaire

1. What school district do you work for?_____

2. How many students attend your school?_____

3. How many are identified GATE?_____

4. How many teachers at your school are GATE certified?____

5. What do you use at your school to identify and qualify students for GATE?

_____

_____

6. After a student is qualified, what does your school offer as programs to meet need?

_____

_____

7. What do you feel that your school could do to better meet the needs of gifted students?

_____

_____

8. What do you feel your district could do to better meet the needs of gifted students?

_____

_____

Is there anything you would like to add?

_____

_____

APPENDIX B

IDENTIFICATION MATRIX ONE

Identification Matrix

□ California Standards Test Scores between 500-600 in 1 area (Specific Academic Identification) Write area of identification score on line

_____Total Reading _____Total Language _____Total Math

□ California Standards scores between 400-600 in two areas (High Achievement Identification) Write scores in the lines

_____Total Reading _____Total Language _____Total Math

□ Raven Matrix 95% of higher (Intellectually Gifted Identification)

□ ELL From starting at CELDT level 3 or below to redesegnation in two years (High Achievement Identification)

□ Raven from 90-95% and/or California Standards Score between 400-600 in 1 area (High Achievement Identification)

_____Total Reading _____Total Language _____Total Math

AND two of the Following

□ A: Grade point average 3.6 of above
□ B: Documentation of leadership ability
□ C: Teacher/Parent or significant adult recommendation

□ Visual Arts- Student Portfolio

□Performing Arts- Audition

Comments:_____

_

Recommendation:

_____ Admitted to Program _____Not Admitted to Program

APPENDIX C

IDENTIFICATION MATRIX TWO

IDENTIFICATION MATRIX

Student_____ Grade_____

Referring Teacher_____

Possible Points	3	2	1	Total
STAR Test LA.____ Math____	90-99%	80-89%	70-79%	
Raven	95-99%	90-94%	70-89%	
Teacher Inventory	105-95	94-85	less than 84	
Parent Inventory	105-95	94-85	less than 84	
Grade Point Average A=1pt.				
Leadership Abilities 1pt.				
ELL Achieved Fluency in 2 Years				
Creative Ability Observed by Teacher	6pts.	5pts.	4pts.	

Free or Reduced Lunch Parents Speak Language Other than English .5pts				
Total Points. More than 12 Qualifies				

Recommendation:

____Admitted ____Not Admitted

Date_____

APPENDIX D

READING CONTRACT

Contract For Permission to Read Ahead

Check each statement to show that you agree with it. Then sign the contract.

☐ I will not tell anyone anything about the story until everyone in the group is finished reading it.

☐ I will not participate in classroom prediction activities.

Student Signature_____

Teacher Signature_____

Above contract modeled from Susan Winebrenner.
Winebrenner, S. (2001). Teaching gifted kids in the regular classroom. Minneapolis, MN. Free Spirit Press.

APPENDIX E

INDEPENDENT STUDY CONTRACT

Personal Independent Study Contract

Read each condition. Write your initials beside it to show you understand and agrée to abide by it.

____ I will spend the expected amount of time working on my project.
____ I will complete all required forms and keep them at school.

____I will leave my project to participate in designated whole class activities without arguing.
____I will keep a daily log of my project.

____I will share my progress to the class in brief reports at regular intervals with the class. Reports will be 5-7 minutes long. Each will include a visual aid or a question for the class.

Working Conditions:
____ I will be present in the classroom at the beginning and end of class.

____ I will not bother anyone or call attention to the fact I am doing different work than others in the class.
____ I will keep this paper in the classroom at all times.

____ I understand that I may keep working on my project as long as I follow the requirements above.
Student Signature_____

Teacher signature_____

Above contract modeled from Susan Winebrenner.
Winebrenner, S. (2001) Teaching gifted kids in the regular classroom. Minneapolis, MN. Free Sprit Publishing.

APPENDIX F

LEARNING CONTRACT

Learning Contract

For: _____

Student's Name_____

√	Page/Concept	√	Page/ Concept	√	Page/Concept
___	_____	___	_____	___	_____
___	_____	___	_____	___	_____
___	_____	___	_____	___	_____

Extensions Options: _____

_____

_____

Student Ideas _____

_____

_____

Working Conditions _____

_____

_____

Student Signature:_____

Teacher Signature:_____

APPENDIX G

RECOMMENDED READING

Recommended Reading About Gifted

Learning About Giftedness

Betts, G. & Kercher, J. (2000). Autonomous learner model. Greeley, CO: Alps Publishing.

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Social and Emotional Issues

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Curriculum and Instruction for the Gifted

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APPENDIX H

ENRICHMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Summer Enrichment Camps

Astrocamp
P.O. Box 1360
Claremont, CA. 91711
Telephone: Stacy Garrett 800-645-1423
Web Site: www.guideddiscoveries.org
Program: Summer camp that teaches, entertains and builds talent, skills and friendship.

Catalina Junior Sea Camp
P.O. Box 1360
Claremont, CA. 91711
Telephone: Stacy Garrett 800-645-1423
Web Site: www.guideddiscoveries.org
Program: Summer Camp on Catalina Island.

Cybercamps
35 locations around the country
Telephone: DJ. Barker 800-904-2267
Web Site: www.cybercamps.com
Program: Campers can choose from wed design, game design, robotics, digital photography and graphics.

Dr. B's Summer Science Exploration 2005
3576 Woodcliff Road
Sherman Oaks, CA. 91403
Telephone: Dr. Bootlootian 818-981-3473
Web Site: www.summerscienceexplorations.com
Program: Traveling to different parts of the world for research. Some local day trips.

Education Unlimited
Academic Summer Programs
Telephone: Diedra Barber 800-548-6612
Web Site: www.educationunlimited.com
Program: Length range from 7 days to 6 weeks. Offering challenging but fun academic, debate and acting classes.

Foundations For Teaching Economics
Economics for Leaders
260 Russel Blvd.
Suite B
Davis, CA. 95616
Telephone: 530-757-4630
Web Site: www.fte.org
Program: Week long programs for students who have just completed their junior year in high school. Opportunity to learn economics and leadership.

Great Books Summer Reading Program at Amherst and Stanford
79 Stanford Street
Fairfield, CT. 06824
Telephone: Lora Premo 888-327-5923 ext.
Web Site: www.greatbooksprogram.com
Program: College level seminars for discussing great works in literature. Six day seminars.

iD Tech Camps
An iD Tech Computer Camp: Summer Camp
Telephone: Client Services 1-888-709-8324
Web Site: www.internationalDrive.com
Program: Offered at 13 universities in California. Week long camp for ages 7-17 wanting to experience hands on technology fun.

Sea Camp Expeditions on the Tall ship Tole Mour
P.O. Box 1360
Claremont, CA. 91711
Telephone: Stacy Garrett 800-645-1423
Web Site: www.guideddiscoveries.org
Program:

SuperCamp
1725 South Coast Highway
Oceanside, CA. 92054
Telephone: 800-285-3276
Web Site: www.supercamp.com
Program: 10 day residential program. Students age 9-24 learn skills for success that can be applied to any situation or subject.

UCI Gifted Students Academy
5171 California Ave.
Suite 150
Irvine, CA. 92697
Telephone: Darlene Boyd 949-824-8927
Web Site: www.cfep.uci.edu
Program: Grade 1-8 can attend one week or longer classes. Classes are chosen from a variety of subjects.

University of California
COSMOS- California State Summer School for Mathematics and Science
University California Davis, San Diego, Santa Cruz and Irvine
Web Site: www.ucop.edu/cosmos
Program: Four week summer residential programs for high school students who excel in math and science.

University Of California ,Davis
Young Scholars Program
School of Education
One Shields Avenue
Davis, CA. 95616
Telephone: J. Richard Pomeroy 530-752-0622
Web Site: http://ysp.ucdavis.edu
Program: Six week residential program for high achieving high school juniors and somphmores.

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