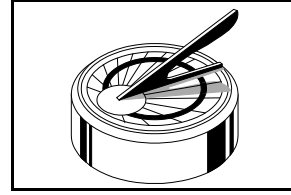


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indicate that ninety percent of fourth graders passed the state mathematics test, but only forty-one percent mastered the federally designed NAEP standards. Another example is New York where the state passing rate for fourth grade mathematics was eighty-five percent while the NAEP passing rate was only thirty-six percent. The NAEP tests are highly regarded national assessments developed and applied by educational researchers for thirty-nine years (<http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/about/#overview>). This national disgrace clearly has had a detrimental effect on all students. In regard to this situation, Diane Ravitch has said (The New York Times, November 7, 2005): “The release last month of test results by the National Assessment of Educational Progress, which is part of the Department of Education, vividly demonstrated why varying state standards and tests are inadequate. Almost all states report that, based on their own tests, incredibly large proportions of their students meet high standards. Yet the scores on the federal test (which was given to a representative sample of fourth and eighth graders) were far lower. Basically, the states have embraced low standards and grade inflation.” The gifted have been particularly affected by being denied a challenging education because of this *teaching for the test* agenda. It is time for national and state gifted organizations to pressure elected officials to modify current testing laws so that all teachers can do their job more effectively.

Two articles in this issue express our concern with identifying and educating gifted Black and Hispanic students. Professor Donna Ford and her colleagues at George Peabody College, Vanderbilt University, are national leaders regarding this problem. Her column addresses some of the steps that can be taken to improve the early identification of gifted minority students, while Dr. H. Richard Milner’s article concentrates on the discussing various teaching methods and philosophies to promote maximum learning opportunities. Both authors make recommendations that can be used in all school systems – urban, suburban and rural. Their recommendations are also based on a positive outlook toward improving the selection and education of gifted minority students. The third article, written by Catherine McClure, provides a concise summary of issues related to I.Q. testing – particularly in the areas of multiple intelligences and assessing gifted minority students. She recently received her Masters Degree from the University of Michigan and is now teaching elective enrichment courses in the Ann Arbor Schools. Dr. Michael Walters provides an insightful discussion of the giftedness of a great Jewish scholar, Moses Maimonides. We have also reprinted a letter to The Wall Street Journal by Dr. Joseph Piro of Long Island University. It discusses some of the pitfalls of online courses taken by gifted students. This issue concludes with the review of two books from *Gifted Education News-Page* (August-September 2005) that should appeal to these students and their teachers.

**Greetings and Happy New Year!** Recent comparisons of statewide high stakes testing results with the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) show large and educationally scandalous discrepancies. For example, Idaho data

**Maurice D. Fisher, Ph.D. Publisher**

## **Identification of Young Culturally Diverse Students for Gifted Education Programs**

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I have worked in the field of gifted education for approximately 15 years (at the university level) and have examined several reports about the persistent and pervasive under-representation of culturally diverse students in gifted education programs. Sadly, I have seen little progress relative to demographic changes – Black and Hispanic students continue to be as under-represented in gifted programs today as they were 20 years ago (Ford, 1998). It is clear that we must analyze and evaluate our efforts and, then, proactively and aggressively address this problem. In this short article, I offer three propositions and provide recommendations for how we might go about achieving the goal of diversifying gifted education. First, I believe that we can increase diversity in gifted education classes if we are deliberate and intentional in our efforts. Second, I contend that previous efforts have been less than effective because we've sought quick and easy solutions to this complex problem. Finally, I argue that past efforts have not had the desired impact because we have taken an intervention rather than prevention approach to identification. Stated differently, the earlier we identify giftedness among diverse students and the sooner we provide gifted education services, the more likely we are to see demographic changes in gifted education. This article is written with this last assertion in mind. What are some ways to identify and serve culturally diverse gifted students in the early years?

### **Young Gifted Diverse Students**

*After spending nearly three weeks alone and surviving on raw pasta, mustard and ketchup, a 2-year-old Jacksonville, Florida, girl was in good spirits Tuesday morning at a hospital (CNN, 2003).*

In September of 2003, I recall reading the above caption and hearing several newscasts about the situation. My immediate reaction was – and remains – “This is a gifted child! Who is she? Who are her parents? Are they educators? What is their economic status?” These questions were followed by a few assumptions: “If she can survive for this long at the age of two, she must be advanced verbally. She probably enjoys books, and she has been exposed to a great deal of education-oriented activities.” After reading the article, none of my assumptions held true. This African American toddler lived in a low SES home with a single, 22 year old mother who had a juvenile record. In September, the toddler was left home alone, while the mother went shopping and was arrested for shoplifting.

This African American child is now 4½ years of age – one year from entering formal schooling. Will her teachers know of this incredible example of survival? Will they even consider the possibility that this is a gifted child if she lacks basic skills, does not test well, or does not have an extensive vocabulary? What strengths will teachers see in this young survivor and problem solver? Will she be recognized as intellectually gifted – despite shortcomings in her overall academic development and experiences? This young child represents many diverse children who are intelligent, problem solvers, resourceful, and abstract thinkers, but who may be weak in those academic skills valued by educators, and those skills deemed appropriate for participating in gifted programs. I worry about this young African American child because she may be overlooked for gifted education screening, assessment and placement<sup>1</sup>.

Theorists (Gardner, 1983; Sternberg, 1985) have argued that giftedness is a social construct and that the term ‘intelligent’ is value laden and subjective (Sternberg & Detterman, 1986). Thus, what is considered gifted or intelligent to one person may not be so to another. Further, different cultures have different notions of these constructs, such that what is deemed gifted in one culture may not be considered gifted in another. How will teachers – approximately 90% of whom are White and female -- recognize giftedness in students who come from other cultures and backgrounds?

### **Characteristics of Giftedness in Cultural Context**

Frasier (1994) proposed that a set of core characteristics of giftedness exists in every cultural group; however, how a child manifests his/her giftedness may vary across cultures. This assertion is supported by our most recent federal definition of the gifted, which states:

“Children and youth with outstanding talent perform or show the potential for performing at remarkably high levels of accomplishments when compared with others of their age, experience or environment.” (USDE, 1993)

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<sup>1</sup> This concern is magnified given that the child resides in Florida, a state where an IQ score is used solely to identify gifted students.

Relative to ‘experience or environment,’ we must, of course, consider how low socio-economic status, unequal opportunities to learn, and differential opportunities pose significant barriers for many students to develop their intelligence; likewise, we must consider the child’s cultural background during the identification or recruitment process (Ford et al., 2005).

In addition to looking for such core characteristics of intelligence like abstract thinking, logical reasoning, problem solving skills, large vocabulary, and speed of information processing as signs of intelligence, I believe other characteristics of intelligence must be considered so that we do not overlook diverse students:

- Resourceful and adaptable** – finds ways to adapt to situations; adjusts and transitions with more ease than other students from similar backgrounds. These adaptations can be related to school, but can also be personal or social situations. For example, a resourceful child might adjust more quickly than other young students to a new teacher or school.

- Leadership** – is able to persuade others; gets others to buy into his/her suggestions; takes charge and organizes. This child makes suggestions that other children tend to follow, often without question; he/she also takes initiative and volunteers to take responsibility for tasks.

- Strong vocabulary** – code switches (speaks Standard English and Non-Standard English, and slang). This child listens to and observes others for his/her cues as to which language is most acceptable under the current circumstances.

- Asks many questions** – not satisfied with simple, close-ended responses; challenges statements and ideas to the point of appearing stubborn and argumentative. This child is a critical thinker who asks questions to develop a complete picture of the situation or issue.

- Has his/her own ideas** – often has an opinion or point of view on topics; not easily persuaded by information provided by others, even if it is presented as fact or truth.

- Has a keen sense of justice** – challenges others on ‘right and wrong’; notices inconsistencies and shares them with little hesitance; angers easily when an injustice occurs; passionate in his/her disdain for unfairness. This child may even challenge a teacher who has made inconsistent or contradictory statements.

- Makes unusual connections** – sees what others may miss; makes connections between seemingly unrelated topics. When playing with three sticks, this child may realize that he/she can make an “H” or “A” if the sticks are laid in a certain way.

## **Developing Talents and Nurturing Potential**

In special education, educators are working aggressively to identify special needs as early as possible. This principle is an important one. The earlier we identify gifts and talents in students, the more likely they are to receive the supports and services needed to develop their potential. This prevention or early intervention idea is especially important considering the second-grade syndrome often reported for African American students. That is, many African American students begin to lose interest in school somewhere between grades 2 and 4. Unfortunately, this is also the time when many schools begin identifying gifted students and offering gifted education services.

To state the obvious, we must look earlier for gifts and talents in diverse children. I’d like to see school personnel build collaborations with Headstart Programs, preschool programs, and child care organizations, to name a few, to intervene early and to, ultimately, identify potential among diverse students – particularly those living in low SES communities. Three broad strategies are recommended: (1) teachers trained in gifted education can work directly with these young children by exposing them to gifted education curriculum and resources; (2) school personnel trained in gifted education can train educators in these organizations in gifted education strategies and curriculum; and (3) the primary caregivers of these young children must receive training to understand how they can nurture their child’s gifts and talents. Sample topics for professional development are presented in **Figure 1**.

This brief article cannot possibly cover all of the efforts and strategies needed to diversify gifted programs and to reach diverse students in the earliest development years. Educators must come together to use their creativity, problem solving skills, and collective resources to address this on-going issue. The future of diverse students depends on us.

**Figure 1: Professional Development Topics for Early Childhood Educators and Families.**

<i>General Topics</i>	<i>Specific Topics</i>
<b>Overview of field of gifted education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussions about the purpose of gifted education, as well as the benefits of such services for diverse children</li> <li>• Federal definition of giftedness (1993)</li> <li>• Sample gifted education models and theories that are most relevant to young diverse children</li> <li>• Discussion of under-representation of diverse students in gifted education</li> </ul>
<b>Identifying gifts and talents</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Characteristics of giftedness</li> <li>• Definitions of giftedness</li> <li>• Definitions of and perspectives on talent development</li> <li>• Pros and cons of using traditional tests with young children and with diverse children</li> </ul>
<b>Social-emotional needs of young, diverse gifted students</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information on how self-esteem and self-concept affect the motivation of young diverse students</li> <li>• Understanding racial identity and promoting racial pride</li> <li>• Helping diverse students cope with peer pressures</li> <li>• Helping diverse students to resolve conflicts</li> </ul>
<b>Underachievement among culturally diverse gifted students</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Characteristics and causes of underachievement</li> <li>• Strategies and resources for motivating young diverse children</li> <li>• Strategies for preventing or intervening in underachievement</li> </ul>
<b>Multicultural gifted curriculum</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ways to challenge gifted diverse children using multicultural curriculum</li> <li>• Using different teaching styles to match learning styles</li> <li>• Choosing multicultural literature that affirms and challenges diverse children</li> </ul>

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**Effective Pedagogical Strategies and Philosophies for Gifted Students of Color**

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Teachers in school settings face several major challenges as they seek to meet the needs of students. Among these challenges is that of meeting the needs of students with differences in learning styles, abilities, and interests. These challenges become even more evident when the students have been identified as gifted or when the students are culturally diverse. To complicate matters,

the strategies teachers use may be stretched to the limit when students are gifted and culturally diverse as noted by Ford and Harris (1999), Baldwin and Vialle (1999), and Castellano (2003), to name a few. These ranges of challenges require teachers to, at the very least, examine their professional

philosophies about teaching and learning, and the specific strategies they use to meet students' needs.

It goes without saying that the instructional strategies teachers employ and the philosophies they hold about teaching and learning have profound influences on the achievement and engagement of students. To be clear, teachers must be thoughtful and deliberate in their attempts to develop pedagogical strategies and philosophies that best meet the needs of their gifted students, including students of color. As Dillard (2000) explained, students of color are not White people with pigmented skin; rather, students of color bring into the classroom a range of experiences that are often quite inconsistent with their White classmates. Research by Boykin (1994) and Shade et al. (1997), for example, points to different learning styles of Black students and how these styles often conflict with traditional or mainstream teaching styles and strategies. Some examples include a strong preference for social learning, tactile learning experiences, and communicating ideas verbally. While these preferences are evident within all groups, they seem to be particularly prevalent among African American students.

In this article, I explore pedagogical strategies and philosophies that can be modified to meet the needs of gifted students of color. The major premise of the article is that more students of color can succeed in our gifted programs if teachers become more self-reflective and develop culturally appropriate learning environments. Developing culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1994) and culturally responsive (Gay, 2000) pedagogical strategies and philosophies are necessary because students of color, in particular, often see and experience the world differently than traditional students (Boykin, 1994). Thus, in this article, I attempt to outline 10 effective pedagogical philosophies and strategies that have the potential to ensure optimal learning and engagement among gifted students of color.

### Teaching Philosophy Matters

Prior to teaching, it is essential that educators explore, develop, and then adopt an overarching philosophy of teaching and learning. By philosophy, I mean that teachers should have an *evolving* set of beliefs, ideologies, perspectives, viewpoints, attitudes, ideas, orientations, and thoughts about teaching, the content, themselves, and their students. Teachers must consistently engage in a search for more innovative and meaningful instructional strategies to meet the needs of gifted students of color. In other words, philosophies ought not be fixed or static. Rather, philosophies should be constantly evolving; they should be dynamic and forever changing. Teachers who resist changing their philosophies and their teaching strategies place their students at a disadvantage; having a static teaching philosophy ignores the ever-changing nature of students' experiences. Students are constantly changing and so must our teaching philosophies. Clearly, the United States and our schools are more diverse than they have ever been. More than ever before, schools are places where students are

multiracial, multiethnic, and multilingual. Students and teachers come from various religious backgrounds, from various home structures, and from various socio-economic levels; students come to school with many cognitive, social, and emotional needs. Teachers' pedagogical strategies and philosophies must be attentive to such diversity and be ever-evolving to meet the needs of their gifted students of color, and all their students. Ultimately, teachers need to engage in what I call *relational reflection*; that is, they need to focus on themselves, their own experiences, their privileges (McIntosh, 1990), struggles, and positions in relation to others (their students as racialized and cultural beings, their students' parents, their students' communities, their students' ways of knowing, for example). Therefore, it is not enough for teachers to engage in a high level of self-reflection. They must also engage in a high level of relational reflection where they consider not only themselves, but also themselves in relation to others.

### Teaching Strategies Matter

As a wealth of literature suggests, gifted students have needs that differ from those of general education students; likewise, culturally diverse students have needs that differ from other students (Grantham, Frasier, Roberts & Bridges, 2005; Ford, Moore & Harmon, 2005). As mentioned earlier, these data indicate that learning styles and communication styles are culturally influenced, with diverse students having a greater need and appreciation for social and cooperative learning, a preference for communicating orally, and a strong need for classes to be personally meaningful (Boykin, 1994; Ford & Harris, 1999; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Shade et al., 1997). Teachers must, therefore, develop a repertoire of knowledge, skills, beliefs, and values that allow them to teach with these culturally-constructed meanings in mind – they must develop strategies that allow them the opportunity to teach in any context with various groups of students and with a range of student needs.

The teaching strategies outlined in this section are shared as one way to place ideas, recommendations, and strategies into perspective. I support and advocate for the teaching philosophies that follow, with the clear understanding that they are all framed by assumptions regarding who students are, how students learn, and how/why they become engaged (or disengaged) in a particular classroom or subject area.

### Responsive Philosophies and Pedagogical Strategies

**Self-Reflective Instruction.** Teachers' self-perception and introspection are central to helping students become engaged and academically successful. An important tenet of this philosophy is that of 'knowing thyself.' Self-reflective teachers are better positioned to observe, understand, and develop tentative hypotheses about the academic and instructional needs of their students, mainly because they have self-awareness and self-understanding. Minimally, teachers should: (a) be familiar

with their own learning and teaching styles; (b) be familiar with their strengths and shortcomings as an instructor, including, for example, subject matter knowledge, and knowledge about student learning and development; and (c) be familiar with their biases, stereotypes, likes and dislikes, about working with both gifted students and culturally diverse students.

**Develop Teacher-Student Relationships.** Teaching is about more than instructing; it is also about building relationships with students. Effective teachers, I believe, are familiar with the maxim, ‘students don’t care what you know until they know that you care.’ Teachers must attempt to become actively engaged in the lives of their students and the community in which they teach by attending extra-curricula activities, church, and even the supermarket of their students. As Ford (forthcoming) noted, teachers who drive into the schools without having a commitment to the students and the community are guilty, so to speak, of ‘drive-by teaching.’ What are our students’ dreams and goals? Who do they admire and why? How sensitive are they to criticism, even when it is constructive? Are they extraverted or introverted? Are they social learners or do they prefer to work alone? Clearly, to answer these questions, teachers need to develop new levels of engagement in the community and in the personal lives of their students. Teacher-student relationships are critical if teachers are to develop this knowledge about the students’ community and personal experiences, which can lead to better teaching and learning in the classroom.

**Range of Instructional Skills and Strategies.** To date, no definitive instructional style can be advocated for meeting the needs of most, no less, all students. Developing definitive instructional styles may not even be possible given the many ways in which our students are different. Therefore, teachers, like all professionals, must have a range of tools to use when working with students, particularly those who are gifted yet performing poorly in school. Teachers who have a limited, homogeneous set of teaching skills, strategies, and philosophies contribute to poor student achievement and apathy. These teachers have a ‘teaching disability,’ albeit not in a formally diagnosed or clinical sense (Ford, 1996). For the sake of their students, teachers should learn to modify their teaching/instructional styles and philosophies so that all students have access to the curriculum, and thus, an opportunity to learn.

**Inquiry-Based Instruction.** Teachers should develop researcher lenses in their practice and negotiate their levels of expertise in order to meet the needs of students. Thus, action research and other research-based instruction are important. The teacher, then, has to be willing to decide that he or she is not the only, nor the main, arbiter of knowledge. Because students also bring a wealth of knowledge and experience into the classroom, teachers need to be inquisitive about their own and their students’ experiences, and then implement these experiences into the lessons. In short, teachers must find out what they know as teachers and what students know, how they come to know this information, and why – and use that information as they adjust their instruction. For instance, teachers may attempt to develop a lesson plan that allows students to use rap or hip hop in their discussions of

poetry, iambic pentameter, themes, and so forth because their students enjoy music and enjoy this specific genre. Teachers can also alternate between social and independent learning because their students show more excitement, engagement, and achievement when working together. And upon observing that their students thrive more when tasks are tactile and kinesthetic, teachers may choose to use this strategy more often.

Teaching is an art and a science. Thus, it is not easy to master how to effectively implement these types of pedagogical and learning options. Astute observation and inquiry are necessary to develop the skills to scaffold teaching and learning in this way, and teachers should learn from their students.

**Critical Thinking and Problem Solving.** Students who are encouraged to ask questions, to pose problems, to critique, and to interrogate what is presented to them are in a better position to truly use what they have been taught in the real world. Thus, students of color especially need opportunities to engage in a critique of the world and their experiences. It is through productive, meaningful, and constructive critique that change can occur – these students can use what they learn to influence and spearhead change in their own respective communities. As Banks (1998) explained, students ought to be taught to look with their *head* and their *heart* in order to improve the world and as they work for social justice.

**Blended Direct and Student-Centered Instruction.** When teachers understand that there are areas of expertise that their students bring into the learning environment, they simultaneously come to understand that there are areas that the teacher him or herself brings into the learning context as well. There may be times when instruction should follow a more direct orientation, where the teacher lectures, writes on the chalkboard, or overhead, for instance. While some researchers, theoreticians, and practitioners would frown upon such an approach with the teacher at the center of instruction, I am suggesting that, in some instances, this approach is needed and thus necessary in order to have a truly shared knowledge approach to instruction, where both teachers and students are teaching and learning. Moreover, as Delpit (1995) explained, it is essential that teachers explicitly expose students to what she called the “culture of power.” In other words, students need to understand the norms, values, beliefs, and philosophies of their environment in order to help ensure that they will succeed in the context, especially because many students of color operate in a different ‘culture’ outside of the learning environment. Even when instruction is directive, it must still be connected to the students and their needs. The examples used, the activities provided, and the discussions should be consistent with who the students are, the students’ needs, and what the students actually bring into the classroom.

**Meeting the Needs of the Whole Child.** Teachers are often prepared to focus on the academic and cognitive needs of students, and rightfully so. But teaching ‘from the neck up’ ignores the feelings and emotions – the heart and affect – of students. In essence, teachers must not only address the cognitive and academic needs of their students, they must also endeavor to meet students’ affective, social, and cultural needs

(Milner, 2002). As Hooks (1994) explained, teaching the whole child means that teachers are also seeing the student as racialized beings as well as a cultured beings. Teachers may adopt color-blind (Johnson, 2002; Lewis, 2001; Milner, in press) and culture-blind ideologies (Ford, Moore & Milner, 2005) in their teaching where the teachers deliberately and often subconsciously do not think about the enormous, central, and profound influences of race and culture in teaching and learning. The voids of recognizing and meeting the needs of the whole child, inevitably will lead to “ignored discriminatory institutional practices toward students of color such as high suspension rates for African American males” (Johnson, 2002, p. 154). Essential, effective teaching and teachers cannot ignore, negate or in any way minimize students’ racial and cultural differences.

**There is Expertise Among All Students.** Teachers must assume that all students have strengths and some level of expertise that can be built upon. In this sense, teachers must realize that diverse students may be highly creative, innovative, and have cutting edge ideas that are inconsistent with the teachers’ experiences and worldview.

**Real-Life Learning Experiences.** Teachers who are effective at bringing learning to life – real life – are often successful at promoting not only students’ achievement but also their interest and engagement in learning. Such teachers are able to make a personal connection between pedagogy and the lives of students. The examples teachers use to make a point, to move students’ thinking to higher levels, or to elicit student input are very important to students’ engagement and ultimate success both inside and outside of the learning context. To illuminate, students expect (and deserve) to know how what they are learning is relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1994) to their immediate and future lives and needs. To be effective at focusing on real-life experiences, teachers must get to know their students, as noted earlier. They must keep abreast of the multiple interests and talents of their students, and have a good idea of the students’ learning and career trajectories. Increased learning and engagement occur when teachers develop and implement real-life learning opportunities and experiences in the classroom.

**Multicultural Knowledge and Competence.** This philosophical position suggests that there is a serious need for teachers to have a solid foundation and knowledge base in terms of working with culturally diverse students. Our school districts are more diverse than ever before and teachers who choose to ignore issues of diversity set themselves – and their students – up for failure in many ways. To recap, teachers can no longer afford to adopt ‘color-blind,’ ‘culture-blind,’ and ‘diversity-blind’ ideologies in their teaching. Teachers must recognize the historical and contemporary issues that frame the experiences of culturally diverse students and use those special and unique experiences to make connections, to bridge issues, and to create effective pedagogy. Teachers much seek to become culturally sensitive, culturally aware, culturally knowledgeable and, ultimately, culturally competent. Teachers should realize – and believe – that while they are culturally or racially different from their students, they can still develop culturally relevant and culturally specific instructional strategies. In fact, there is

compelling evidence to suggest that all teachers, regardless of race and/or ethnicity, can be successful teachers of students of color, particularly African American students (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, too many gifted students are not realizing and reaching their potential (Siddle-Walker, 1996). These students are often met with pedagogical strategies that do not capitalize on their needs, and philosophies that may be color-blind. In this article, I have argued that our teaching philosophy is critical to how well we teach diverse gifted students, particularly students of color. If teachers do not change their thinking – their beliefs, perspectives, values, ideas – about diverse learners, their teaching will not change. The examples a teacher employs in a lesson, the nature of questions posed, how students are allowed to express themselves, and whose knowledge is validated (or not) in the classroom (Apple, & King, 1990) can point to mismatches that must be rectified. It is easy for any of us to look outwardly to find blame for the lack of engagement and achievement among diverse learners. However, I am suggesting that teachers need to look inward, consider the needs of their students, and work to change the areas in which they have some control in order to improve the educational opportunities of all students.

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## **A Measured Look at the Double Challenge to the Standardized I.Q. Test as the Identification Tool for the Gifted and Talented**

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### **Background**

#### **Evolving Definitions of Intelligence**

The Stanford-Binet intelligence test has been used for the better part of the last century to measure the general intelligence or I.Q. (the g factor) of students in U.S. schools for purposes of grouping them for instruction. High performance on the test correlates with the ability to excel academically, which was and continues to be considered practical proof of high intelligence.

However, the federal definition of gifted and talented, as articulated in the 1970 Marland Report, reflects the emerging view that intelligence is something more diverse than general intellect as measured by this g factor, and that multiple intelligences exist relating also to creative or productive thinking, leadership ability, high abilities in the visual and performing arts, and psychomotor ability. Moreover, these intelligences are not just a product of heredity but also of environment. Scholars in the fields of psychology and education such as Sternberg, Gardner, and Renzulli support this view that intelligence is actually made up of multiple components which exist independently of one another and can be measured separately (Gardner, 1983; Renzulli, 1999; Sternberg, 1985).

For example, Sternberg has developed a theory of intelligence that includes an analytic, creative, and practical component (Sternberg, 1985, 1997). Similarly, Renzulli has developed his "three ring conception of giftedness," which includes cognitive giftedness, creative productive giftedness and task commitment giftedness (Renzulli, 1999). Gardner, on the other hand, has developed a theory of multiple intelligences that involves eight different components: linguistic, musical, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal and naturalistic, with the potential of more to come (Gardner, 1983, 1999).

#### **The Problem of Minority Participation in Gifted Programs**

In 1988, the Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Act provided federal money for gifted and talented programs, giving priority to programs that would serve poor, disabled, and non-English speaking students. By 1990, 38 states reported serving more than 2 million gifted K-12 students (Zepeda & Langenbach, 1999). However, studies suggest that minorities (such as Native American, Hispanic American, and African American) are significantly underrepresented in gifted and talented programs across the country (Wasserman & Becker, 2000; National Research Council, 2003). For example, nationally blacks make up 17 percent of the total student



population, but only 7.3 percent are enrolled in gifted and talented classes, according to the National Research Council (2003). Some scholars attribute this underrepresentation to cultural and language differences that may significantly impact minority student performance on standardized I.Q. tests (Naglieri & Ford, 2005; Callahan, 2003).

### **The Testing Instruments**

The Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale is now in its Fifth Edition. The other widely used individual standardized I.Q. test for school-aged children, the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children, is in its Fourth Edition (WISC-IV). Composite scores on these two tests are highly correlated and purportedly measure the general intelligence of the person tested. While subscores on these tests do break out verbal and quantitative reasoning, which correlate with two of Gardner's seven intelligences, it is the composite score (or the measurement of the g factor) that is used as a cut-off threshold for identification of gifted and talented students in a majority of U.S. schools (National Research Council, 2003).

### **A Measured Look at the Issues**

#### **Accuracy Considerations and the Definition of Intelligence**

The first question that arises in any analysis of whether the standardized I.Q. test is an adequate criterion for identifying gifted children involves asking whether, in fact, the test aligns with current notions of intelligence. For many years intelligence was defined as a general unitary ability to process verbal and analytical information. If, however, the newer theories of independently existing multiple intelligences are correct, univariant and standardized I.Q. tests that measure only verbal and analytic abilities are of limited value. Other multiple assessments must be employed to correctly identify students who may not be gifted in verbal and analytical abilities, but who are in fact gifted in other areas involving, for example, creative, musical, interpersonal or spatial abilities (Renzulli, 1999; Osborn, 2004).

We are reliant on the research community to guide us in defining intelligence, and as a general proposition many, although not all, admit to the probability that intelligence is a multivariant construct. The larger debate *when applied to gifted and talented programs* occurs in determining what kinds of intelligence the programs should be attempting to support. Many scholars and practitioners say that programs should be focused on academic giftedness (involving, for the most part, verbal and analytic skills), because the purpose of gifted programs should be to increase academic success, the single most valid indicator of potential in educational, occupational, economic and social endeavors (Robinson I & II, 2003; Tannenbaum, 2003; Osborn, 2004). The I.Q. test, which reliably and validly measures these aptitudes is, for these theorists and practitioners, an appropriate screening device for these programs.

In addition, proponents of the traditional tests argue that it is the academically gifted students who are least well served in the regular classroom (as opposed to the creatively or interpersonally gifted), and so it is these students who must be supported by gifted programs (Robinson I, 2003). All agree in this regard that there must be a clear connection between the kind of giftedness supported by a particular program and the kind of giftedness defined by its selection criteria (Coleman, 2003; Renzulli, 1999; Robinson I, 2003; VanTassel-Baska, 2000). As one writer notes, "when we rely solely on visual-spatial measures to identify children for gifted programs and then the services we provide are highly verbal, we may do these students more harm than good." (Coleman, 2003, p.2)

On the other side of this controversy is the argument that there are many more ways for students to achieve success than by the traditional verbal and analytic aptitudes (Callahan, 2003; Gardner, 2004; Renzulli, 1999; Sternberg, Grigorenko & Bundy, 2001). Renzulli in particular focuses on gifted *behavior* and the productivity of individuals, and insists that individuals who may not be cognitively gifted can be just as productive as many gifted individuals because of their superior creativity and/or task commitment (Renzulli, 1999). Renzulli and others argue that programs which ignore these kinds of superior talents because of their cognitive focus are doing society a disservice by excluding a large number of well-above average pupils who, given the opportunity, resources, and encouragement are capable of producing equally good products as the traditionally-defined gifted student (Renzulli, 1999; VanTassel-Baska, 2000). Opponents of relying on the traditional tests also argue that gifted programs should be as inclusive as possible to give students who may have undeveloped potential a chance to excel (VanTassel-Baska, 2000). For these theorists and practitioners, I.Q. tests, which admittedly can identify the cognitively gifted, should never be used in isolation but must be supplemented by more holistic assessments that allow for the evaluation of creative, leadership, interpersonal, and other abilities in addition to cognitive ability.

#### **Equity and Access Considerations**

The second attack on the standardized I.Q. test relates to its validity when applied to minority students. Studies have shown that minority students are underrepresented in gifted and talented programs across the country (National Research Council, 2003). Many in the field believe that this under-representation is the result of culturally biased standardized tests, which do not take into account factors such as ethnicity, language, or cultural differences that cause minorities and low income students to do poorly on certain questions (Naglieri & Ford, 2005; Coleman, 2003). For these scholars and practitioners, non-verbal tests and assessment approaches which contain a strong spatial component are necessary to accurately capture the strengths and potential of culturally diverse and low income students (Naglieri & Ford, 2005; Coleman, 2003).

In fact, within the last few decades, various assessments have been created to test minority giftedness using nonverbal indices, the most widely used being the Comprehensive Test of Nonverbal Intelligence (C-TONI), Tests of Nonverbal Intelligence-III (TONI-III), Universal Nonverbal Intelligence Test (UNIT), Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT), Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test-Multilevel Form (NNAT), and Raven's Progressive Matrices Test. John C. Raven's Progressive Matrices Test has been subjected to the most scrutiny, partially because it was the first widely used test to assess nonverbal abstract reasoning through the subject's analysis of different sets of abstract symbols (Raven, Court & Raven, 1990). Studies conducted on the validity and reliability of this test have shown that significantly higher proportions of minority children score well on this test than on traditional measures (Mills & Tissot, 1995). However, little research has been conducted on its validity in identifying academic potential in minority populations, and some question both its standardization and its usefulness (National Research Council, 2003; Robinson II, 2003; Matthews, 1988; Mills, Ablard & Brody, 1993; Rogers, 2003).

Jack A. Naglieri's Nonverbal Ability Test (NNAT) is a more recent variation of a progressive matrices test which similarly assesses nonverbal, figural reasoning (Naglieri, 1997). Research suggests that this test is culturally fair, meaning Black and Hispanic students are as likely to earn high scores on the test as White students (Naglieri & Ronning, 2000; Naglieri & Ford, 2003). However the data analysis used in that research, as well as the conclusions drawn, have also been called into question (Lohman, 2005).

In fact, opponents of using these kinds of non-verbal tests generally argue that little research has been done to confirm their reliability or validity in assessing academic success, and that these measures assess different abilities and constructs that are not equivalent in predictive power to the more traditional verbal measures (Robinson I, 2003; Rogers, 2003). One study found that those qualifying for gifted programs on a nonverbal measure had significantly lower achievement than those chosen on the basis of verbal and quantitative measures (Bittker, 1991).

Opponents further argue that there is evidence that biases in assessment have generally not played a major role in the disproportionate representation seen in gifted and talented programs (Robinson I, 2003, National Research Council, 2003; Scientists' Public Statement, 1994). They argue that the traditional standardized tests are not culturally biased against any native-born English speaking group in the United States. Individuals who do not understand English well can be given a test in their native language (Robinson I, 2003; National Research Council, 2003; Scientists' Public Statement, 1994). Rather, the underrepresentation of minorities in gifted programs is the result of real disparities in abilities, resulting from the low economic status of many minorities and the conditions that result from poverty, such as lower birth weight, poorer nutrition, higher exposure to harmful toxins, including lead, alcohol and

tobacco, and home and child care environments that are less supportive of early cognitive and emotional development (National Research Council, 2003; Robinson I, 2003).

Proponents of the traditional tests further argue that we cannot correct the situation by placing students in gifted programs not fitted to their abilities. Rather, we should continue using traditional standardized I.Q. tests as indices for admission to gifted programs, but also supplement those tests with a search for demonstrable academic talent in portfolios, classroom observations and extracurricular performance, as well as nominations by parents, peers, and teachers (Robinson I, 2003; Rogers, 2003). Schools should further consider affirmative action for children from disadvantaged backgrounds, include multiple entry points to gifted programs so that there is room for increasing enrollment throughout the grades, and provide a multicultural environment to better meet the needs of all minority students (Robinson I & II, 2003; Rogers, 2003).

### **The Motivators in these Debates**

At least one of the participants in the debate over the definition of intelligence has forthrightly admitted (Renzulli, 1999) that because this debate has both philosophical as well as practical ramifications in identification and programming practices, the political overtones and motivations can hardly be avoided. The politics here relate to the perception that labeling only certain children as "gifted" is an elitist enterprise that is unjustified and inconsistent with the equalitarian movement that categorizes any kind of grouping or tracking practices as discriminatory (Bawden, 2002). The politics of the "haves" versus the "have nots" is particularly highlighted by the fact that gifted programs often include enrichment activities in which a select group of children have opportunities to go on cultural and scientific field trips that the regular classrooms cannot afford.

Furthermore, there is no question but that the book, *The Bell Curve* by Herrnstein and Murray (1994), continues to influence and further politicize the already politically loaded debate of how to best deal with the problem of the underrepresentation of minority students in gifted and talented programs in the United States. While scholars in the 1990s quickly and effectively challenged the authors' assumptions that certain ethnic groups are genetically fated to be more or less intelligent than others, the legacy of the book is that there is an undercurrent of perceived racism whenever scholars suggest that differences in IQ scores for minorities are attributable to anything other than test bias (Scientists' Public Statement, 1994).

### **Directions for the Future**

We know that I.Q. scores from the traditional standardized tests reflect what the psychology community describes as general intellectual ability, relating primarily to verbal and logical or cognitive thinking. However, critics that suggest that these I.Q. tests do not align with current theories of multi-dimensional intelligence, and therefore are inaccurate measurement

instruments, go too far. Even if the tests do not lend themselves perfectly to some views of intelligence, standardized I.Q. tests, including the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children and the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale have been shown to be reliable predictors of school achievement and academic success. They have been researched, refined and standardized over many years with thousands of children, with the result that they are statistically sound. They therefore play a valuable role in adding a degree of accountability and objectivity to the identification process, and should not, for that reason, be discarded<sup>1</sup>.

However, using only cut-off scores from standardized tests to make decisions about gifted program admissions simply does not make sense, given the high stakes associated with this decision-making process, and the arguable potential for cultural or ethnic bias in evaluating a child on the basis of one score from a single testing instrument. Standardized testing must be supplemented by evaluations that focus on identifying those other intelligences now recognized by the psychological community. For example, the following procedures can be used: (1) a careful review of parent and teacher reports of the child's behavior in school and in extra-curricular activities; (2) the child's creative work as shown in portfolios; and (3) direct classroom observations of the child (Robinson I, 2003; Rogers, 2003). In addition, standardized non-verbal I.Q. tests show great promise as supplements to the traditional test, especially for minority and low income populations. We should test for analytic intelligence separate from its verbal component when cultural and linguistic differences suggest that this is necessary for the accurate measurement of a child's ability.

However, the need for more research into the problem of minority under-representation in gifted programs is tremendous. Too many unanswered empirical questions still exist with respect to this debate to make any reasoned decisions about how to best test this population of students. We are grappling with difficult problems here that will require longitudinal studies to answer the following questions: Are non-verbal tests reliable and valid measurements of cognitive intelligence? Do non-verbal tests correlate well with the potential for academic achievement? Will students who score well on nonverbal tests but low on linguistic and logical-mathematic tests be well-served by the gifted programming currently in place across the nation? Put more simply, the essential questions here are: (1) Can we accurately test for ability separate from achievement? and, assuming this is possible; (2) Can we turn that ability into achievement through our current programming?

While research into the question of minority representation in gifted programs is critical, there are steps that we can and must take in the meantime. Given the unknowns just identified, this is further justification for supplementing standardized testing with parent and teacher reports of the child's behavior in school and in extra-curricular activities, the child's creative work through the use of portfolios, and direct classroom observations of the child. Non-verbal I.Q. test scores should also be considered as part of this larger assessment package. In addition,

affirmative action policies for admission to gifted programs and policies (allowing multiple opportunities for admission to such programs throughout the grades) are justified, and may be useful for research purposes to assess correlations between non-verbal tests and future academic achievement.

There is no question that other academic support should also be provided for minority and low-income students through after-school tutoring, cluster grouping for certain subjects, and summer programs. Programs such as Young Scholars programs can provide researchers with data for determining whether in fact we can turn what we believe to be cognitive ability into academic achievement.

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<sup>1</sup> Even Renzulli (1998) admits the merit of using the IQ test for threshold purposes, stating that there is a consensus among many researchers that once the IQ is 120 or higher, other variables become increasingly important.

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### **Moses Maimonides (1138-1204): Scholar of Giftedness**

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There are many insights that educators of the gifted can gain by reading a recent biography of Moses Maimonides, the Jewish philosopher and physician of the Medieval period – **Maimonides** (2005, Schocken) by Sherwin B. Nuland, MD. Among his other books are **Doctors: The Biography of Medicine** (1988) and **The Wisdom of the Body** (1997). He is presently a clinical professor of surgery at Yale University and he also teaches bioethics and medical history. Dr. Nuland's mentor is Maimonides, who lived almost a thousand years ago. The first insight from reading his latest book is an awareness of how giftedness can transcend generations.

There is a tendency in certain areas of gifted education to stress technique over content. Maimonides' life and career illustrate that techniques such as critical thinking and creativity need to have a strong foundation in content. It is what a gifted individual does with content that is significant. Maimonides possessed a massive knowledge of the medical literature of his time, but it was how he applied this knowledge that was so important. He was constantly aware of the role that psychology and empathy have in patient care, and his interest in medical knowledge was as vast as human suffering, e.g., asthma and hemorrhoids.

The historical conditions related to Maimonides' life are significant for understanding modern events. He spent his entire life in the Moslem societies of Spain, Morocco and Egypt. While Maimonides thrived in situations of political toleration, he constantly had to emigrate to new countries because of the rise of fundamentalist rulers. He also lived in a multicultural world where he was influenced by Greek physicians such as Galen, Islamic doctors and philosophers such as Avicenna and Averroes, and by his fellow Jewish scholars and doctors. A high percentage of religious scholars were also doctors. There was no separation between science and the humanities as there is today. In 1187 he was appointed the court physician to Saladin's vizier, el Fadal, and later (1198) to Saladin's son and successor, al Afdal.

Maimonides, as a philosopher, struggled to help gifted individuals of his time to deal with a psychological problem that is very much with us today. In his book, **The Guide for the Perplexed** (1190), he established that there was no conflict between religion and philosophy (logic, mathematics and science). His concepts influenced Christian thinkers of the late Medieval period such as Albert Magnus and one of his students, Saint Thomas Aquinas. According to Maimonides, the rationalism of Aristotle was not a threat to religiosity. In fact, rational thinking makes religious belief more humane. This is a needed lesson for today's adherents of religious fanaticism.

Nuland's description of Maimonides' manner of understanding the relationship between knowledge and content is also a good depiction of the sensibility of giftedness: "...The greatest of his strengths was the quality that might be called the 'synthesizing mind,' that which enabled him to perceive parallels, connections, patterns, and unities in widely disparate masses of information and experience, and then to interpret and organize them into a meaningful, comprehensive, and apprehensible whole, while maintaining the virtue of conciseness. In doing this, he took material already in existence, imbued it with his own insights and perspectives, and made of it something new, achieving a creative synthesis that characterized his genius not only in medicine but in religious thought as well." (p. 174, **Maimonides** (2005) by Sherwin Nuland) Maimonides' life and writings show that he is part of the continuity of giftedness that stretches back thousands of years in world history.

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**The following letter by Dr. Joseph Piro** appeared in the Wall Street Journal (August 25, 2005) in response to an article that was published in the August 19, 2005 issue of this newspaper. The original article discussed the advantages of using online courses to teach gifted students.

### **Gifted, Yes – But Also Underchallenged**

"**Gifted Students Connect Online With Colleges**" (Marketplace, Aug. 19) most decidedly comes in under the good news/bad news banner. On the one hand, using technology to meet the needs of gifted students is an exciting methodology to encourage their achievement potential. That online courses offered by prestigious universities have become a popular way to learn and that gifted students, and their parents, find them useful is praiseworthy. But taking online courses runs the risk of further isolating students who may already lead isolated learning lives at their schools, through no fault of their own. While the article cites social learning opportunities, these may be transitory and not particularly well-defined.

The real message might be that in most U.S. schools, gifted students are the most underserved, underresourced and underchallenged learners we have. When their needs are prioritized in equal measure with their value to American culture and society, we will begin to design and retain programs that are meaningful, challenging and sustainable. Until that time arrives, skillful marketing techniques will continue to direct these students along other educational pathways, relieving school systems of responsibilities that are really theirs.

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### **Book Reviews from Gifted Education News-Page – August-September 2005**

**1776** (2005) by David McCullough. New York: Simon & Schuster.

David McCullough has received Pulitzer Prizes for the books, **Truman** (1992) and **John Adams** (2001). His recent book **1776** contains the same elements of thorough scholarship and detailed analysis that characterize these previous works. As a highly respected historian,

he has presented the story of the first year of the American Revolution from both the British and American points of view. This story begins with King George III's address to Parliament in October 1775 regarding the rebellious American colonies. It then moves to the successful siege of Boston by General George Washington's ragtag army, and their brilliant coup in seizing Dorchester heights overlooking the British army encampment in Boston. Colonel Henry Knox provided the artillery in January 1776 that forced the British commanding general, William Howe, to withdraw his army from Boston. Knox and his troops brought much needed mortars and canons from Fort Ticonderoga, New York over hundreds of miles of ice and snow to Dorchester Heights. General Howe, upon seeing these siege weapons located above his troops, swiftly evacuated Boston. This first American victory electrified the citizens of Boston and the entire nation. General Washington was idolized and became a national hero.

After this grand victory, the Continental Army raced to New York City and Long Island to prevent the British from occupying this strategically and politically important area. The darkest days of the war then occurred when the full force of the British Empire was unleashed on the Americans, and they experienced for the first time the well-disciplined Hessian troops (employed as mercenaries by the British). As McCullough emphasizes, the war was almost lost in the spring and summer of 1776 during this low point of the American's military performance. The army retreated into New Jersey and appeared to be too weak to carry on. However, on Christmas day of 1776, General Washington and his troops invaded Trenton where they overwhelmed 1,500 Hessians. This victory improved the morale of the Continental Army and roused the hopes of all American citizens. At last, the American army learned how to achieve victory through careful planning and disciplined action.

As a work of scholarship in American history, **1776** is a superb book, e.g., McCullough has 72 reference pages including original sources and current publications. An interesting project for gifted students would be to compare McCullough's style and methods of analysis with those used by Jeff Shaara who wrote a historical fiction account of the Revolutionary War (**The Glorious Cause: A Novel of the American Revolution** (2002)). His book was reviewed in the June-July 2004 issue of *Gifted Education News-Page*. Another project would be for gifted students to study McCullough's excellent descriptions of King George III and George Washington as a basis for conducting biographical studies of the key figures in the War of Independence.

**The Pleasure of Finding Things Out: The Best Short Works of Richard Feynman (1999) by Jeffrey Robbins (Editor). New York: Basic Books.**

Richard Feynman, Nobel Prize winner (1965) in physics for his work in quantum electrodynamics, was a wide ranging creative thinker on new developments in science and technology. He was well-liked by colleagues and students for his knowledge and humor. Both attributes are illustrated throughout this fascinating book of essays. For example, he gives an informative account of his work (as a new Ph.D. in physics from Princeton University) on the Manhattan Atomic Bomb Project during World War II, where he was surrounded by such scientific geniuses as Robert Oppenheimer and Hans Bethe. The book also includes Feynman's pioneering speech on nanotechnology, a proposal for miniaturizing information (e.g., placing the entire Encyclopædia Britannica on the head of a pin), his famous minority report on the space shuttle Challenger disaster, and a speech to science educators where he gives tribute to his father's influence on his life and thinking. His father (a uniforms salesman) provided the impetus for stimulating a lifelong interest in systematic observation, experimentation and analytic thinking. His discussion of his early years would be particularly interesting to educators.

"Everything we'd read would be translated as best we could into some reality and so I learned to do that—everything that I read I try to figure out what it really means, what it's really saying by translating and so (LAUGHS) I used to read the *Encyclopædia* when I was a boy but with translation, you see, so it was very exciting and interesting. . . ." (p. 3)