

Old Dominion University

## ODU Digital Commons

---

Educational Foundations & Leadership Faculty  
Publications

Educational Foundations & Leadership

---

2021

### Promoting Privilege: Selecting Students for a Public Gifted School

Douglas G. Wren  
*Old Dominion University*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/efl\\_fac\\_pubs](https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/efl_fac_pubs)



Part of the [Disability and Equity in Education Commons](#), [Education Policy Commons](#), and the [Gifted Education Commons](#)

---

#### Original Publication Citation

Wren, D. G. (2021). Promoting privilege: Selecting students for a public gifted school. *Murmurations*, 3(1), 1-34. <https://doi.org/10.31946/meee.v3i1.35>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Educational Foundations & Leadership at ODU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Educational Foundations & Leadership Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of ODU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@odu.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@odu.edu).

ARTICLE

# Promoting Privilege: Selecting Students for a Public Gifted School

Keywords:

*gifted underrepresentation, gifted identification, gifted education, socioeconomic status, ethnic bias, racial bias*

Douglas G. Wren

Educational Foundations and Leadership, Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA, USA

[dwren@odu.edu](mailto:dwren@odu.edu)

<https://wrenedconsult.com>

<https://doi.org/10.31946/meee.v3i1.35>

Pre-publication dialogue: <https://murmurations-journal.org/index.php/murmurations/article/view/35>

## Abstract

**Point of view:** I am a cisgender, White male in my sixties. I retired recently after working with children in a professional capacity since the mid-1970s. During my education career, I was an elementary school teacher, gifted teacher, research specialist, and director of research and evaluation in a historically White school district that became majority African American during my tenure.

**Value of submission:** Numerous educational policies and procedures in the United States benefit children from privileged families over their traditionally underserved counterparts, which include students of color and low-income students. This piece describes a public school district's inequitable practices related to its program for gifted students, practices that are not uncommon in many American school districts. "Education is one of the best ways to address systemic inequities, but education systems in the US seem to be increasingly subject to criticism that they are unable to change and promote equity" (Cheville 2018, p. 1). Despite their inherent resistance to change, educational agencies must be made aware of discriminatory policies and procedures. Stakeholders must then hold policy makers and educational leaders to account. As James Baldwin wrote nearly 60 years ago, "Not everything that is faced can be changed; but nothing can be changed until it is faced" (Baldwin 1962, p. 38).

**Summary:** Gifted education programs in public schools comprise mainly middle-class and upper-middle-class students of European and Asian descent. Students from low socioeconomic groups, African American students, Latinx students, and Indigenous American students continue to be underrepresented in gifted programs, despite the fact that this inequity was brought to light many years ago (Ford 1998). Given our nation's long history of overt and covert racism, it is not surprising that the manner by which students are identified for gifted services is systemically entrenched. Most states have mandates or provide guidance to local school districts regarding identification criteria; however, very few of the measurement instruments or methods used to evaluate children for gifted services are effective at facilitating equitable representation of all groups in gifted education programs. This piece examines one school district's guidelines used to identify students for gifted services, including admittance to its prestigious school for gifted children. Because the guidelines are typical of practices employed by many school districts across the US, the information contained herein is generalizable to a larger audience.

This work was completed without funding.



## Introduction

The underrepresentation of African American, Indigenous, and Latinx students in educational programs for gifted and talented youth has been a concern of educators for decades (Baldwin 1985; Erwin and Worrell 2012; Ford 1995, 1998; Graham 2009; Grissom, Redding, and Bleiberg 2019; U.S. Department of Education 2006; Worrell 2003). According to the 2014-2015 *State of the States in Gifted Education* report, "Most states indicate[d] identifying and serving students from historically underrepresented populations as an area in need

of attention” (National Association for Gifted Children and Council of State Directors of Programs for the Gifted 2015, p. 14). To be precise, 95% of states responded that inclusion of underrepresented students (e.g., students of low socioeconomic status, disabled students, English language learners, and students belonging to specific ethnic groups) in gifted and talented programs was either “most in need of attention” or “in need of attention.” Only Iowa and Rhode Island checked “neutral” on this survey item.

A report from the American Psychological Association Presidential Task Force on Educational Disparities (Quintana et al. 2012) maintained that the underrepresentation of racial and ethnic groups in gifted programs is not separate from the broader issue of educational inequalities in America. “The distribution of scores on cognitive and achievement measures that results in the overrepresentation of certain groups in remedial programs and dropout statistics is the same distribution that results in the underrepresentation of these groups in gifted programs” (p. 68). Until school districts employ more effective ways to evaluate each and every student’s abilities and their potential for achievement, it is unlikely that much will change.

What follows is an analysis of a school district’s methods of evaluating children to determine which ones will be admitted to its exclusive school for intellectually gifted students. Some of these are routine methods used by other districts to identify students for gifted program services. The purpose of this article is to point out the systemic problems that continue to impede access to gifted services for children in underrepresented groups. Recommendations for improving the gifted identification process are included toward the end of the article.

## Equal Access to Courses, Programs, and Enrollment

The title of this section was taken from the Notice of Non-Discrimination Policy of a prominent school district located in a Mid-Atlantic state. The statement is intended to mean that every student in the district has an equal opportunity to be enrolled in its courses and programs, which simply isn’t true.

The district’s flagship school for its most intellectually gifted elementary and middle school students—ostensibly the best of the best—presents a prime example of the failure of many public education agencies to serve all populations equally. This school is housed in a state-of-the-art building, completed in early 2017 at a cost of over 63 million in taxpayer dollars. The district’s program for the “über-gifted” started in the 1990s and was based previously in old and dilapidated school buildings, similar to several elementary, middle, and high schools still in use by the district. This district is not unique among local education agencies that face challenges with multiple facilities in disrepair and a lack of funds to renovate or replace them.

Not long after the new gifted school opened its doors, approximately 3,600 community members responded to a survey about the district’s facility master plan. Hundreds of parents, students, district employees, and other citizens mentioned that one or more schools needed refurbishing or rebuilding (Cooperative Strategies 2017). The inequity of constructing an ultramodern facility for a chosen few while many children continued their education in outdated structures was addressed by a number of survey respondents, and included the following comments:

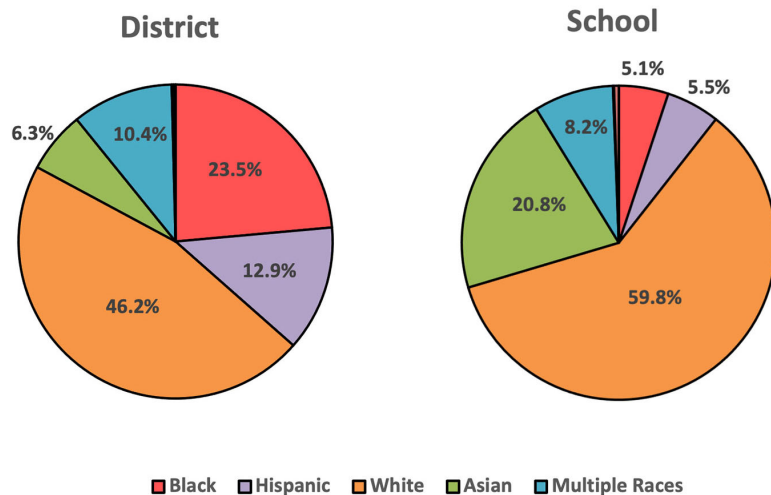
- “Equity is a big concern. Funding so much to go to one school for the gifted when neighboring schools have students in poverty” (p. 35).
- “I am concerned with the equity issue. Sure the new building is beautiful, but do we spend that on every school and every student? Seems like the gifted get the good gifts” (p. 47).
- “Spending all on one school creating super schools while others don’t have any modern features or even furniture isn’t fair ... especially schools with higher poverty unable to fundraise” (p. 71).
- “It’s hard when you have to deal with really old/ broken classroom furniture, windows that leak whenever it rains hard, and air conditioning and heating units that

are so loud you can barely hear instruction, while other schools have special water fountains that students can refill their water bottles with. The inequity is just so unfortunate” (p. 130).

- “The unequal spending for particular ‘populations’ has not gone unnoticed by parents of ‘average’ students” (p. 132).

In all likelihood, the local school board expected backlash from the perceived unfairness of constructing a superschool for the district’s most gifted students at the same time other students were, and still are, attending classes in derelict buildings. But a different issue of fairness, an administrative process that received little attention, was in place well before ground was broken for the new school.

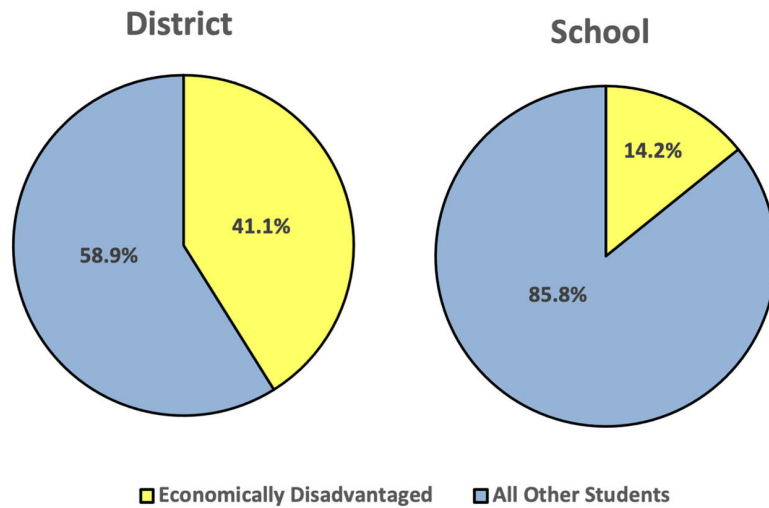
American journalist and cultural critic H. L. Mencken once quipped, “There is always an easy solution to every human problem—neat; plausible and wrong” (Mencken 1949, p. 18). On the surface, the guidelines that address the matter of who is and who is not admitted to the gifted school appear to be reasonable and impartial. A closer look at the process reveals a patent bias that favors privileged children over their underserved counterparts. Although the district’s leaders may not have foreseen the results of the process, a glimpse at district and school demographics exposes the inequity.



**Figure 1.** Comparison of fall 2020 student membership by racial/ethnic group. Data source: <https://schoolquality.virginia.gov/>

Figure 1 shows the percentage of students by racial/ethnic groups for the entire district and the gifted school. The pie charts are based on data collected by school districts on September 30, 2020, for the annual Fall Membership Reports from the Virginia Department of Education (Virginia Department of Education 2021a). The VDOE uses information from the report to produce School Quality Profiles for every district and public school in the state. In the charts, the percentages for the district’s and school’s five largest student groups—Black, Hispanic, White, Asian, and Multiple Races—are visible, but the percentages for the two smallest groups—American Indian and Native Hawaiian, short for American Indian or Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander—are not shown. These two small groups comprised 0.23% and 0.20% of students in the district and 0.07% and 0.53% of the school’s students, respectively.

The disparity between the percentage of Black students in the district and Black students enrolled at the gifted school is staggering. African American students represent nearly one-quarter of the district’s 65,000 students, but account for only about one-twentieth of the school’s 1,327 enrollees. The underrepresentation of Latinx and multiracial students is also pronounced, as is the overrepresentation of Asian and White students. Combined, Asian and White students make up less than 53% of the district’s enrollment, yet they represent more than 80% of the gifted school’s student body.



**Figure 2.** Comparison of fall 2020 student membership by economic status. Data source: <https://schoolquality.virginia.gov/>.

As Figure 2 illustrates, economically disadvantaged students are grossly underrepresented at the gifted school. Economically disadvantaged students are those whose families meet the income eligibility guidelines for free or reduced-price school meals. Roughly 27,000, or 41.1% of the district’s students are economically disadvantaged. On September 30, 2020, only 14.2% of students enrolled at the school were categorized as economically disadvantaged.

What factors led to the racial and economic disparities between students in the district and students in the gifted school? One factor could have been a lack of applications from low-income students and students of color, not including Asian students. There are no publicly available data on school applicants, so the topic of applications from different socioeconomic and ethnic groups is not addressed here.

Another factor that likely contributed to the gifted school’s racial imbalance is the racial imbalance of students identified as intellectually gifted in the district. Students cannot be considered for admission to the school unless they are already labeled as gifted. Similar to other gifted programs across the US, African American and Latinx students are underrepresented in this district’s gifted program. For the 2019-2020 academic year, Black students comprised 23.1% of all students in the district but only 9% of gifted students; Hispanic students accounted for 12.4% of the district’s students and 8.5% of the gifted population (Virginia Department of Education 2020).

## Universal Screening and the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test

Because the pool of gifted school aspirants is made up exclusively of students who have been identified as gifted, the methods for creating the pool deserve scrutiny. This section examines the process that the district employs to screen students for giftedness.

In an effort to determine which students might be eligible for gifted program services, a standardized test is administered to all first- and fifth-grade students in the district. This is known as universal screening, a practice that purportedly gives all students an equal chance of being identified as a candidate for gifted services (Lakin 2016).

Each year, thousands of children aged 6-7 and 10-11 take the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test (Naglieri 2008b). The NNAT is “a nonverbal measure of general ability comprised of progressive matrix items that utilize shapes and geometric designs interrelated through spatial or logical organization” (Naglieri and Ford 2003, p. 157). On each NNAT item, test takers analyze relationships among the matrix parts and choose the correct answer. The

author of the NNAT, Jack Naglieri, claims it is a “culturally neutral assessment . . . that is ideal for use with a diverse student population . . . [and] well-suited for identifying gifted and talented students” (Naglieri 2020, para. 14).

The district should be commended for using universal screening. Other school districts have seen large increases in the number of economically disadvantaged students and students of color in their gifted programs after establishing universal screening programs (e.g., Card and Giuliano 2016; Gonser 2020; Kebede 2020). Universal screening is costly and time-consuming for the district, where upwards of 9,000 students per year are tested by trained gifted assessment specialists, school by school, class by class.

While the district’s leadership knew that screening every first and fifth grader would be a considerable investment in terms of time and money, they were probably unaware of the drawbacks of using the NNAT as its screening tool. Pearson markets the NNAT with the author’s own words about the assessment being culturally neutral and ideal for diverse student populations (Pearson 2018), but not all researchers and educational measurement experts agree. Lohman and Gambrell (2012) described problems that can adversely affect the NNAT scores of low-income students and students of color, starting with an issue they called the conundrum of short directions.

Directions are an important component of standardized tests. Many multiple-choice tests, including the NNAT, contain one or two sample or practice items at the beginning of each test section for examinees to better understand the format of test items and how to answer them. Usually, these items are easier than the bulk of items in the test, which misrepresents the rigor of the test for some examinees, particularly young children. Based on previous studies and their own research, Lohman and Gambrell (2012) asserted that “brief test directions with few practice items may actually mislead children by confirming that a simple but errant test strategy is appropriate” (p. 32). To make matters worse, young test takers receive added affirmation that their simple strategy is effective, as they choose certain distractors (i.e., the incorrect choices on a multiple-choice test item) that incorporate the errant strategies. Children of color, low-income children, and English language learners (ELLs) are most affected by the conundrum of short directions because they are more inclined than other children to misunderstand the task at hand, adopt a faulty approach to solving nonverbal items, or both.

Another concern of Lohman and Gambrell (2012) was the effect that practice and coaching have on NNAT scores. Obviously, students who are familiar with a test’s directions and item formats will perform better on the test than students who have not seen the test in advance. Due in part to the proliferation of readily available practice tests on the internet through sites such as testingmom.com, testprep-online.com, tests.com, tutorified.com, ad infinitum, ad nauseum, test prep has become an industry that reaps in over \$1 billion annually (Johnston Taylor 2019). Parents in a position to locate and purchase NNAT preparation materials “can easily give their child an advantage on the screening test, thereby further disadvantaging the disadvantaged” (Lohman and Gambrell 2012, p. 34).

In a 2017 study, Roda (2017) discovered striking differences between the beliefs of White parents and parents of color pertaining to test preparation resources for improving their children’s chances of getting accepted to a local gifted and talented program. White parents believed that paying for test prep was symbolic of good parenting; Black and Latinx parents did not hold this view. Another finding was that White parents had social networks with other parents whose priorities about gifted testing and gifted programs were the same as theirs, while Black and Latinx parents did not have these types of networks.

These issues might have played into the substantial variations in NNAT scores by ethnicity and socioeconomic status (SES) reported by several researchers (Carman and Taylor 2010; Drake 2006; Lewis 2001; Shaunessy, Karnes, and Cobb 2004). The work by Carol Carman and Debra Taylor is especially relevant because of similarities between the district of interest in this article and the district in the study. Both districts are sizable and ethnically diverse, and both used the NNAT to screen thousands of young students for gifted services. The results of the study indicated that, regardless of ethnicity, kindergarten students who were eligible for free or reduced-price lunches scored significantly lower than other children on the NNAT.

Compared with older students, children in grades K-1 are notoriously unreliable test tak-



ers, owing to their short attention spans, rapid and uneven development, and lack of test-taking experience (Armstrong 2006; Barlow and Dunbar 2010; Gao and Grisham-Brown 2011). Plainly stated, the standardized test scores of 5-, 6-, and 7-year-old children do not necessarily represent their true abilities. The test performance of first graders can vary from day to day, whereas test scores for fifth graders and other older students are more stable. Although the district of interest screens at two grade levels for potential giftedness, the majority of gifted school enrollees are accepted based in large part on testing conducted while they were in first grade.

Young children are also susceptible to so-called examiner effects, where test takers perceive the examiner as familiar or unfamiliar. In the 1980s, a pair of researchers performed meta-analyses to investigate the effects of different examiners on children's test scores. They concluded that low SES children performed better on difficult tests when they "knew the examiner for a relatively long duration" (Fuchs and Fuchs 1986, p. 243) than when the examiner was unfamiliar. Black and Latinx children also scored significantly higher with familiar rather than unfamiliar examiners (Fuchs and Fuchs 1989). The implications for districts that administer tests to elementary students using unfamiliar test examiners include the possibility of deflated scores for some African American, Latinx, and low SES students.

Joni Lakin (2016) used the term "false negatives" (p. 146) to denote children who were missed by universal screening but could have succeeded in a gifted program if they had been identified. How many false negatives have resulted from NNAT administrations to the district's first graders over the years? Four reasons to believe that countless children have been overlooked for gifted identification and a chance to attend the district's best school are (a) the conundrum of short directions, which leads to confusion and errant test strategies; (b) test practice and coaching, which gives some children an unfair advantage over others; (c) the unreliability of young test takers' test scores, which could eliminate from consideration any first-grade test taker who performs poorly on a given day; and (d) examiner effects, which stem from unfamiliar staff administering the NNAT to young students.

Giessman, Gambrell, and Stebbins (2013) advised schools and districts to "not assume that using a figural screening test such as the NNAT2, without other adjustments to selection protocol, will address minority underrepresentation" (p. 101). Policy makers, district leaders, and gifted program coordinators would also do well to heed the words of Carman and Taylor (2010) regarding nonverbal assessments in general:

There are multiple tests available that are either entirely nonverbal or have significant nonverbal components that are being advertised as (or are assumed to be) better than verbal-based tests at measuring ability in an unbiased, "culture fair" way. These results speak to the idea that one cannot assume just because a test is advertised as "bias free" or "culture free" that it will produce results that are undifferentiated by ethnicity and/or SES. . . . Nonverbal ability tests in and of themselves do not provide a "level playing field" for students from different educational or cultural backgrounds. (p. 81)

## Put to the Test

Recall that students in the district of interest must be identified as intellectually gifted before their applications to the school are considered. To this end, students must first successfully navigate the district's gifted identification process.

The district's website contains a wealth of information about its gifted program. The Screening and Identification Process page states that all first graders are screened and that "with parent/guardian permission for continued assessment, students who score at the 90th percentile or higher on the screening instrument are referred for additional testing." Another sentence in the same paragraph reads, "Based on screening results, students may be referred for further testing with parent/guardian permission." Clearly, parental permission is required for additional testing, but it is unclear if referrals are automatic or provisional. Adding to the confusion is a third statement on the site's frequently asked questions (FAQs) about gifted screening. The statement reads, "It is suggested that students who score at the 90th percentile or higher be referred for further testing"

The Screening FAQs page reveals a loophole in the district's screening process that could not be found anywhere else on the district's website: "Parents/guardians, school staff or anyone with knowledge of the child's abilities may refer him/her for continued assessment *even if the child does not score at the 90th percentile or higher* [emphasis added]." On the one hand, this makes sense, due primarily to the issues discussed in the preceding section. On the other hand, unless every parent and guardian in every community across the district is made aware of the loophole, the possibility of inequity is very real.

There are also discrepancies between the Screening FAQs page and the Screening and Identification Process page concerning the sources of information that the identification and placement committee uses to determine whether a student is intellectually gifted. Two sources that do appear on both pages are achievement test scores and ability test scores, or "Information from achievement tests" and "Current information from ability tests."

### Information from achievement tests

According to the administrative code of the state in which the district is located, "Each school board shall submit a comprehensive plan for the education of gifted students to the Department of Education (DOE) for technical review" (Virginia General Assembly 2010a). The *Local Plan for the Education of the Gifted 2020-2025* is the district's 188-page document that addresses every aspect of its gifted services, including student identification procedures. It was approved by the district's school board on August 11, 2020.

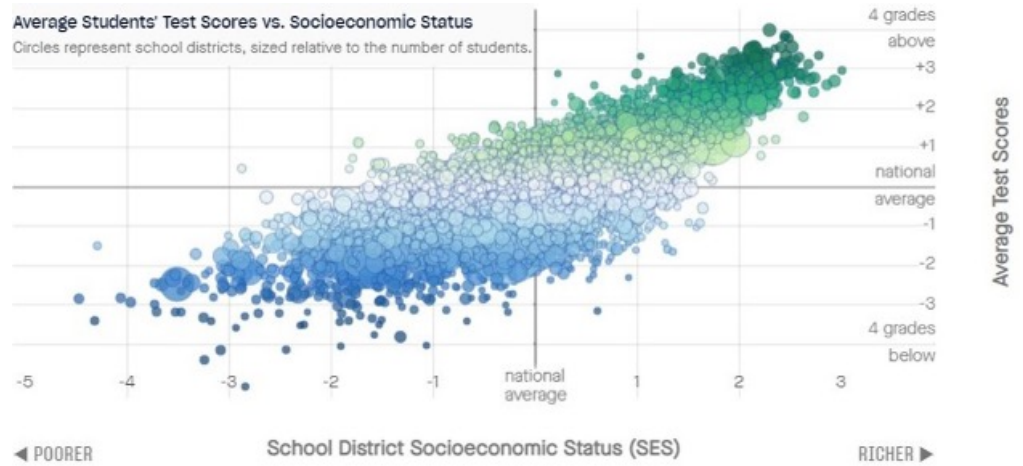
On page 73 of the plan, "nationally norm-referenced achievement test" was indicated as a criterion the district uses to create profiles for considering students for gifted services. The purpose of a norm-referenced achievement test is to distinguish between examinees at different levels of learning (Henrysson 1971). Nationally normed tests allow an examinee's test score to be ranked against scores from a national sample of same-aged examinees. A student who scored at the 90th percentile of a nationally normed test—for example, the NNAT—performed better than 90% of other test takers nationwide, at least in theory. But, as its name implies, the NNAT is an ability test, not an achievement test. Achievement tests are designed to measure a student's learning (Haladyna 2007). Nationally normed achievement tests, such as Iowa Assessments (Dunbar and Welch 2015), formerly known as the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS; Hoover, Dunbar, and Frisbie 2001), are used by districts to compare their students' academic performance with students across the nation.

Elementary school students in the district of interest are not required to take a nationally normed achievement test, but the district's *Local Plan for the Education of the Gifted* states that the gifted identification and placement committee reviews "achievement test scores available in a student's cumulative record" (p. 72). What type of achievement test scores does the district use? The only standardized achievement tests administered en masse to elementary students in the district, beginning with third graders, are the Standards of Learning (SOL) tests, part of the VDOE's accountability system that "supports teaching and learning by setting rigorous academic standards and through annual assessments of student achievement" (Virginia Department of Education 2021b, para. 1). Using scores from SOL tests to determine giftedness is problematic because the tests are not norm-referenced—they are criterion-referenced tests.

There are three concerns about using information from achievement tests to determine giftedness. The first two concerns, discussed earlier in this piece, are the unreliability of young children's test scores and the effect of unfamiliar examiners on some children's test scores. The third concern was voiced by Renzulli and Reis (2020), two internationally recognized experts in the field of gifted education, who wrote, "an assessment of learning [e.g., achievement test] . . . tells us what students already know and how they have performed in school when compared with others. Scores often reflect students' family backgrounds, neighborhood demographics, early life experiences, and the quality of their previous school experiences" (para. 3).

Renzulli and Reis (2020) were referring to the positive correlation between SES and achievement test scores, which has been documented in study after study (e.g., Caldas 1993; Jencks et al. 1972; Sexton 1961; Unnever, Kerckhoff, and Robinson 2000; White et al. 2016; Walsh 1986). The scatter plot in Figure 3 illustrates the relation between SES and





**Figure 3.** "Average Students' Test Scores vs. Socioeconomic Status" chart produced by The Educational Opportunity Project at Stanford University using Stanford Education Data Archive (Version 4.0) data under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported license.

standardized achievement test scores—the higher the SES of school districts, the higher the average test scores, and vice versa.

The use of achievement tests for identifying gifted students is limited. Although achievement tests are effective for assessing students' subject-specific knowledge to determine if placement in advanced classes is warranted, the scores of achievement tests portray what a student has learned at the time of testing, and not the student's potential for learning. Compared with underserved youth, children of privilege typically receive a better education at better schools. Furthermore, privileged children have more opportunities to travel and participate in extracurricular activities because their parents can afford them. These advantages give the privileged group an edge on achievement tests.

### Current information from ability tests

In contrast to tests that measure achievement, or "the level of knowledge or skill that has already been attained" (Dik 2007, p. 2), ability tests "are assessment instruments designed to measure the capacity of individuals to perform particular physical or mental tasks" (p. 1). For example, the NNAT measures an examinee's capacity to solve problems containing shapes and figures, though Naglieri (2020) and Pearson (2018) claim that the test measures general ability.

The district uses ability test scores as another source of data to determine a student's giftedness. After their applications to be evaluated for gifted services have been processed, students are administered the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT; Lohman and Lakin 2017), a nationally normed test designed to measure the nonverbal, quantitative, and verbal abilities of children. On the CogAT home page, Riverside Insights (2021) brags that "a recent Education Week Research Center report shows 54% of districts surveyed use the Cognitive Abilities Test™ (CogAT®) as part of their gifted and talented identification criteria" (para. 1). Riverside also maintains that "CogAT makes it happen by measuring abilities across the symbol systems that are most highly correlated with fluid reasoning, problem solving, and success in school" (para. 3).

The latest versions of the CogAT, Form 7 (Lohman 2011a) and Form 8 (Lohman and Lakin 2017) are parallel; the forms can be used interchangeably. Score reliability for the CogAT is high, and validity data "provide ample evidence that the CogAT meets its designer's goals" (Warne 2015, p. 190).

Despite its popularity and psychometric strengths, the CogAT hardly "makes it happen" for every examinee. In a PowerPoint presentation, Lohman (2011b) wrote that "Form 7 tests substantially reduce but do not eliminate group differences." Given his extensive research

and expertise in cognitive ability testing, one would expect Lohman to acknowledge the limitations of his test. Interestingly, the presentation is no longer posted at its original site.

The CogAT comprises three subtests, called batteries: nonverbal, quantitative, and verbal. The CogAT nonverbal battery and the NNAT are similar in that they both consist exclusively of figural reasoning items in a multiple-choice format, and they require no reading on the part of examinees. After analyzing the CogAT nonverbal and NNAT scores of over 30,000 young students who were screened for gifted services, Carman, Walther, and Bartsch (2020) observed another similarity between the assessments. “Both tests, regardless of type of norming used, were less likely to identify demographic groups that have traditionally been underrepresented in gifted and talented programs (e.g., Latinx, Black, and ELL) than students from traditionally overrepresented demographic groups” (p. 184).

In addition, there are concerns about using the CogAT quantitative and verbal batteries to identify gifted children. Jack Naglieri (2008a) is among the scholars who recognized the problem. Writing for the *Critical Issues in Equity and Excellence in Gifted Education* series, the author of the NNAT noted that strikingly similar items with parallel objectives appeared on quantitative ability tests (e.g., CogAT) and math achievement tests (e.g., ITBS). “Although it seems reasonable that math skills should be part of a test of achievement, it does not seem reasonable that math skills should be used to measure ability because acquired skills are influenced by both instruction and ability. The same issue applies to verbal tests” (Naglieri 2008a, p. 71). Naglieri concluded, “Ability tests that are achievement-laden can become a barrier to smart children who do not have adequate academic skills. . . . The disadvantage of such tests outweighs any advantages, and the failure to include diverse populations because of limited academic skills can be described as a social injustice” (p. 85).

CogAT author David Lohman weighed in as well on the blurred line between tests of ability and tests of achievement. In an article for the *Roeper Review*, Lohman (2006) asserted that “commonly-held beliefs about the separability of ability and achievement are much closer to folk [theories] than to scientific theories of these constructs” (p. 33). By pointing out the overlap between measures of ability and measures of achievement, Lohman admitted that ability tests like the CogAT perform much the same as achievement tests, which favor privileged children over children who have not had comparable learning opportunities.

The effect of learning opportunities on children’s vocabulary was addressed in a 2009 workshop on the Role of Language in School Learning, supported by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. Citing the works of Hart and Risley (1995) and Hoff (2013), the workshop’s rapporteur summarized, “vocabulary size and growth are associated with the amount and complexity of language children hear in their everyday lives. Children from lower SES homes who, on average, have smaller vocabularies, hear less language, and less complex language at home than children from more economically advantaged backgrounds” (National Research Council 2010, p. 8).

Rank ordering young children by the quantity and quality of their words seems unfair when some have not had the same opportunities as others to expand their vocabularies; however, sample items available on the ubiquitous websites offering CogAT practice indicate that children need a large and complex vocabulary to get a high score on the CogAT verbal battery. Figure 4 on the following page shows an example of a verbal classification item that is intended for 8-, 9-, and 10-year-old children—third and fourth graders.

Districts that rely heavily on CogAT scores to identify students for gifted services believe they are choosing students with the highest ability. The truth is these districts are neglecting the needs of underserved, high-ability students whose learning experiences do not necessarily prepare them for standardized tests the same way that the experiences of privileged children do.

## Additional test-related issues

The district of interest uses the results of two nationally norm-referenced ability tests, the NNAT and the CogAT, as a major component of its gifted identification process. As discussed earlier, data from achievement tests can also be used in profiles for students being considered for the district’s gifted services. Like the NNAT and CogAT, most nationally normed achievement tests, as well as state-mandated achievement tests, consist mainly—or en-

**These three words are alike in some way:**  
alarm | horror | revulsion

**Choose one word from the answer selections  
of five that goes with the first three words in  
the same way.**

- peace
- cheer
- repose
- aversion
- composure

**Figure 4.** Sample CogAT verbal classification item intended for grades 3-4. Reprinted from tests.com (2021).

tirely—of multiple-choice items, so the profiles of students could include scores from at least three multiple-choice tests. A position statement from the National Association for Gifted Children (2008), *The Role of Assessments in the Identification of Gifted Students*, weighed in on the overuse of multiple-choice tests: “Administering assessments that follow the same response format may unfairly penalize some students while benefiting others” (p. 2).

An oft-overlooked testing issue that affects many children is test anxiety. Methia (2004) estimated that over one-third of US students have experienced test anxiety in some form during their school careers. Although test anxiety is prevalent in every demographic group, studies indicate that African American schoolchildren experience higher levels of test anxiety than their European American counterparts (e.g., Carter, Williams, and Silverman 2008; Hembree 1988; Wren and Benson 2004). The consequence, according to Gaye-Valentine and Credé (2013), is that “test anxiety reduces the validity of cognitive ability test scores” (p. 128).

Carter, Williams, and Silverman (2008) maintained that stereotype threat is one reason African American students self-report debilitating test anxiety. Claude Steele and Joshua Aronson coined this term in their 1995 paper, “Stereotype Threat and the Intellectual Test Performance of African Americans” (Steele and Aronson 1995). The paper described

a social-psychological predicament that can arise from widely-known negative stereotypes about one’s group. It is this: the existence of such a stereotype means that anything one does or any of one’s features that conform to it make the stereotype more plausible as a self-characterization in the eyes of others, and perhaps even in one’s own eyes. We call this predicament *stereotype threat* and argue that it is experienced, essentially, as a self-evaluative threat. . . . For African American students, the act of taking a test purported to measure intellectual ability may be enough to induce this threat. (pp. 797-798)

Steele and Aronson (1995) further explained that the degree of the threat is intensified for Black students who place greater value on the results of the test, “a degree not borne by people not stereotyped in this way” (p. 799). In his research with a large sample of African American children at an urban elementary school, Martin Wasserberg (2014) confirmed that stereotype threat was exacerbated for children who are most concerned about their achievement. The implications of these findings for bright young African American students seeking gifted status are significant.

In spite of the belief that norm-referenced, standardized test scores are unquestionably valid for making clear-cut decisions about children’s giftedness, there are several problems associated with testing that can affect the validity of scores. The legendary Samuel Messick (1989) defined validity as “an integrated, evaluative judgment of the degree to which empirical evidence and theoretical rationales support the adequacy and appropriateness of inferences and actions based on test scores or other modes of assessment” (p. 13). In other words, an inference (e.g., deciding whether a child is gifted) and action (e.g., refer-

ring the child for gifted services) made on the basis of a test score are appropriate only if there is ample evidence to support the use of the score for this purpose for this child. To summarize this section, “overreliance on norm-referenced test results can lead to inadvertent discrimination against minority groups and low-income student populations” (Great Schools Partnership 2015).

## Make the Grade

Recognizing the limitations of standardized tests for determining giftedness, the National Association for Gifted Children (2021a) recommends that “various identification tools should be used to eliminate bias” (para. 7). In the 2014–2015 *State of the States in Gifted Education* report (National Association for Gifted Children and Council of State Directors of Programs for the Gifted 2015), the majority of states that responded to the survey—including the state in which district of interest is located—employed a multiple criteria model to identify gifted students. The administrative code of the state decreed that “identification of students for the gifted education program shall be based on multiple criteria” (Virginia General Assembly 2010b, 8VAC20-40-40D1).

The district’s multiple criteria are listed on page 72 of its *Local Plan for the Education of the Gifted 2020-2025*. The list includes “record of previous achievements (awards, honors, grades, etc.)” On page 5 of the document, “report cards” are named as an indicator of a student’s readiness for intellectually gifted services. Academic awards and honors are, for the most part, tied to grades, the main ingredient of a report card. In public schools, report card grades are an important determinant of every student’s academic opportunities, such as being admitted to a gifted program or school for gifted students.

Even with recent reforms in report card and grading policies, Sue Brookhart, Tom Guskey, and other assessment experts caution that these improvements are meaningless if the grades are not reliable (Brookhart et al. 2016; Guskey and Brookhart 2019; Link and Guskey 2019). A review of studies on grading practices from the 1980s revealed inconsistent grading practices among teachers (Brookhart 1994). The same inconsistencies were confirmed in subsequent studies conducted through 2017 (McMillan 2019).

Variable grading practices result in unreliable information on report cards. A problem with grading is the tendency of teachers to account for nonacademic factors (e.g., attitude, classroom behavior, effort) when awarding grades, a practice that benefits White students more than it does Black students (Link and Guskey 2019). Teacher expectations can also add bias to the grading process. In a meta-analysis of over 30 studies from 1968 to 2003, Tenenbaum and Ruck (2007) examined differences in teachers’ expectancies for children of color versus White children. They found that “teachers hold lower expectations for African American and Latino/a children than for European American children. . . . [which is] likely to contribute to a less than fair classroom climate and limited educational opportunities for African American and Latino/a students” (p. 271).

Research by Quinn (2020) looked at how racial bias plays into teachers’ grading. The study involved over 1,500 K-12 teachers—predominantly White females—who each evaluated one of two nearly identical second-grade writing samples. The only differences between the 22-word samples, distributed randomly to teachers, were the names of the writer’s brother and his brother’s friend. On one paper, the brother was named “Dashawn” and the friend was named “Arin.” On the other paper, the brother’s name was “Connor” and the friend was “Scot.” Teachers were asked to rate the writing sample as *below*, *at*, or *above grade level*. Overall, the teachers were more inclined to rate the writing in the Connor/Scot paper either *at grade level* or *above grade level* compared to identical writing in the Dashawn/Arin paper. White, Latina, and Black female teachers all demonstrated similar bias, but the bias was statistically significant for the White subgroup only. In his conclusion, Quinn posited,

Teachers’ biased evaluations of student work may lead to a vicious cycle in which initial racially biased evaluations from a teacher cause lower future performance from students, which reinforces stereotypes held by teachers, which in turn leads to future bias in evaluations. (p. 389)

A related topic, teacher evaluations of students seeking gifted services, is discussed in the next section.

## True to Form

According to the district's *Local Plan for the Education of the Gifted*, another profile component that the gifted identification and placement committee uses to determine a child's gifted status is a "teacher information form of behavioral characteristics of the gifted, including a written narrative" (p. 78). Teacher recommendations are a common method of identifying gifted students (Acar, Sen, and Cayirdag 2016; Davis and Rimm 2004). In a nationwide survey of educators regarding gifted identification methods, the preferred method of classroom teachers was, not surprisingly, teacher recommendations. Administrators and gifted education specialists reported that teacher recommendations were not the most effective method (Schroth and Helfer 2008).

A gifted school application for non-district students was recently accessed from the website of the district of interest. To the district's credit, the form is available in Spanish, Tagalog, Mandarin Chinese, and Vietnamese. Included in the application is a Teacher Checklist for Observing Gifted Behaviors. This is same checklist used by teachers to rate students currently enrolled in the district.

The checklist is a blend of 48 items that are identical, paraphrased, or revised items from the Scales for Rating the Behavioral Characteristics of Superior Students (SRBCSS; Renzulli et al. 2002) and the Slocumb-Payne Teacher Perception Inventory: A Scale for Rating Superior Students from Diverse Backgrounds (Slocumb and Payne 2000), as well as items that appear on lists used by other school districts (e.g., Broward County, Florida; Fleming County, Kentucky; Los Angeles, California; Oklahoma City, Oklahoma).

It is not unusual for districts to customize gifted rating scales. In a chapter written for *Identification: The Theory and Practice of Identifying Students for Gifted and Talented Education Services*, Karen Westberg (2012) indicated why these endeavors are ill-advised:

Much too often, we find that consultants or school districts have created their own teacher rating forms or checklists, which have absolutely no support for their reliability and validity. In many cases, these forms have been created in an earnest attempt to find students who demonstrate strengths not addressed on aptitude or achievement measures, but school personnel need to realize that, when using teacher judgment instruments with no empirical support, they are using a highly crude measurement tool, much like using one's arm span to measure the length of a football field. (p. 365)

In lieu of using adapted tools, Westberg endorsed instruments with empirical support, specifically the Gifted Rating Scales (Pfeiffer and Jarosewich 2003), the Scales for Identifying Gifted Students (Ryser and McConnell 2004), and the SRBCSS (Renzulli et al. 2002).

The directions for completing the district's Teacher Checklist for Observing Gifted Behaviors state, "Listed below are traits, attributes and behaviors that may indicate giftedness along with examples of how these may be observed. Please place a checkmark if regularly observed." The 48 items are grouped into six areas, shown as follows with one item from each area:

- Communication/Language (5 items) – Reads a great deal independently; voracious early reader; seeks advanced reading material.
- Cognitive Learning (15 items) – Prefers learning that involves action and physical movement.
- Creativity/Imagination (7 items) – Preoccupied with own thoughts, asks unrelated questions, may appear disorganized.
- Social/Emotional (10 items) – Questions authority.
- Motivation (7 items) – Sometimes appears unaware of deadlines.
- Interests (4 items) – Curious about many things; has many hobbies or one intense interest.



A major challenge related to the development of rating scales and checklists, irrespective of their psychometric properties, is choosing clear and appropriate wording. Among the errors associated with implementing rating instruments is ambiguity, “the tendency to have different raters interpret rating terms in different ways” (Payne 2003, p. 309). On the district’s checklist, classroom teachers are directed to check an item if the trait, attribute, or behavior is regularly observed. A potentially ambiguous term on the Teacher Checklist is “regularly observed.” It is neither defined nor quantified, so teachers completing the checklist must interpret the meaning for themselves. Another task forced upon teachers is deciding how to score certain items on the checklist; an example is the triple-barreled “Preoccupied with own thoughts, asks unrelated questions, may appear disorganized.” If a student is frequently preoccupied, disorganized at times, and asked an unrelated question last month, should the item be checked?

In some school districts, classroom teachers are instructed to write narratives about students who are being considered for gifted services. This can introduce even more subjectivity into the teacher recommendation process. Beneath each behavioral area on the district of interest’s Teacher Checklist for Observing Gifted Behaviors is a text box for teachers to include “specific evidence/examples in the space provided.” The evidence is limited to 250 characters, or approximately 30-40 words per box. Classroom teachers are also encouraged to provide additional comments, up to 3,000 characters, on each student’s gifted application.

Narratives are just one piece of a student’s portfolio, but a well-written description that aligns with conventional thinking about gifted attributes and behaviors can persuade a selection committee that a child deserves placement in a gifted program or at a gifted school. Conversely, a poorly written description can have the opposite effect. The results of two fairly recent surveys indicated that teachers find excessive paperwork burdensome. On a statewide survey, “Less paperwork and regulations to follow” came in second behind “more money” in answer to the question, “What would make your job more satisfying?” (Badger Institute 2018), while “time pressure” was the highest ranked “everyday stressor in the workplace” on a national survey taken by over 30,000 educators (American Federation of Teachers and Badass Teachers Association 2015). Given the time constraints and amount of paperwork teachers have to deal with, some are likely to rush through the written portion of a gifted application, consequently shortchanging the students.

There is a relatively large body of research on how teachers’ racial bias can consciously or subconsciously cloud their ability to evaluate students fairly. In a study examining teachers’ evaluations of classroom behavior, Downey and Pribesh (2004) found that “the evidence suggesting that black students receive poorer subjective evaluations from white teachers than from black teachers is strengthening” (p. 279). Downey and Pribesh concluded that difficulties between African American students and White teachers begins as early as kindergarten and it “is more readily understood from the position of white teachers’ bias than from that of [black students’] oppositional culture” (p. 267).

Few scholars have written more than Donna Ford about issues related to the problem of gifted underrepresentation and the inability of teachers to identify gifted students of color (e.g., Ford 1995, 1998; Ford, Grantham, and Milner 2004; Ford 2013). Based on the findings of numerous studies, Ford, Grantham, and Whiting (2008) surmised that “teachers (the vast majority of whom are White) are more effective at identifying giftedness among White students, but less effective with CLD [culturally and linguistically diverse] students” (p. 295), even when the academic performance of CLD students is the same or better than that of the White students.

Concerning African American teachers’ ability to identify African American students for gifted programs, a larger proportion of African American teachers has been associated with an increased number of African American children in gifted programs (Grissom, Kern, and Rodriguez 2015; Grissom, Nicholson-Crotty, and Nicholson-Crotty 2009; Meier and Stewart, Jr 1992; Rocha and Hawes 2009). Studies show a similar relationship between the presence of Latinx teachers and Latinx children receiving gifted services (Nicholson-Crotty, Grissom, and Nicholson-Crotty 2011; Rocha and Hawes 2009).

Like most school districts across the country, the teaching force of the district of interest is overwhelmingly White. The last tally of American public school teachers, taken in



2017-2018, indicated that 80% were White (National Center for Education Statistics 2020). Determining how many teachers of color are employed by the district was impossible because of its location in one of six states that do not collect district-level data on teacher race and ethnicity (Di Carlo and Cervantes 2018). The odds are good that a student's Teacher Checklist for Observing Gifted Behaviors was completed by a White female, especially for elementary school students. Although many classroom teachers, irrespective of their race or culture, are fully capable of identifying gifted children, irrespective of their race or culture, it is conceivable that the checklist and written narratives used by the district play a part in the underrepresentation of Black and Latinx students in its gifted program and gifted school.

## Response Variable

In 2020, the district added another source of information for the gifted identification committee to consider when deciding on the gifted status of students. On the district's *Local Plan for the Education of the Gifted 2020-2025*, "Individual interview" was checked on the "Multiple Criteria Listing" (p. 73).

A comprehensive search of literature failed to turn up any empirical studies on the effectiveness of student interviews for gifted identification purposes. The bulk of gifted education research involving interviews were studies that incorporated interviews with teachers and parents of gifted students. Interviewing gifted students was restricted mainly to doctoral dissertations that examined students' perceptions of themselves or the services they received (e.g., Brigandi 2015; Buckner 2009; Cunningham 2003; Greene 2001).

An older study conducted by Lundy, Carey, and Moore (1978) had the greatest potential for informing the student interview process. After analyzing and comparing interview responses from over 100 highly gifted students in grades 3, 5, 8, and 11 with responses from a group of "average" students matched by gender, grade level, and same class schedule, the researchers were able to ascertain the learning characteristics of the gifted group. The interview instrument was developed with input from teachers "with considerable experience teaching highly gifted students, . . . [who] describe[d] the learning styles and preferred learning situations of highly gifted students with whom they had worked" (p. 5). The 15-item instrument—made up primarily of questions that inquired about students' everyday experiences and how they learned—was field tested and revised before it was used to interview students. Below are three sample questions:

- What is the most important thing that happened in school today? (Alone or with others? How did it come about? Momentary or prolonged?)
- What did you think about or imagine today that seems worth remembering?
- Finally, if you could have any kind of situation at school that you wanted and still get credit, etc., what kind of thing would you ask for? (pp. 30-31)

These interview questions held further promise that, unfortunately, was not achieved. A gifted screening or identification tool with empirical support could have been generated simply by eliminating the questions that did not elicit appreciably different responses between the two groups and retaining the questions that showed stark contrasts between gifted and average students.

In their popular book, *Removing the Mask: Giftedness in Poverty*, Slocumb and Payne (2000) presented a different type of interview instrument for identifying gifted students. Many of the 10 interview questions are scenarios intended to prompt students to continue a story. Some scenarios are over 100 words long, though most are much shorter, such as, "You turn the television on and there is a movie on. The movie is about you. Tell me what you think is happening in that movie about you. It's your movie: you can make it do anything you want" (p. 130). The authors stated that "Students are rated on a scale of 1 to 3 using a rubric" and "Criteria are given to guide the interviewer in his/her overall evaluation of each student's responses" (p. 104), but no rubric or rating criteria could be found in the book.

At the time of this writing, the interview questions used by the district of interest to help identify gifted children were publicly accessible on its website in the gifted school application for non-district students. There are three sets of questions in the district's Student Interview Questions instrument. Beneath each set is a text box for the school's gifted resource teacher (GRT), who conducts each interview, to enter a student's responses. The directions and questions, which are not all questions, are as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. Directions for instructions for the gifted resource teacher.**

| Question  | Sub-questions   |
|---|---|
| 1. Describe what you see as your talents and strengths.       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you know the meaning of talents and strengths? Talents and strengths are things that might be easy to do or things that you are so good at doing that you consider yourself an expert. These may be things that you enjoy doing. They can be things you learn about in school, after school, at home, or with friends.</li> <li>• Tell me about your talents at school or at home.</li> </ul> |
| 2. How have your talents and strengths helped you to achieve? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Achieve means to be successful and becoming the best you can be at something.</li> <li>• Remember, strengths are things that you are good at doing; so, how have these things helped you to be successful?</li> <li>• How have these things helped you to learn new things?</li> </ul>   |
| 3. Describe your goals for the future?<br>[sic]               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you think you would like to do when you grow up?</li> <li>• What are some things that you would like to learn more about?</li> <li>• What will you be an expert at doing when you are older?</li> </ul>  |

A Google Scholar search disclosed the source of the three main prompts/questions. They were part of an interview guide developed for research purposes by Thomas Hébert, an internationally recognized authority on gifted education. The interview guide was first used in "An Examination of High-Achieving First-Generation College Students from Low-Income Backgrounds" (Hébert 2018). A slightly tweaked version of the same prompts was used one year later in another study by Hébert (2019):

1. Describe what you see as your talents and strengths.
2. Describe the personality characteristics that you believe have helped you achieve.
3. Describe your goals for the future. (p. 34)

There are minor differences between the Hébert (2019) prompts, written for college-aged students, and the main prompts/questions on the district's Student Interview Questions instrument, used with children as young as first grade. One word was changed in the first prompt and the third prompts are identical, except for the errantly placed question mark in the district's prompt. The second prompt was amended from Hébert's "Describe the personality characteristics that you believe have helped you achieve" (p. 34) to the district's "How have your talents and strengths helped you to achieve?"

Dr. Hébert, a former NAGC board member and winner of NAGC's Distinguished Scholar Award in 2019, was contacted via email to confirm that he authored the interview guide. Dr. Hébert said that he did write the guide. Hébert also replied to the question, "What grade

levels do you believe the prompts are appropriate for?" by saying, "I think high school students would not have difficulty responding to them" (personal communication, February 11, 2021).

Even if GRTs use the additional information included with the questions/prompts for "elaboration of the question . . . for primary grade students," the district's interview questions do not provide data that is valid for making decisions about the gifted status of elementary and middle school students. Hébert wrote the original prompts for much older students who could speak to their own talents and strengths, as well as articulate their goals for the future. More importantly, the prompts were never meant to identify gifted students of any age.

There are additional problems with the questions/prompts in the Student Interview Questions instrument. One of the statements intended to elaborate on the meaning of talents and strengths for primary students is misleading: "These may be things that you enjoy doing." Plenty of children enjoy playing team sports, but it might not be their strength because they are not talented athletes. The second question continues, "How have your talents and strengths helped you to achieve?" The elaboration of this question is "strengths are things that you are good at doing; so, how have these things helped you to be successful?" Arguably, this is an inappropriate question since it implies that all children, regardless of background, have experienced success at an early age.

The third prompt asks students to describe their goals for the future, along with the question, "What do you think you would like to do when you grow up? Paula Prober (2018), author of *Your Rainforest Mind: A Guide to the Well-Being of Gifted Adults and Youth*, wrote this about gifted people: "There are certain questions that they will have trouble answering. Questions that most people think are simple. Questions like: What do you want to be when you grow up?" (para. 3). Coming in at number 12 on a list of 20 Things Every Gifted Child Needs To Know is, "You may never know what you want to be when you grow up and that's OK. . . . most adults only ask you because they think that's what they're supposed to do" (Tucker 2013).

School districts that include student interviews as a component of their gifted identification process should be aware of the possibility of bias. Concerning the use of interviews for identifying gifted children, the National Association for Gifted Children (2008) stated that "all individuals are affected by bias and prejudice, even if only at a subconscious level. . . . it is important that one recognize that different genders, cultures, races, ethnicities, and social classes have different ways of communicating" (p. 3). Approximately 80% of public school teachers in the US are White (National Center for Education Statistics 2020), so it can be assumed that the majority of GRTs in the district of interest are White. Because GRTs are required to write additional comments about each child they interview, there might be some level of bias reflected in their narratives.

**Table 2. Gifted attribute: Large storehouse of knowledge.** Copyright 2000 by aha! Process, Inc. Reprinted with permission. Slocumb and Payne (2000).

| Educated household   | Less educated household  |
|--|--|
| Students from educated households may have large storehouses of knowledge about many things to which they have been exposed, such as...  | Students from less educated households may have large storehouses of knowledge about many things to which they have been exposed, such as...   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Space</li> <li>• Architecture</li> <li>• Politics</li> <li>• Art</li> <li>• Music</li> <li>• Science</li> <li>• Places they have visited</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Singers</li> <li>• Athletes</li> <li>• Who has the most video games</li> <li>• What can or cannot be purchased with food stamps</li> <li>• Who can protect others in the neighborhood</li> <li>• Other information related to entertainment, relationships and survival.</li> </ul> |

Slocumb and Payne (2000) told their readers that “many students from poverty manifest the same attributes of giftedness as advantaged students; however, their manifestations may not be recognized because they are not couched in middle-class values and norms” (p. 101). Among these attributes is a large storehouse of knowledge. Table 2 shows a list of topics that students from a conventional “educated household” could be familiar with along with a stereotypical list of topics for students from an “uneducated household” (i.e., low SES). Despite its triteness, the figure illustrates a contrast that privileged persons on gifted identification committees may need to be reminded of prior to reviewing student interview responses.

## Valid Claim

Another category that the district “shall include to develop a profile or composite for each student being considered” for general intellectual aptitude services, according to the district’s *Local Plan for the Education of the Gifted 2020-2025*, is “additional valid and reliable measures or procedures,” specifically “Work Samples, Writing Samples, Portfolio, [and] Anecdotal Records” (p. 73). Student art portfolios are part of students’ applications for the district’s visual arts gifted program, but neither samples nor anecdotal records are listed as a criterion for determining intellectual giftedness on the district’s website.

This could be a new approach that the district is exploring to identify intellectually gifted students, yet work samples, writing samples, portfolios, and anecdotal records can hardly be considered “valid and reliable measures or procedures.” Deciding if a sample, portfolio, or anecdote is representative of a child’s giftedness is subjective and therefore unreliable. Although proven methods—extensive training of evaluators on utilizing tried-and-true rubrics—can decrease subjectivity and increase reliability, obtaining evidence of validity is quite difficult (Wren and Gareis 2019).

## A Holistic Evaluation of the Applicants

The title of this section was borrowed from the gifted school application. Describing the process that the district uses to determine whether an applicant in grades 1-7 is admitted to the school, the application states, “Selection committee members use the numerical rating scale to complete a holistic evaluation of the Applicants.” The same statement appears on page 81 of the *Local Plan for the Education of the Gifted*, which lists the components used in the decision-making process:

- Student Achievement (as indicated on the most current report card)
- Standardized Test Scores
- Parent Information
- Teacher Information
- GRT Information
- Student Responses to Interview Questions

Gifted school applications for students who have not already been identified as gifted can be submitted concurrently with their applications for gifted identification.

Starting with the 2020-2021 school year, parent information, the third item on the list, was limited to the student applicant’s name, address, school, grade level, gender, and date of birth, as well as both parents’ names and contact information. In past years, parents were asked to write narratives providing evidence of their child’s giftedness. Curbing the amount of information that parents are allowed to submit might help level the playing field by removing one factor: highly educated parents tend to write better than parents with less education.

The district’s local plan describes an appeals process for parents whose children are not accepted to the gifted school, where they “are invited to present additional, pertinent information that they feel would be helpful to the committee in making their decision” (p.

84). Similar to the loophole discussed much earlier—referring children for gifted identification even if their NNAT scores did not reach the 90th percentile—some parents whose children deserve a spot in the gifted school are unfamiliar with the appeals process. In addition, low-income parents may not have the time or resources to pursue an appeal. This is reminiscent of an observation made by Barlow and Dunbar (2010) in their case study of a district's unsuccessful efforts to achieve equity in a gifted and talented magnet school: “the [school application] process favored middle-class and White parents who knew about the school in advance and could negotiate the complex and detailed process” (p. 74). In some instances, parents of means use their privilege or resort to unethical methods to get their children into elite schools, as evidenced by the recent college admissions bribery scandal (United States Department of Justice 2021).

Regarding the statement that spawned this section's title, “Selection committee members use the numerical rating scale to complete a holistic evaluation of the Applicants,” it is unthinkable that a child can be holistically evaluated using report card grades, test scores, responses to interview questions, and information from two teachers. The statement must mean that quantitative scores are combined with qualitative information to assign each student a number from 1 to 5. The numerical ratings are described on page 81 of the district's *Local Plan for the Education of the Gifted*:

- 5 = consistently strong in all the application components; a definite yes
- 4 = strong in most of the application components; a likely yes
- 3 = shows strength in some application components, but not consistently strong; possible, but not likely yes
- 2 = few consistent areas of strength; a likely no
- 1 = not recommended

The local plan also explains training for the selection committee and the gifted selection process:

A team of approximately 25 people, all employees of [the district], representing a variety of experiences, backgrounds, and ethnicities serve on each Selection Committee. The selection processes for each program begin with training to attend to inter-rater reliability. . . . The presenter shares sample applications, without names, to demonstrate how to fairly review and evaluate applications as well as the differentiated program of study at the school. Training also includes a review of the characteristics of gifted children, including traditional and concomitant, as well as an overview of the program at [the gifted school]. . . . Working whole group, the trainer leads the committee through rating several sample applications. This process continues until all committee members are comfortable with the components of the application, the rating scale, and the overall selection process. . . . A minimum of three readers rate each application independently. (pp. 80-81)

This passage calls for two comments. First, nowhere in the plan does it state if the district employees on the committee are screened or asked about potential conflicts of interest. Second, while training raters on the “traditional and concomitant” characteristics of gifted children makes perfect sense, it is unlikely that a short lesson on gifted traits will have any effect on the underrepresentation issue at the gifted school. “Educators are largely untrained in gifted education and in particular, the characteristics of culturally and economically diverse gifted” (Olszewski-Kubilius and Corwith 2018, p. 43).

The second comment above is a moot point. The district's local plan makes it clear that achieving equitable representation of students at the gifted school is not a priority. “The goal of the selection process . . . is to select the top candidates from those who apply. The overarching question for selection is, ‘For whom is this program the best fit?’” (p. 80). With the current selection criteria and process, the top candidates, those for whom the school is “the best fit,” are far more likely to be privileged White or Asian American students than disadvantaged students of color. If in doubt, refer back to Figures 1 and 2.

The local plan continues on page 80 with its explanation of how children are selected for the gifted school:

The committee uses the following three questions as consideration when examining . . . applications:

- Is there evidence throughout the application that this student needs more than what is provided through the [gifted] resource cluster program at his/her home school?
- Is there evidence that shows this student has the potential to be successful in the [school's] setting?
- Is there evidence that the student is either achieving at high levels OR is displaying gifted characteristics and behaviors as identified by the parent, teachers, and/or GRT?

With the type of available evidence and the selection committee's limited knowledge, the last question seems to be the only one that a committee member would be adequately prepared to answer. The other questions deserve to be examined on their own merits.

The first question reads, "Is there evidence throughout the application that this student needs more than what is provided through the resource cluster program at his/her home school?" To explain the gifted resource cluster model, the district's *Local Plan for the Education of the Gifted* states that it is "an arrangement in which a group (cluster) of identified gifted students is assigned to a classroom with a cluster teacher who collaborates with the GRT to provide differentiated curriculum and instruction" (p. 89). Cluster teachers are regular classroom teachers who have had "local training in curriculum differentiation and social and emotional needs of gifted students" (p. 104). Cluster teachers are not required to have gifted endorsement, though earning a gifted add-on endorsement for a teaching license involves only four courses (Virginia General Assembly 2018), all offered online at numerous accredited universities across the state (e.g., Radford University, Regent University, University of Virginia, William and Mary).

Returning to the question, it is unlikely that there is enough credible evidence in a student's application for gifted school selection committee members to make fully informed decisions about whether the child "needs more than what is provided through the resource cluster program at his/her home school." Test scores and report card grades are unhelpful, so committee members must rely on written narratives from GRTs and classroom teachers, as well as checklists and transcripts of students' interview responses. The committee lacks information about students' home schools, their gifted cluster programs, and how each child fits in at their home school. Consequently, the committee is making a guess as to whether "this child needs more" than what their home school has to offer.

It is also unlikely that gifted school selection committee members obtain useful information from children's responses to the interview questions. Better questions, similar to those developed by Lundy, Carey, and Moore (1978), could evoke insightful answers for committee members to better determine a student's educational needs. For example, students' responses to "How would you organize school or have it arranged so that you and others like you could learn best?" (p. 31) would be more meaningful than answers to questions about children's talents, strengths, and future goals.

The second question that the committee considers as they are examining gifted school applications is, "Is there evidence that shows this student has the potential to be successful in the [school's] setting?" The noun *potential* is defined as "Latent qualities or abilities that may be developed and lead to future success or usefulness" (Lexico 2020b), while *latent* is defined, "existing but not yet developed or manifest; hidden or concealed" (Lexico 2020a). In an NAGC publication titled *Unlocking Emergent Talent: Supporting High Achievement of Low-Income, High-Ability Students*, Olszewski-Kubilius and Clarenbach (2012) noted that giftedness continues to be viewed by many as innate and manifested in test performance, "in spite of the fact that the majority of states include *potential to achieve* in their definitions of giftedness" (p. 9). Biological determinism was discredited long ago (Gould 1981), yet outdated thinking on the part of educators frequently results in a failure to identify "capable children [who] may not be able to demonstrate their advanced learning potential on tests . . . until after they have access to challenging curriculum and enriched learning opportunities (Olszewski-Kubilius and Clarenbach 2012, p. 9). With limited evidence and the possibility



that some evidence is tainted, the district's selection committee members must again take a guess, this time about each child's potential.

Granted, there are many deserving students enrolled at the gifted school. There are also applicants who could have been successful at the school but never had a chance due to the selection criteria and process. As explained in previous sections of this article, test scores, grades, checklists, and narratives can all be biased against students of color and economically disadvantaged students. The district's gifted school applications do not contain enough information for a few adults to make what could be life-altering decisions for children. Even if they are turned away from the gifted school, most privileged children from the district's affluent areas have promising futures. When deserving children from Title I schools have the opportunity to be educated in a state-of-the-art school by some of the district's best teachers, the trajectory of their lives could change. As it currently stands, the district's gifted school selection process promotes privilege over potential.

## Recommendations

A quick glance at page 50 of the *Local Plan for the Education of the Gifted 2020-2025* reveals that the district is well aware that its gifted program services lack "Equitable Representation of Students," the goal listed at the top of the page. The goal statement is, "Establish processes and opportunities that are inclusive of students with diverse abilities, beliefs, and cultures during the identification and education of gifted and talented students." To address the goal, the local plan—also known as the 5-year plan—includes 40 activities intended to meet 12 objectives. Rather than critique each activity in an attempt to forecast its impact on the district's underrepresentation problem, this section focuses on recommendations in four areas: universal screening, staff development, assessments, and the gifted school dilemma. Though presented within the context of the district's current practices, most of the 12 recommendations, all italicized, are generalizable to other school districts.

### Universal screening

In late 2020, the district of interest produced a video to explain revisions to its gifted identification process, such as the discontinuation of parents submitting narratives as evidence of their child's giftedness. The 7-minute video was posted on the district's website under the heading, Informational Parent Video: How to Apply for Gifted Services. According to the narrator, the district's gifted program "reflects the most effective, current, and equitable practices in gifted identification and gifted services as recommended by nationally renowned gifted education experts," and the district "has begun updating its gifted program by working with these experts to identify ways in which the gifted identification and [gifted school] selection process would reach a greater amount of students who may benefit from gifted services." If the goal is to increase the "amount" of students who might benefit from being in a gifted program, the place to start is universal screening.

Many school districts cannot afford universal screening due to the cost of assessing an entire grade level. Districts that utilize universal screening often use it as a means of increasing diversity in their gifted programs. As mentioned earlier, the district of interest uses the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test for universal screening. While the NNAT is psychometrically sound, it is not necessarily the best universal screening tool available. Research suggests that NNAT scores may not reflect the true abilities of ELLs, children of color, and low SES students, as well as primary students in general. *Recommendation 1: The NNAT should not be used for universal screening unless an additional screening method—something other than a multiple-choice test—is employed.*

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced educators to modify many of the logistical and practical aspects of K-12 schooling. Annual standardized testing was suspended in the US for the 2019-2020 school year (Barnum and Belsha 2020). Since then, other programs have been altered, interrupted, or simply eradicated. In January 2021, the district of interest's school board passed a motion to change the universal screening procedures from those outlined in the 5-year plan approved by the board in August 2020. To screen first-grade

students, the online CogAT Screening Form would replace the paper-and-pencil version of the NNAT, at least for the time being. Oddly, nothing was said at this board meeting about universal gifted screening for fifth-grade students, which apparently disappeared for the 2020-2021 school year.

The school board's motion also approved the administration of the online version of the full CogAT to students in grades 2-11 who apply for gifted services. In successive months, these students took the CogAT, and thousands of first graders were administered the CogAT Screening Form. Almost all of the administrations were proctored by each school's GRT instead of the gifted assessment specialists who had administered the NNAT and CogAT in prior years.

The CogAT Screening Form—or CogAT Screener, as it is commonly called—is actually an abbreviated version of the CogAT. The CogAT Screener costs less and takes less time to administer than the CogAT full form. It consists of three short subtests from the full form's batteries. The main disadvantage of the CogAT Screener is that examinees receive only a composite score; separate “verbal, quantitative, and nonverbal scores are not provided because they would not be reliable” (Lakin and Driver 2019, p. 2). There aren't enough items on each subtest of the CogAT Screener to reach reliability values that are up to testing industry standards. Typically, as the number of items on a test or subtest increases, so does its reliability (Payne 2003). A consequence is that students who perform pretty well on each CogAT Screener subtest will have higher scores than classmates who ace one subtest but whose performance is average on the others.

This is not an issue with the full form of the CogAT, which reports reliable scores for each battery. Districts that use the full CogAT as a screening or gifted identification tool should heed the advice of CogAT author Joni Lakin (2018): “consider allowing students to qualify for services on the basis of any one battery score, rather than only considering the composite” (p. 3). In other words, children do not need to demonstrate exceptionality in all three areas—verbal, math, and nonverbal—to be intellectually gifted. *Recommendation 2: Children who are exceptional in at least one area, based on results from the CogAT screener or full CogAT, should be considered for gifted services.*

Just as there is nothing magic about the 90th percentile on the NNAT, there are no cut scores on other standardized tests to indicate that a child should be evaluated for gifted services. The bar can always be raised or lowered. Talented children who have poor test-taking skills or test anxiety might not make the cut, so exceptions should be made. As stated in the Screening FAQs on the district of interest's website, “Parents/guardians, school staff or anyone with knowledge of the child's abilities may refer him/her for continued assessment even if the child does not score at the 90th percentile or higher.”

- *Recommendation 3: Set appropriate benchmark scores for universal screening tests.*
- *Recommendation 4: Allow children who do not meet test benchmarks to be evaluated for gifted services.*
- *Recommendation 5: Communicate to all parents and guardians at the time they receive screening results that, regardless of their child's score, they can still refer their child for further assessment for gifted services.*

Recall research indicating that African American, Latinx, and low SES children perform better on difficult tests when the tests are administered by familiar, rather than unfamiliar examiners (Fuchs and Fuchs 1986, 1989). Other than the possibility that some classroom teachers may believe that *they* are being evaluated—which could lead them to “teach to the test” in subsequent years—there seems to be no good reason for itinerant assessment specialists to test young students in place of teachers they have known since the beginning of the school year, perhaps longer. *Recommendation 6: Universal screening tests should be administered to elementary school students by their teachers.*

Turning over testing responsibilities to teachers will free up the district's assessment specialists for other work. They could visit schools to assist elementary and middle school GRTs as they “identify more students from underrepresented, underserved, and under-resourced populations,” a recurring theme in the district's 5-year plan. They would also have time to prepare for and “provide staff development on characteristics and identification of

gifted students to instructional staff,” a responsibility of gifted assessment specialists described in the plan.

## Professional development

Professional Development is the name of the fourth goal in the district’s *Local Plan for the Education of the Gifted*. The goal statement is, “Provide continuous differentiated professional development for all school staff (e.g., teachers, school counselors, teacher assistants, school administrators) on identification and education of gifted and talented students” (p. 36). The professional development (PD) goal entails 58 activities, the most activities of any of the goals. Despite an ambitious agenda, it is unlikely that the social and racial injustices of gifted programs can be corrected by putting additional PD on educators’ plates.

Even PD that incorporates the effective, research-based methods described by Darling-Hammond, Hyler, and Gardner (2017) can accomplish so much to boost the representation of underserved groups in gifted programs. Standing in the way are people’s attitudes and beliefs. Summarizing her research findings on elementary school teachers’ conceptualizations of giftedness, Erin Morris Miller (2009) wrote, “the lack of differences between the classroom teachers with different levels of training in gifted education suggests that programs leading to endorsement or certification in gifted education do not have a great deal of influence on teachers’ beliefs about giftedness” (p. 98). Miller proposed the following:

Teachers need to receive alternative educational experiences and training in working with culturally diverse students (Ford et al., 2004), particularly those experiences that promote reflection on personal beliefs. As beliefs are not going to be changed unless they are proven to be unsatisfactory by the individual teachers themselves, perhaps part of that training should be a critical exploration and study of the teachers’ individual beliefs about giftedness. Teacher educators and professional development programs could explicitly explore teachers’ beliefs as part of the first experiences teachers undertake in pursuit of greater expertise in gifted education. (p. 97)

In another article, Donna Ford (2013) reminded us that “changing long-held beliefs and attitudes is difficult but not impossible” (p. 205).

Assuming that the training portrayed by Miller (2009) has any transformational effect on educators’ longstanding biases, the next step in the PD process should be to teach teachers how to recognize gifted children from diverse backgrounds. This is especially important for pre-kindergarten and primary grades teachers. Moon and Brighton (2008) warned that gifted young children whose talents are not developed can experience negative outcomes in their cognitive, social, and affective growth, and that “the ramifications of inadequate early intervention for talent development are likely to be most severe for students from poor and cultural minority backgrounds” (p. 449).

*Recommendation 7: While all school staff need cultural diversity training, only a few faculty members at each school—volunteers who agree to serve as “talent scouts” (Mitchell 2019, para. 11)—should receive focused training on identifying gifted children of color. The scouts would work with GRTs and gifted assessment specialists in a joint effort to seek out gifted children who might have been overlooked otherwise.*

For PD sessions that involve educators’ beliefs about race, districts are advised to contact organizations with expertise in these topics, such as Learning for Justice or the Center for Racial Justice in Education. Several studies reviewed by Kåre Hauge (2019) stressed

the importance of using external experts or researchers . . . in [staff] development activities in schools. In these studies, the external experts have contributed by introducing new perspectives, creating focused and meaningful dialogues, challenging the thinking and actions of the teachers by questioning their practice, strengthening the observation focus and directing attention on what may be the next step related to the overriding goals. (p. 15)

*Recommendation 8: Schools and districts should use experienced instructors from outside the school system for professional development.*

## Assessments

Nationally normed achievement and ability tests received much-deserved scrutiny in the first half of this piece. Notwithstanding the high reliability and evidence of validity for most commercially produced standardized tests, the underidentification of African American, Indigenous, Latinx, and low-income students for gifted services can be partially attributed to the use of these assessments. Standardized achievement test scores often reflect students' socioeconomic status and the quality of their educational experiences (Renzulli and Reis 2020). Standardized ability tests tend to measure students' achievement instead of their abilities (Lohman 2006; Naglieri 2008a).

Getting into a gifted program usually requires a high score on a standardized test, which increases the chances for certain children to be identified. A report from Purdue University's Gifted Education Research and Resource Institute, titled *System Failure/Access Denied* (Gentry et al. 2019), recounted several grim statistics, including these:

Children who attend Title I schools are identified at only 58% the rate of those who attend Non-Title I schools. . . . Children who are Asian or White are 2 to more than 10 times more likely to be identified with gifts and talents than students who are AIAN [American Indian/Alaska Native American], Black, Latinx, or NHPI [Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander]. (p. 5)

A variable that contributes substantially to these unfortunate stats is "using tests for identification that yield disparate results or were not normed on the populations to which they are being applied, and applying national normative cut-off scores as the most important (or only) pathway to identification" (Gentry et al. 2019, p. 5). Comparing children in accordance with national standards is not always fair. David Lohman, primary author of the CogAT, and David Gambrell pointed out that "inferences about ability require comparison of an individual's performance with the performance of others who have had a similar opportunity to learn. National norms often do not provide such comparisons for ELL, poor, and minority children" (Lohman and Gambrell 2012, p. 41). Lohman and Gambrell recommended using local norms.

Peters, Makel, and Rambo-Hernandez (2021) conceived a hypothetical scenario to explain the difference between national norms, state norms, and local norms:

Every year, schools across the country hold tryouts for their athletic teams with the best players making the team. Subsequently, all-conference, all-state, and all-American teams are selected – each at a different "level" of competition. As the context changes, so do the criteria by which players are judged. Imagine if a school's soccer coach decided that only players who perform equivalent to All-American caliber would make the team. Students who are below that threshold do not make the team. . . . this All-American approach is precisely the type of selection process used by schools across the country for their gifted programs. (pp. 1-2)

The use of local norms holds promise for dealing with the problem of underrepresented groups in gifted programs. Using a large set of data from students in 10 states, Peters et al. (2019), found that "in districts with considerable residential segregation and dissimilar school demographics, using school-based norms will identify more African American and Latinx students (and, although not directly addressed in this study, almost certainly more students from low-income backgrounds)" (p. 16).

Some educators believe that implementing local norms is complicated and expensive, but it is neither. Resources are available on the internet to guide novices—for example, "Identifying Students for Gifted and Advanced Academic Services Using Universal Screening and Local Norms" by McIntosh and Sanguras (2020). Scott Peters's website includes an instructional video and spreadsheet under Gifted Identification Resources, "meant to show people that this process is easier than they think" (personal communication, March 1, 2021). His website is at <https://sites.google.com/uww.edu/peterss/>.

Among the district's 40 activities under the goal of Equitable Representation of Students in the *Local Plan for the Education of the Gifted 2020-2025* is "Explore the practice of using local norms for selection and placement of gifted students at [the gifted school]" (p. 52). All

indications are that local norms are a practical and useful way to address diversity issues in gifted programs. *Recommendation 9: Districts with gifted underrepresentation concerns should explore the practice of using local norms.*

Another activity in the district's 5-year plan under the goal of Identification is "Utilize high-quality, authentic performance-based assessments and rubrics based on K-12 gifted program benchmarks to increase diversity of identified students and provide more opportunities for students to display gifted characteristics" (p. 9). This aligns with the position paper on *The Role of Assessments in the Identification of Gifted Students* (National Association for Gifted Children 2008), which recommends "a variety of assessment types" (p. 3), such as performance assessments, to identify gifted students.

Jay McTighe (2015) has long advocated for performance assessments and performance tasks to "assess many of the most significant outcomes identified in the current sets of academic Standards as well as trans-disciplinary 21st Century Skills" (para. 1). These significant outcomes include critical thinking and creativity, two skills that show up on almost everyone's list of "Cs" (i.e., 21st century skills), as well as on Barbara Clark's list of the characteristics of gifted children (Clark 2008). It comes as no surprise that 23 of 36 responding states checked "Use of alternative assessments" as an area "In need of attention" on the survey for the 2014-2015 *State of the States in Gifted Education* report (National Association for Gifted Children and Council of State Directors of Programs for the Gifted 2015).

What's keeping states and school districts from using performance tasks to identify gifted children? Developing high-quality performance tasks for large-scale use is an arduous endeavor (Wren and Gareis 2019). Devising tasks that are culturally sensitive and bias-free is complex. Conducting pilot studies and field tests to determine a task's effectiveness is time-consuming. There is also the challenge of creating rubrics that scorers can interpret uniformly after they have undergone extensive training. Developers can expect multiple trips back to the drawing board, because even "the best of rubrics are always just trumped by the deluge of student responses they are written to assess" (Farley 2009, p. 199).

The district of interest successfully developed, administered, and scored performance tasks as a measure of students' critical-thinking, problem-solving, and written communication skills (Wren and Gareis 2019). The assessments were modeled on tasks embedded in the College and Work Readiness Assessment (Council for Aid to Education 2007), and were administered districtwide to all fourth- and seventh-grade students biannually from 2010 through fall 2019. In addition, the district established a reliable scoring method and obtained criterion-related validity evidence for the tasks, but they were never used for gifted screening or identification.

*Recommendation 10: Districts should utilize performance assessments as part of their gifted screening/identification processes, provided the assessments are psychometrically sound.* Districts that choose to go this route are encouraged to use an existing assessment or get help from professional test developers to create a new instrument. Districts that use low-quality performance measures could end up on the receiving end of a lawsuit from disgruntled parents.

## The gifted school dilemma

It was mentioned near the beginning of this piece that racial and economic disparities between the district of interest's student population and the gifted school's student body could be due in part to a lack of school applications from low-income students and students of color. If there is genuine concern about the equitable representation of students at the gifted school—as stated in the 5-year plan—the district is obligated to investigate the underlying reasons for the lack of applications.

Again, this situation is reminiscent of the gifted school study by Barlow and Dunbar (2010), where "few parents of color and/or low-income applied for the program. Many of them knew little or nothing about Rockwood Magnet School; others did not see a benefit in having their young child compete against children with far more advantages" (p. 73). The "reasons that minority parents gave for not enrolling their children were their concerns



that their children would feel marginalized at a predominately white, middle-class school” (p. 74).

Rather than speculate, the district of interest should actively engage in candid conversations with stakeholders in communities where there are few applications to the gifted school. An effective method for getting at the root causes of an issue is focus groups, a research method

in which a trained moderator conducts a collective interview of typically six to eight participants from similar backgrounds, similar demographic characteristics, or both. Focus groups create open lines of communication across individuals and rely on the dynamic interaction between participants to yield data that would be impossible to gather via other approaches. (Jarvis and Barberena 2008 p. 286)

In the targeted communities, focus groups should be arranged with parents whose children have been identified as gifted, as well as with parents whose children have not. The focus groups should be conducted by a reputable research organization with no affiliation to the district, and by moderators who are not “of an age, ethnic background, or gender that might inhibit group members from participating in the conversation” (Jarvis and Barberena 2008, p. 288). The chances of participants being forthright are better if these conditions are met. The research organization should also develop and administer confidential, open-ended surveys for people who do not participate in a focus group. After receiving a full report explaining the main reasons for the lack of gifted school applications from certain schools, district leadership can take appropriate action to address the problem of token integration at its gifted school. *Recommendation 11: An independent research organization should conduct focus groups and administer surveys to the parents and guardians of children at schools with gifted underrepresentation issues.*

Yet another activity under the Identification goal in the 5-year plan is “Conduct an annual review of referral, application, selection data, and procedures to ensure equitable representation of students at [the gifted school]” (p. 8). Since the topics of referrals, applications, and selection criteria have largely been covered, the final recommendation describes a way that the student body of a gifted school can become representative of a district’s student population.

Activity 1.8 appears on pages 8 and 52 of the *Local Plan for the Education of the Gifted 2020-2025*: “Consider the feasibility of implementing a lottery system for selecting identified gifted students for available seats at [the gifted school in] grades 2-8.” Holding lotteries to choose students for schools is commonplace. Magnet Schools of America (2021) reported that “three out of four magnet schools . . . use computer-based lottery systems for admissions” (para. 7). Depending on a district’s purpose for using a lottery system, guidelines and rules differ. Lotteries are usually held to decide which children are admitted to a school or program with limited enrollment. This is the case with Georgia’s PreK Program, a voluntary, tuition-free program that has more applicants than available places (Raden 1999). Interestingly, Georgia’s PreK program is supported primarily by the revenue-rich Georgia Lottery.

In another story from the Peach State, a large Georgia district once used a lottery system to select students for its school for high achievers, opened in 1987. The district had been under a federal mandate and the lottery proved to be an effective method of integrating the school. Though the school’s lottery has seen changes over the years, an early version serves as a model for districts that would prefer that the student body of their limited-enrollment schools represent a cross-section of students from the district.

To replace the gifted school selection process described in the district of interest’s 5-year plan—which demonstrably favors well-off Asian and White students—the incoming second-grade cohort would be selected on a school-by-school basis, with the district’s 50+ elementary schools allotted two places each for identified gifted first-grade students whose parents submit an application within a deadline. When more than two students from a school apply, a lottery would determine the two students. This would work similarly for rising sixth graders, except that each of the district’s 13 middle schools would be allotted 12 places for identified gifted students.



Based on Fall Membership Reports from the VDOE (Virginia Department of Education 2021a), there were 128 second-grade students and 279 sixth-grade students enrolled at the gifted school on September 30, 2020. Under the proposed partial lottery system, if every elementary school sent two of its rising second graders and every middle school sent 12 of its rising sixth graders, there would be 20 or more “at-large” spots in the new second-grade cohort and the new sixth-grade cohort. These remaining places would be filled by students whose lots were drawn from two large pools of applicants comprising rising second- and sixth-grade students who were not selected to represent their elementary or middle school.

It is possible that some schools would not max out their allotment of spots at the gifted school. Some elementary schools might not have two applicants and some middle schools might have fewer than 12 applicants, which would increase the number of at-large spots.

While this proposed plan will not be to everyone’s liking, it is a solution that attends to the inequities illustrated in Figures 1 and 2 in ways the district has yet to address. Some will argue that a lottery system would defeat the purpose of the gifted school; others will claim that a lottery will permit children to attend who didn’t earn a place at the school. Both of these arguments reek of racial property rights, the subject of the seminal *Harvard Law Review* article by Cheryl Harris (1993). It is true that the gifted school was intended exclusively for the über-gifted, an intent that essentially serves the “exclusion of nonwhites from gifted and talented programs and services [and] maintains access to educational opportunity for white students at others’ expense” (Barlow and Dunbar 2010, p. 65).

In order for real change to occur, the district’s leaders must first acknowledge that the gifted school admissions process favors children of privilege over underserved children. If the leaders act promptly, the first lottery could be held at the end of the 2021-2022 academic year. Assuming everything proceeds on schedule, the school’s student population would be significantly more diverse by September 2025, around the time that the current 5-year plan expires. *Recommendation 12: Lottery systems should be implemented to ensure equitable representation of students at gifted schools with limited enrollment.*

## A Sense of Justice

Public education has been challenged like never before as a result of the pandemic. Many educators left the profession; those who remain are stressed and overworked. But as Erika Christakis (2020) noted last year, “School Wasn’t So Great Before COVID, Either.” On the bright side, Christakis saw that “the pandemic presents an opportunity to rethink school entirely. What should we be demanding?” (para. 13).

An obvious demand is ending racist practices in America’s public schools. These practices include, but are not limited to, enforcing harsh disciplinary measures on students of color (Barrett et al. 2017), drawing attendance boundaries that have given rise to the new segregation (Rosiek 2019), and failing to identify students of color for gifted services. While demanding change to such practices is easy, effecting change is difficult, and not solely for the reason that it must be done state by state and district by district. Acknowledging the difficulties related to these changes in the face of resistance, Paul Gorski (2019) pointed out that “it’s not more difficult than navigating racism, which many students, families, and educators of color endure” (p. 61).

Gorski (2019) also said, “I cling to hope that most of us want racial equity” (p. 61). Students who attend the district of interest’s gifted school are likely to be among the “us.” In the affective column of NAGC’s Traits of Giftedness is “Idealism and sense of justice” (National Association for Gifted Children 2021b); the original list is from Barbara Clark’s *Growing Up Gifted* (Clark 2008). A *Parent’s Guide to Gifted Children* (Webb et al. 2007) includes these two common characteristics of Gifted Children:

- Concern with social and political issues and injustices
- Idealism and sense of justice appear at an early age (p. 11)

This year’s theme for the gifted school is a quote from Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “Three Dimensions of a Complete Life” sermon: “Life’s most persistent and urgent question is: ‘What

are you doing for others?" (King, Jr 1964, p. 88). The school's website states that their students have "tremendous potential to make an impact on the world around them." Given their idealism, concern with social injustice, and ability to analyze issues from different perspectives—another of Clark's Traits of Giftedness—it is possible that the gifted school's middle grades students could come up with viable solutions to correct the underrepresentation problem at their school. Perhaps the gifted students themselves will be our strongest advocates for racial and social equity.

## Acknowledgments

The author would like to thank Meghan Raftery, Carol Thurman, Linda Vanasupa, and Naomi Wren for their helpful comments that greatly improved the manuscript.

## References

- Acar, Selcuk, Sedat Sen, and Nur Cayirdag. 2016. "Consistency of the performance and nonperformance methods in gifted identification: A multilevel meta-analytic review." *Gifted Child Quarterly* 60 (2): 81–101.
- American Federation of Teachers and Badass Teachers Association. 2015. *Quality of Worklife Survey*. <https://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/worklifesurveyresults2015.pdf>.
- Armstrong, Thomas. 2006. *The Best Schools: How Human Development Research Should Inform Educational Practice*. ASCD.
- Badger Institute. 2018. *Badger Institute Teachers Survey on Federal School Funding*. <https://www.badgerinstitute.org/BI-Files/Federalism/Federal-teacher-survey-Dec-2017/FederalteachersurveyDec2017.pdf>.
- Baldwin, Alexinia Y. 1985. "Programs for the gifted and talented: Issues concerning minority populations." In *The Gifted and Talented: Developmental Perspectives*, edited by Frances D. Horowitz and Marion O'Brien, 223–249. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Baldwin, James. 1962. "As much truth as one can bear." *New York Times Book Review* 14 (January 14, 1962).
- Barlow, Kathleen, and Elaine Dunbar. 2010. "Race, class, and Whiteness in gifted and talented identification: A case study." *Berkeley Review of Education* 1 (1). <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/247908gb>.
- Barnum, Matt, and Kalya Belsha. 2020. "All states can cancel standardized tests this year, Trump and DeVos say." *Chalkbeat* (March 20, 2020). <https://www.chalkbeat.org/2020/3/20/21196085/all-states-can-cancel-standardized-tests-this-year-trump-and-devos-say>.
- Barrett, Nathan, Andrew McEachin, Jonathan N. Mills, and Jon Valant. 2017. *What Are the Sources of School Discipline Disparities by Student Race and Family Income*. New Orleans, LA: Education Research Alliance for New Orleans, November 20, 2017. <https://educationresearchalliancencola.org/publications/what-are-the-sources-of-school-discipline-disparities-by-student-race-and-family-income>.
- Brigandi, Carla B. 2015. "Gifted secondary school students: The perceived relationship between enrichment and achievement orientation," University of Connecticut. <https://opencommons.uconn.edu/dissertations/731>.
- Brookhart, Susan M. 1994. "Teachers' grading: Practice and theory." *Applied Measurement in Education* 7 (4): 279–301.
- Brookhart, Susan M., Thomas R. Guskey, Alex J. Bowers, James H. McMillan, Jeffrey K. Smith, Lisa F. Smith, Michael T. Stevens, and Megan E. Welsh. 2016. "A century of grading research: Meaning and value in the most common educational measure." *Review of Educational Research* 86 (4): 803–848.
- Buckner, Cari. 2009. "Gifted first graders in a multi-ability classroom: an interpretive case study," Utah State University. <https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/etd/300>.

- Caldas, Stephen J. 1993. "Reexamination of input and process factor effects on public school achievement." *The Journal of Educational Research* 86 (4): 206–214.
- Card, David, and Laura Giuliano. 2016. "Universal screening increases the representation of low-income and minority students in gifted education." In *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 113:13678–13683. 48. Washington, DC: National Academy of Sciences.
- Carman, Carol A, Christine A. P. Walther, and Robert A. Bartsch. 2020. "Differences in using the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) 7 nonverbal battery versus the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test (NNAT) 2 to identify the gifted/talented." *Gifted Child Quarterly* 64 (3): 171–191.
- Carman, Carol A., and Debra K. Taylor. 2010. "Socioeconomic status effects on using the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test (NNAT) to identify the gifted/talented." *Gifted Child Quarterly* 54 (2): 75–84.
- Carter, Rona, Sandra Williams, and Wendy K Silverman. 2008. "Cognitive and emotional facets of test anxiety in African American school children." *Cognition and Emotion* 22 (3): 539–551.
- Cheville, R. Alan. 2018. "Murmurations - why a dialectic journal?" *Murmurations: Emergence, Equity and Education* 1 (1): 1–4. <https://murmurations-journal.org/index.php/murmurations/issue/view/3/meee.v1i1>.
- Christakis, Erika. 2020. "School wasn't so great before COVID, either." *The Atlantic* 326 (5): 17–22. <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2020/12/school-wasnt-so-great-before-covid-either/616923/>.
- Clark, Barbara. 2008. *Growing Up Gifted*. 7th ed. New Jersey: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Cooperative Strategies. 2017. *Community Dialogue Results Report*, December 7, 2017. [http://www.dejongrichter.com/vbcps/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/04/VBCPS\\_CD1\\_ResultsReport\\_mts20171207.pdf](http://www.dejongrichter.com/vbcps/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/04/VBCPS_CD1_ResultsReport_mts20171207.pdf).
- Council for Aid to Education. 2007. *College and Work Readiness Assessment*.
- Cunningham, Barbara L. 2003. "The phenomenon of intellectually gifted underachievers and education: Listening to the male adolescent voice," University of Montana. <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/etd/9452>.
- Darling-Hammond, Linda, Maria E. Hyler, and Madelyn Gardner. 2017. *Effective Teacher Professional Development*. Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED606743.pdf>.
- Davis, Gary A., and Sylvia B. Rimm. 2004. *Education of the Gifted and Talented*. 5th ed. Boston: Pearson.
- Di Carlo, Matthew, and Klarissa Cervantes. 2018. *Collection and Availability of Teacher Diversity Data: A Survey of 51 State Education Agencies*. Washington, DC: Albert Shanker Institute. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED591963.pdf>.
- Dik, Bryan J. 2007. "Ability tests." In *Encyclopedia of Measurement and Statistics*, edited by Neil J Salkind and Kristin Rasmussen, 1:1–5. SAGE.
- Downey, Douglas B., and Shana Pribesh. 2004. "When race matters: Teachers' evaluations of students' classroom behavior." *Sociology of Education* 77 (4): 267–282.
- Drake, Katherine Seiden. 2006. *Gifted Services Identification Report*. Saint Paul, MN: Saint Paul Public Schools, Department of Research, Evaluation and Assessment.
- Dunbar, Stephen B., and Catherine J. Welch. 2015. *Iowa Assessments, Forms E, F, and G*.
- Erwin, Jesse O., and Frank C. Worrell. 2012. "Assessment practices and the underrepresentation of minority students in gifted and talented education." *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment* 30 (1): 74–87.
- Farley, Todd. 2009. *Making the Grades: My Misadventures in the Standardized Testing Industry*. Sausalito CA: PoliPoint Press.
- Ford, Donna Y. 1995. "Desegregating gifted education: A need unmet." *Journal of Negro Education*, 52–62.
- Ford, Donna Y. 1998. "The underrepresentation of minority students in gifted education: Problems and promises in recruitment and retention." *The Journal of Special Education* 32 (1): 4–14.
- Ford, Donna Y. 2013. *Recruiting and Retaining Culturally Different Students in Gifted Education*. Waco, TX: Prufrock Press.

- Ford, Donna Y., Tarek C. Grantham, and H. Richard Milner. 2004. "Underachievement among gifted African American students: Cultural, social, and psychological considerations." In *In the Eyes of the Beholder: Critical Issues for Diversity in Gifted Education*, edited by Diane Boothe and Julian C. Stanley, 15–31. Prufrock Press: Waco, TX.
- Ford, Donna Y., Tarek C. Grantham, and Gilman W. Whiting. 2008. "Culturally and linguistically diverse students in gifted education: Recruitment and retention issues." *Exceptional Children* 74 (3): 289–306.
- Fuchs, Douglas, and Lynn S. Fuchs. 1986. "Test procedure bias: A meta-analysis of examiner familiarity effects." *Review of Educational Research* 56 (2): 243–262.
- Fuchs, Douglas, and Lynn S. Fuchs. 1989. "Effects of examiner familiarity on Black, Caucasian, and Hispanic children: A meta-analysis." *Exceptional Children* 55 (4): 303–308.
- Gao, Xin, and Jennifer Grisham-Brown. 2011. "Use of authentic assessment to report accountability data on young children's language, literacy and pre-math competency." *International Education Studies* 4 (2): 41–53. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1066453.pdf>.
- Gaye-Valentine, Andrea, and Marcus Credé. 2013. "Assessing the construct validity of test anxiety: The influence of test characteristics and impact on test score criterion validity." *TPM: Testing, Psychometrics, Methodology in Applied Psychology* 20 (2): 117–130. <http://www.tpm.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/20.2.2.pdf>.
- Gentry, Marcia, Anne Gray, Gilman W. Whiting, Yukiko Maeda, and Nielsen Pereira. 2019. *Gifted Education in the United States: Laws, Access, Equity, and Missingness Across the Country by Locale, Title I School Status, and Race*. Purdue University and Jack Kent Cooke Foundation. <https://www.education.purdue.edu/geri/new-publications/gifted-education-in-the-united-states/>.
- Giessman, Jacob A., James L. Gambrell, and Molly S. Stebbins. 2013. "Minority performance on the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test, versus the Cognitive Abilities Test, Form 6: One gifted program's experience." *Gifted Child Quarterly* 57 (2): 101–109.
- Gonser, Sarah. 2020. "A strategy for overcoming equity issues in gifted programs." *Edutopia* (January 30, 2020). <https://www.edutopia.org/article/strategy-overcoming-equity-issues-gifted-programs>.
- Gorski, Paul. 2019. "Avoiding Racial Equity Detours." *Educational Leadership* 76 (6). <http://www.edchange.org/publications/Avoiding-Racial-Equity-Detours-Gorski.pdf>.
- Gould, Stephen J. 1981. *The Mismeasure of Man*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Graham, Sandra. 2009. "Giftedness in adolescence: African American gifted youth and their challenges from a motivational perspective." In *The Development of Giftedness and Talent Across the Lifespan*, edited by Frances D. Horowitz, Rena F. Subotnik, and Dona J. Matthews, 109–129. American Psychological Association.
- Great Schools Partnership. 2015. "The glossary of education reform for journalists, parents, and community members: Norm-referenced test," July 22, 2015. <https://www.edglossary.org/norm-referenced-test/>.
- Greene, Mary Trombatore. 2001. "Instructional differentiation in general education and the gifted resource room: Teacher and student perceptions," University of Nevada, Las Vegas. <https://digital scholarship.unlv.edu/rtds/2485/>.
- Grissom, Jason A., Emily C. Kern, and Luis A. Rodriguez. 2015. "The 'representative bureaucracy' in education: Educator workforce diversity, policy outputs, and outcomes for disadvantaged students." *Educational Researcher* 44 (3): 185–192. <https://my.vanderbilt.edu/jasongrissom/files/2012/05/Representative-Bureaucracy-in-Education.pdf>.
- Grissom, Jason A., Jill Nicholson-Crotty, and Sean Nicholson-Crotty. 2009. "Race, region, and representative bureaucracy." *Public Administration Review* 69 (5): 911–919.
- Grissom, Jason A., Christopher Redding, and Joshua F. Bleiberg. 2019. "Money over merit? Socioeconomic gaps in receipt of gifted services." *Harvard Educational Review* 89 (3): 337–369. <https://cdn.vanderbilt.edu/vu-news/files/20190924120921/Grissom-Redding-Bleiberg-Socioeconomic-Gaps-in-Receipt-of-Gifted-Services.pdf>.
- Guskey, Thomas R., and Susan M. Brookhart. 2019. "Introduction." In *What We Know About Grading: What Works, What Doesn't, and What's Next*, edited by Thomas R. Guskey and Susan M. Brookhart, 1–11. ASCD. <http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/118062/chapters/Introduction.aspx>.

- Haladyna, Thomas. 2007. "Achievement tests." In *Encyclopedia of Measurement and Statistics*, edited by Neil J. Salkind and Kristin Rasmussen, 1:7–11. SAGE: Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Harris, Cheryl I. 1993. "Whiteness as property." *Harvard Law Review* 106 (8): 1707–1791. [https://harvardlawreview.org/wp-content/uploads/1993/06/1707-1791\\_Online.pdf](https://harvardlawreview.org/wp-content/uploads/1993/06/1707-1791_Online.pdf).
- Hart, Betty, and Todd R. Risley. 1995. *Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experience of Young American Children*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing.
- Hauge, Kåre. 2019. "Teachers' collective professional development in school: A review study." *Cogent Education* 6 (1): 1–20. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/2331186X.2019.1619223?needAccess=true>.
- Hébert, Thomas P. 2018. "An examination of high-achieving first-generation college students from low-income backgrounds." *Gifted Child Quarterly* 62 (1): 96–110.
- Hébert, Thomas P. 2019. "A longitudinal case study of exceptional leadership talent." *Gifted Child Quarterly* 63 (1): 22–35. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0016986218800068>.
- Hembree, Ray. 1988. "Correlates, causes, effects, and treatment of test anxiety." *Review of Educational Research* 58 (1): 47–77.
- Henrysson, Sten. 1971. "Gathering, analyzing, and using data on test items." In *Educational Measurement*, 2nd ed., edited by Robert L. Thorndike, 130–159. American Council on Education Washington, DC.
- Hoff, Erika. 2013. *Language Development*. 5th ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.
- Hoover, Hiram D., Stephen B. Dunbar, and David A. Frisbie. 2001. *Iowa Tests of Basic Skills, Form A*.
- Jarvis, Sharon E., and Laura Barberena. 2008. "Focus group." In *Encyclopedia of Survey Research Methods*, edited by Paul J. Lavrakas, 1:286–289. SAGE Publications Sage CA: Los Angeles, CA.
- Jencks, Christopher, Marshall Smith, Henry Acland, Mary J. Mary J. Bane, David Cohen, Herbert Gintis, Barbara Heyns, and Stephanie Michelson. 1972. *Inequality: A Reassessment of the Effect of Family and Schooling in America*. New York: Basic Books.
- Johnston Taylor, Susan. 2019. *Examining the Test Prep Industry for Local Business Angles*. Donald W. Reynolds National Center for Business Journalism, July 23, 2019. <https://businessjournalism.org/2019/07/test-prep-industry/>.
- Kebede, Laura F. 2020. "No more 'secret handshake': Universal screening qualifies 600 more Memphis students for gifted education. More to come." *Chalkbeat Tennessee* (January 14, 2020). <https://tn.chalkbeat.org/2020/1/14/21121754/no-more-secret-handshake-universal-screening-qualifies-600-more-memphis-students-for-gifted-educatio>.
- King, Jr, Martin Luther. 1964. "Three Dimensions of a Complete Life." In *Strength to Love*, 82–94. Pocket Books: New York. <https://philosophyofsexlove.files.wordpress.com/2019/01/king-strength-to-love.pdf>.
- Lakin, Joni M. 2016. "Universal screening and the representation of historically underrepresented minority students in gifted education: Minding the gaps in Card and Giuliano's research." *Journal of Advanced Academics* 27 (2): 139–149.
- Lakin, Joni M. 2018. *Cognitively Speaking: Getting Value and Equity from Your Universal Screening Process*. Riverside Insights. <https://cms.riversideinsights.com/uploads/652ddb3e9afe4bec9181a32d258fc105.pdf>.
- Lakin, Joni M., and Victoria Driver. 2019. *Cognitively Speaking: Introducing Form 8*. Riverside Insights. [https://40f818a3-32b5-485c-b9c6-c12ab42516db.filesusr.com/ugd/7ccb1d\\_4e43471809c24433a7594b6c63029c49.pdf](https://40f818a3-32b5-485c-b9c6-c12ab42516db.filesusr.com/ugd/7ccb1d_4e43471809c24433a7594b6c63029c49.pdf).
- Lewis, Joan D. 2001. "Language isn't needed: Nonverbal assessments and gifted learners." ERIC. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED453026.pdf>.
- Lexico. 2020a. "Latent." <https://www.lexico.com/definition/latent>.
- Lexico. 2020b. "Potential." <https://www.lexico.com/definition/potential>.
- Link, Laura J., and Thomas R. Guskey. 2019. "How traditional grading contributes to student inequalities and how to fix it." *Curriculum in Context* 45 (1): 12–19. [http://wsascd.org/wp-content/uploads/2019-Fall-Winter-CinC\\_f.pdf](http://wsascd.org/wp-content/uploads/2019-Fall-Winter-CinC_f.pdf).



- Lohman, David F. 2006. "Beliefs about differences between ability and accomplishment: From folk theories to cognitive science." *Roeper Review* 29 (1): 32–40. <https://lesacreduprintemps19.files.wordpress.com/2012/12/beliefs-about-differences-between-ability-and-accomplishment-from-folk-theories-to-cognitive-scienc.pdf>.
- Lohman, David F. 2011a. *Cognitive Abilities Test, Form 7*.
- Lohman, David F. 2011b. *Introducing Form 7 of the Cognitive Abilities Test*. <https://web.archive.org/web/20160221232248/https://faculty.education.uiowa.edu/docs/dlohman/CogAT7-on-the-road4.pdf>.
- Lohman, David F., and James L. Gambrell. 2012. "Using nonverbal tests to help identify academically talented children." *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment* 30 (1): 25–44. <https://scottbarrykaufman.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Lohman-Gambrell-2012.pdf>.
- Lohman, David F., and Joni M. Lakin. 2017. *Cognitive Abilities Test, Form 8*.
- Lundy, Ruthe A., Richard W. Carey, and Rosemarie K. Moore. 1978. *Dimensions of Learning for the Highly Gifted Student*. Palo Alto Unified School District. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED155864.pdf>.
- Magnet Schools of America. 2021. "Key facts about magnet schools." <https://magnet.edu/getinvolved/grassroots-action-center/key-facts-about-magnet-schools>.
- McIntosh, Joel, and Laila Y. Sanguras. 2020. "Identifying students for gifted and advanced academic services using universal screening and local norms." <https://www.prufrock.com/Universal-Screening-and-Local-Norms-for-Gifted-Advanced-Academics.aspx>.
- McMillan, James H. 2019. "Surveys of teachers' grading practices and perceptions." In *What We Know About Grading: What Works, What Doesn't, and What's Next*, edited by Thomas R. Guskey and Susan M. Brookhart, 84–112. ASCD. <http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/118062/chapters/Surveys-of-Teachers'-Grading-Practices-and-Perceptions.aspx>.
- McTighe, Jay. 2015. "Performance task blog series # 2 – Why should we use performance tasks?" McTighe & Associates Consulting. <https://jaymctighe.com/blog-2-why-should-we-use-performance-tasks/>.
- Meier, Kenneth J., and Joseph Stewart, Jr. 1992. "The impact of representative bureaucracies: Educational systems and public policies." *The American Review of Public Administration* 22 (3): 157–171.
- Mencken, Henry Louis. 1949. "Three solutions." *Omaha World-Herald* (December 26, 1949): 18.
- Messick, Samuel. 1989. "Validity." In *Educational Measurement*, 3rd ed., edited by Robert L. Linn, 13–103. American Council on Education / Macmillan.
- Methia, Dick. 2004. *Help Your Child Overcome Test Anxiety and Achieve Higher Test Scores*. College Station, TX: Virtual Bookwork.
- Miller, Erin M. 2009. "The effect of training in gifted education on elementary classroom teachers' theory-based reasoning about the concept of giftedness." *Journal for the Education of the Gifted* 33 (1): 65–105.
- Mitchell, Corey. 2019. "Mining for gifted students in untapped places." *Education Week* (December 12, 2019). <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/mining-for-gifted-students-in-untapped-places/2019/12>.
- Moon, Tonya R., and Catherine M. Brighton. 2008. "Primary teachers' conceptions of giftedness." *Journal for the Education of the Gifted* 31 (4): 447–480. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ799762.pdf>.
- Naglieri, Jack A. 2008a. "Traditional IQ: 100 years of misconception and its relationship to minority representation in gifted programs." In *Critical Issues in Equity and Excellence in Gifted Education: Alternative Assessment of Gifted Learners*, edited by Joyce VanTassel-Baska, 67–88. Prufrock Press. <https://jacknaglieri.com/article-library>.
- Naglieri, Jack A. 2008b. *Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test, 2nd ed.*
- Naglieri, Jack A. 2020. "Tests by Jack A. Naglieri, Ph.D." JackNaglieri.com. <https://jacknaglieri.com/tests>.
- Naglieri, Jack A., and Donna Y. Ford. 2003. "Addressing underrepresentation of gifted minority children using the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test (NNAT)." *Gifted Child Quarterly* 47 (2): 155–160.



- National Association for Gifted Children. 2008. *Position Statement: The Role of Assessments in the Identification of Gifted Students*. <https://www.nagc.org/about-nagc/nagc-position-statements-white-papers>.
- National Association for Gifted Children. 2021a. "Identification." National Association for Gifted Children. <https://www.nagc.org/resources-publications/gifted-education-practices/identification>.
- National Association for Gifted Children. 2021b. "Traits of Giftedness." National Association for Gifted Children. <https://dev.nagc.org/resources-publications/resources/my-child-gifted/common-characteristics-gifted-individuals/traits>.
- National Association for Gifted Children and Council of State Directors of Programs for the Gifted. 2015. *2014–2015 State of the States in Gifted Education: National Policy and Practice Data*. Report. <https://www.nagc.org/resources-publications/gifted-state/2014-2015-state-states-gifted-education>.
- National Center for Education Statistics. 2020. "Fast facts: Teacher characteristics and trends." <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=28>.
- National Research Council. 2010. *Language Diversity, School Learning, and Closing Achievement Gaps: A Workshop Summary*. National Academies Press. <https://www.nap.edu/read/12907/chapter/1>.
- Nicholson-Crotty, Jill, Jason A. Grissom, and Sean Nicholson-Crotty. 2011. "Bureaucratic representation, distributional equity, and democratic values in the administration of public programs." *The Journal of Politics* 73 (2): 582–596.
- Olszewski-Kubilius, Paula, and Jane Clarenbach. 2012. *Unlocking Emergent Talent: Supporting High Achievement of Low-Income, High-Ability Students*. National Association for Gifted Children. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED537321.pdf>.
- Olszewski-Kubilius, Paula, and Susan Corwith. 2018. "Poverty, academic achievement, and giftedness: A literature review." *Gifted Child Quarterly* 62 (1): 37–55.
- Payne, David A. 2003. *Applied Educational Assessment*. 2nd ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning.
- Pearson. 2018. "NNAT3 FAQs." <https://www.pearsonassessments.com/content/dam/school/global/clinical/us/assets/nnat3/nnat3-faqs.pdf>.
- Peters, Scott J., Matthew C. Makel, and Karen Rambo-Hernandez. 2021. "Local norms for gifted and talented student identification: Everything you need to know." *Gifted Child Today* 44 (2): 93–104.
- Peters, Scott J., Karen Rambo-Hernandez, Matthew C. Makel, Michael S. Matthews, and Jonathan A. Plucker. 2019. "Effect of local norms on racial and ethnic representation in gifted education." *AERA Open* 5 (2): 1–18. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/2332858419848446>.
- Pfeiffer, Steven I., and Tania Jarosewich. 2003. *GRS: Gifted Rating Scales*.
- Prober, Paula. 2018. "How will you know a gifted adult when you see one?" Your Rainforest Mind: Support for the Excessively Curious, Creative, Smart & Sensitive, May 1, 2018. <https://rainforestmind.wordpress.com/tag/identification/>.
- Quinn, David M. 2020. "Experimental evidence on teachers' racial bias in student evaluation: The role of grading scales." *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 42 (3): 375–392.
- Quintana, Stephen M., A. Wade Boykin, Andrew Fuligni, Sandra Graham, Samuel Ortiz, and Frank C. Worrell. 2012. *Ethnic and Racial Disparities in Education: Psychology's Role in Understanding and Reducing Disparities*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association. <https://www.apa.org/ed/resources/racial-disparities>.
- Raden, Anthony. 1999. *Universal Prekindergarten in Georgia: A Case Study of Georgia's Lottery-Funded Pre-K Program*. New York: Foundation for Child Development. <https://www.fcd-us.org/assets/2010/11/Universal20PreK20in20Georgia.pdf>.
- Renzulli, Joseph, and Sally M. Reis. 2020. "Tackling underrepresentation in gifted education." *District Administration* (January 20, 2020). <https://districtadministration.com/tackling-underrepresentation-in-gifted-education/>.
- Renzulli, Joseph S., Linda H. Smith, Alan J. White, Carolyn M. Callahan, Robert K. Hartman, and Karen L. Westberg. 2002. *Scales for Rating the Behavioral Characteristics of Superior Students, Revised edition*.

- Riverside Insights. 2021. "The Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT)." Riverside Insights. <https://info.riversideinsights.com/cogat>.
- Rocha, Rene R., and Daniel P. Hawes. 2009. "Racial diversity, representative bureaucracy, and equity in multiracial school districts." *Social Science Quarterly* 90 (2): 326–344.
- Roda, Allison. 2017. "Parenting in the age of high-stakes testing: Gifted and talented admissions and the meaning of parenthood." *Teachers College Record* 119 (8): 1–53. <https://www.tcrecord.org/Content.asp?ContentId=21930>.
- Rosiek, Jerry. 2019. "School segregation: A realist's view." *Phi Delta Kappan* 100 (5): 8–13. <https://kappanonline.org/school-segregation-realists-view-rosiek/>.
- Ryser, Gail R., and Kathleen McConnell. 2004. *SIGS-complete kit: Scales for Identifying Gifted Students*.
- Schroth, Stephen T., and Jason A. Helfer. 2008. "Identifying gifted students: Educator beliefs regarding various policies, processes, and procedures." *Journal for the Education of the Gifted* 32 (2): 155–179. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ826289.pdf>.
- Sexton, Patricia C. 1961. *Education and Income: Inequalities of Opportunity in Our Public Schools*. New York: Viking Press.
- Shaunessy, Elizabeth, Frances A. Karnes, and Yolanda Cobb. 2004. "Assessing potentially gifted students from lower socioeconomic status with nonverbal measures of intelligence." *Perceptual and Motor Skills* 98 (3\_suppl): 1129–1138.
- Slocumb, Paul D., and Ruby K. Payne. 2000. *Removing the Mask: Giftedness in Poverty*. Aha! Process, Inc.
- Steele, Claude M., and Joshua Aronson. 1995. "Stereotype threat and the intellectual test performance of African Americans." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 69 (5): 797–811. [https://users.nber.org/~sewp/events/2005.01.14/Bios+Links/Good-rec2-Steele\\_+\\_Aronson\\_95.pdf](https://users.nber.org/~sewp/events/2005.01.14/Bios+Links/Good-rec2-Steele_+_Aronson_95.pdf).
- Tenenbaum, Harriet R., and Martin D. Ruck. 2007. "Are teachers' expectations different for racial minority than for European American students? A meta-analysis." *Journal of Educational Psychology* 99 (2): 253–273. <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/6e99/2c62985008d862b31a5d009efdedea3b3b8b.pdf>.
- tests.com. 2021. *CogAT Practice Test*. <https://www.tests.com/practice/cogat-practice-test>.
- Tucker, Amy. 2013. *20 Things Every #Gifted Child Needs to Know ... and Probably Everyone Else, Too. Taste Like Crazy: On the Left Side of the Sanity Bell Curve*, November 21, 2013. <http://tastelikecrazy.com/2013/11/21/20-things-every-gifted-child-needs-to-know/>.
- U.S. Department of Education. 2006. *Elementary and Secondary School Civil Rights Survey*. Report.
- United States Department of Justice. 2021. "Investigations of College Admissions and Testing Bribery Scheme," May 13, 2021. <https://www.justice.gov/usao-ma/investigations-college-admissions-and-testing-bribery-scheme>.
- Unnever, James D., Allan C. Kerckhoff, and Timothy J. Robinson. 2000. "District variations in educational resources and student outcomes." *Economics of Education Review* 19 (3): 245–259.
- Virginia Department of Education. 2020. "Research focus: Gifted education." *Quarterly Research Bulletin* 1 (3).
- Virginia Department of Education. 2021a. "Fall Membership Build-A-Table." [https://p1pe.doe.virginia.gov/apex\\_captcha/home.do?apexTypeId=304](https://p1pe.doe.virginia.gov/apex_captcha/home.do?apexTypeId=304).
- Virginia Department of Education. 2021b. "Standards of Learning Assessment Results: Assessment & Achievement Data." [https://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/achievement\\_data/](https://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/achievement_data/).
- Virginia General Assembly. 2010a. *Title 8. Education: 8VAC20-40-60. Local plan, local advisory committee, and annual report*. <https://law.lis.virginia.gov/admincode/title8/agency20/chapter40/section60/>.
- Virginia General Assembly. 2010b. *Title 8. Education: 8VAC20-40-40. Screening, referral, identification, and service*. <https://law.lis.virginia.gov/admincode/title8/agency20/chapter40/section40/>.
- Virginia General Assembly. 2018. *Title 8. Education: 8VAC20-23-370. Gifted education (add-on endorsement)*. <https://law.lis.virginia.gov/admincode/title8/agency20/chapter23/section370/>.

- Walsh, Daniel J. 1986. "SES, Academic Achievement, and Reorganization of Metropolitan Area Schools: Preliminary Implications of the Milwaukee Area Study." *Metropolitan Education* 1 (1): 78–91.
- Warne, Russell T. 2015. "Test review: Cognitive Abilities Test, Form 7 (CogAT7)." *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment* 33 (2): 188–192.
- Wasserberg, Martin J. 2014. "Stereotype threat effects on African American children in an urban elementary school." *The Journal of Experimental Education* 82 (4): 502–517.
- Webb, James T., Janet L. Gore, Edward R. Amend, and Arlene R. DeVries. 2007. *A Parent's Guide to Gifted Children*. Scottsdale, AZ: Great Potential Press.
- Westberg, Karen L. 2012. "Using teacher rating scales in the identification of students for gifted services." In *Identification: The Theory and Practice of Identifying Students for Gifted and Talented Education Services*, edited by Scott L. Hunsaker, 363–379. Creative Learning Press: Mansfield Center, CT. [https://files.nwesd.org/website/Teaching\\_Learning/HiCap/Session%202/ID/Westberg-Using%20Teacher%20Rating%20Scales.pdf](https://files.nwesd.org/website/Teaching_Learning/HiCap/Session%202/ID/Westberg-Using%20Teacher%20Rating%20Scales.pdf).
- White, Gwyne W., Cesalie T. Stepney, Danielle R. Hatchimonji, Dominic C. Mocerri, Arielle V. Linsky, Jazmin A. Reyes-Portillo, and Maurice J. Elias. 2016. "The increasing impact of socioeconomic and race on standardized academic test scores across elementary, middle, and high school." *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 86 (1): 10–23.
- Worrell, Frank C. 2003. "Why are there so few African Americans in gifted programs?" In *Surmounting All Odds: Education, Opportunity, and Society in the New Millennium*, edited by Carol C. Yeakey and Ronald D. Henderson, 423–454. Greenwich, CT: Information Age.
- Wren, Douglas G., and Jeri Benson. 2004. "Measuring test anxiety in children: Scale development and internal construct validation." *Anxiety, Stress & Coping* 17 (3): 227–240. <https://www.andrews.edu/sed/gpc/faculty-research/montagano-research/measuring-test-anxie.pdf>.
- Wren, Douglas G., and Christopher R. Gareis. 2019. *Assessing Deeper Learning: Developing, Implementing, and Scoring Performance Tasks*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.