

GIFTED EDUCATION AND ITS UNDERREPRESENTED POPULATIONS

A Record of Study

by

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## ABSTRACT

This study sought to determine if teacher perceptions play a role in the referral of culturally and linguistically diverse students to gifted-and-talented programming. There is a deficit of African American, Hispanic, English-language-learner, and low-income students in the gifted-and-talented program at a fifth- and sixth-grade campus in a growing region of Texas. Teachers were surveyed, observed, and interviewed to determine how they perceive the needs of gifted students and what attributes they look for when referring a student for gifted examination. The study found that teachers have a positive view of gifted students and the gifted-and-talented program. They also know what traits to look for in gifted students. The data revealed that teacher referrals are not the reason for gaps in the gifted-and-talented program at the intermediate school of study. The next step is for the campus staff to grow its cultural competence and proficiency. The more knowledge gained on culturally and linguistically diverse students, the more teachers can apply this knowledge in their classes—to the end of providing learning opportunities for culturally and linguistically diverse students and working to lessen the gaps in representation in the gifted-and-talented program.

## DEDICATION

To my husband, Dennis: I would never have embarked on this journey without your support and encouragement. You have always believed in me. Thank you for loving me and seeing the best in me, even when I couldn't. You have all my love! To my sweet boys, T.J. and Case: You have always been proud of me and for that I am grateful. Don't ever forget—you can do anything you put your mind to. To my tribe: Your continued prayers, encouragement, and love helped me make it through the tough times. Love you bunches!

Of course, none of this would be possible if it were not for my parents, Tommy and Geneva Ard. My father instilled in me a love of learning and a continual quest for growth. I feel like I hit the jackpot of dads by having a dad who was my best friend, confidant, and cheerleader for so many years. Though you are no longer with us, I hope I am making you proud and leaving a legacy that honors you. You were and will always be my biggest hero. To my mom: I am so thankful for you. You love me in the good. You love me in the bad. Your love and support of me has never wavered, and I am beyond grateful for you. I never knew how strong a mother's love was until I became one myself. Knowing how I feel about my kiddos and going on journeys with them gives me a whole new perspective and appreciation of you. You've taught me to never give up and that I can do anything I put my mind to. You are always in my corner, and you never stop believing in me, no matter what path I'm on. You and Daddy made me who I am today, and I can never show my gratitude enough. I love you!

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## CONTRIBUTORS AND FUNDING SOURCES

### **Contributors**

The work in this record of study was supervised by Committee Chair Dr. James Laub and Co-Chair Dr. Michelle Kwok, both of the Department of Teaching, Learning, and Culture. Committee members include Dr. Radhika Viruru from the Department of Teaching, Learning, and Culture and Dr. Joyce Juntune from the Department of Educational Psychology. All the work completed for this record of study was completed by the student independently.

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There was no funding used for this study.

## NOMENCLATURE

APM	Advanced Progressive Matrices
BIP	behavioral intervention plan
CLD	culturally and linguistically diverse
DISCOVER	Discovering Intellectual Strengths and Capabilities while Observing Varied Ethnic Responses
ELL	English-language learner
ESL	English as a second language
GT	gifted and talented
IQ	intelligence quotient
ISD	independent school district
LEA	local education agency
MAP	Measures of Academic Progress
NAGC	National Association for Gifted Children
NCLB	No Child Left Behind
NDEA	National Defense Education Act
OTL	opportunity to learn
PD	professional development
PEIMS	Public Education Information Management System
PLC	professional learning community
PSA	Problem Solving Assessment
RI	representation index
RPM	Raven's Progressive Matrices

SCAT	School and College Ability Test
SES	socioeconomic status
TEA	Texas Education Agency
US	United States

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT.....	ii
DEDICATION.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
CONTRIBUTORS AND FUNDING SOURCES.....	v
NOMENCLATURE.....	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	viii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	xi
LIST OF TABLES.....	xiii
CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION.....	1
National Context.....	1
State Context.....	5
Personal Context.....	7
Where It All Began.....	7
A Passion for Helping All Students.....	8
My Research Focus.....	9
Situational Context.....	10
The Problem.....	11
Relevant History.....	12
Significance of the Problem.....	15
Research Questions.....	17
Important Terms.....	17
Significant Stakeholders.....	19
Closing Thoughts on Chapter I.....	20
CHAPTER II LITERATURE REVIEW.....	22
African American and Hispanic Students.....	24
English Language Learners.....	29
Low Socioeconomic Status.....	32
Recommendations for Improvement.....	34
Closing Thoughts on Chapter II.....	40



	Page
CHAPTER III SOLUTION AND METHODOLOGY.....	44
Problem Statement.....	44
Proposed Solution.....	46
Outline of the Proposed Solution.....	46
Justification of Proposed Solution.....	47
Purpose of the Research.....	47
Study Context and Participants.....	48
Proposed Research Paradigm.....	49
Data Collection and Data Analysis Methods.....	49
Timeline.....	52
Validation and Subjectivities.....	53
Closing Thoughts on Chapter III.....	54
CHAPTER IV FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS.....	55
Process of Data Collection and Analysis.....	55
Data Findings.....	56
Teacher Survey.....	56
Teacher Observation.....	69
Teacher Interviews.....	77
Data Analysis.....	77
Open Coding.....	78
Axial Coding.....	80
Selective Coding.....	81
Results of Research.....	81
Analysis Using the Research Questions.....	83
Interaction Between the Research and the Context.....	84
Closing Thoughts on Chapter IV.....	85
CHAPTER V SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION.....	87
Summary of Findings.....	87
Discussion of Results in Relation to Extant Literature or Theories.....	87
Discussion of Personal Lessons Learned.....	89
Implications for Practice.....	89
Context.....	89
Implications for Practice.....	92
Field of Study.....	92
Lesson Learned.....	94
Recommendations.....	94
Closing Thoughts on Chapter V.....	97
REFERENCES.....	99

	Page
APPENDIX A TEACHER SURVEY .....	109
APPENDIX B INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD DETERMINATION .....	113
APPENDIX C OBSERVATION PROTOCOL.....	115
APPENDIX D INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR TEACHER 1 .....	116
APPENDIX E INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR TEACHER 2.....	117
APPENDIX F INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR TEACHER 3 .....	118
APPENDIX G INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR TEACHER 4 .....	119
APPENDIX H PRESENTATION FOR CAMPUS ADMINISTRATION .....	120

## LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE		Page
1	RI Formula .....	44
2	Timeline of Research .....	52
3	Teacher Experience at Suburban Intermediate School .....	57
4	Teacher Experience in the Classroom.....	57
5	Race of Teachers.....	58
6	Ethnicity of Teachers .....	58
7	Likert-Type Scale for Teacher Survey.....	59
8	Teacher Responses: I How Understand the GT Referral Process Works .....	60
9	Teacher Responses: I Know Where I Can Access Materials and Information on the GT Referral Process .....	61
10	Teacher Responses: I Know Where I Can Access Materials and Information on the GT-Testing Window .....	61
11	Teacher Responses: The Referral Window for GT Testing Is Sufficient.....	62
12	Teacher Responses: The GT-Testing Process Is Easy to Understand .....	62
13	Teacher Responses: The GT Program Is Necessary for Gifted Students .....	63
14	Teacher Responses: The School Does a Good Job Identifying Students for GT Services.....	64
15	Teacher Responses: Improvements Are Needed for the GT Program.....	64
16	Teacher Responses: Improvements Are Needed for the GT-Testing Referral Process ....	64
17	Teacher Responses: Improvements Are Needed for the GT-Testing Process .....	65
18	Teacher Responses: Students in the GT Program Are Representative of the Student Population .....	66

FIGURE	Page
19	Teacher Responses: The Classroom Teacher Plays a Significant Role in Supporting the GT Student ..... 67
20	Teacher Responses: The Enrichment Specialist Plays a Significant Role in Supporting the GT Student ..... 67
21	Teacher Responses: Teachers Do a Good Job Supporting GT Students ..... 68
22	Teacher Responses: Administration Does a Good Job Supporting GT Students ..... 68
23	Teacher Responses: It Is the Job of the Entire Staff to Support GT Students ..... 69
24	Grounded Theory Analysis Using Axial and Selective Coding ..... 78
25	Axial-Coding Connections..... 80
26	Table of Contents for <i>Identifying and Serving Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Gifted Students</i> ..... 95

## LIST OF TABLES

TABLE		Page
1	Student Population vs. GT-Student Population in the US (2017–2018).....	3
2	Student Demographics vs. GT-Student Demographics in Texas.....	6
3	Overall Population vs. GT Population of Suburban Intermediate School: A 3-Year Average (2017–2020) .....	10
4	RI for Suburban Intermediate School .....	45
5	Student Totals for Teacher 1 .....	70
6	Student Percentages for Teacher 1 .....	71
7	Student Totals for Teacher 2.....	72
8	Student Percentages for Teacher 2.....	72
9	Student Totals for Teacher 3.....	74
10	Student Percentages for Teacher 3.....	74
11	Student Totals for Teacher 4.....	75
12	Student Percentages for Teacher 4.....	76

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

Lack of equity in gifted-and-talented (GT) education is a phenomenon in schools across the United States (US). Percentages show that White and Asian students are overrepresented and that minority and culturally diverse students are grossly underrepresented (Daniels, 1998; Fish, 2017; Ford, 2010, 2014; Ford et al., 2011; Frye & Vogt, 2010; Harris et al., 2007; Kornhaber, 1999; Wright et al., 2017). The historical background of gifted education in the US reveals that the program has not changed much since its creation (Bhatt, 2011; List & Dykeman, 2021). Because giftedness can be found in every population demographic, a school's GT population should mirror its general population (Card & Guiliano, 2015). While progress has been made over the years, there are gaps in population representation in GT classes. Determining why this phenomenon still exists is critical for the improvement of gifted education—researching the “why” of underrepresentation on personal and contextual levels can provide insight and direction on how to begin eliminating gaps. Understanding why certain populations of students are not as prominent in gifted classes is a significant goal for gifted-education reformers.

### **National Context**

The underrepresentation of minority students, low-income students, and English-language learners (ELLs) in gifted-classroom settings is not a problem for just one area or region of the US. Across states and within both urban and rural districts, “we [are] guided by the unwavering belief that discrimination has no place in educational settings” (Ford & King, 2014, p. 3). We believe that desegregation and integration are goals and ideals that have brought the US education system forward. However, the unfortunate truth is that this vision has “yet to be realized in U.S. schools, gifted programs, and courses for advanced learners” (Ford & King,

2014, p. 3). The landmark ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* stated that separate-but-equal education was not genuinely equal, after which the US started desegregating public schools. Sixty-five years later, we still see segregation in public education, specifically in gifted-education and advanced-learning environments, which have a lack of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students. The Office for Civil Rights within the US Department of Education found in its latest survey (taken for the 2013–2014 school year) that the percentages of students classified as GT are highly disproportionate to school populations. Table 1 reveals the significant discrepancies between students’ race and ethnicity percentages in gifted education. The discrepancies speak volumes to the issue faced in gifted-education equity across the nation. To further show the injustice within this part of our education system, the Office for Civil Rights also found that only 2.8% of gifted-education students are ELLs, yet they comprise 10.2 % of the general population in US schools (List & Dykeman, 2021; National Center for Education Statistics, 2021; Office for Civil Rights, 2018). It has been more than 60 years since the equalization of education, yet gifted education still shows a notable lack of integration.

**Table 1**

*Student Population vs. GT-Student Population in the US (2017–2018)*

Student group	Percentage of US student population	Percentage of US GT-student population
American Indian or Alaskan Native	1.0%	0.7%
Asian	5.2%	9.9%
Hispanic or Latino of any race	27.2%	18.3%
Black or African American	15.1%	8.2%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.4%	0.2%
Two or more races	3.8%	4.2%
White	47.3%	58.4%
ELL	10.4%	2.4%
Economically disadvantaged	51.1%	*

*Note.* Adapted from Office for Civil Rights (n.d.).

\*Data not available.

Education reformers have identified various reasons why underrepresentation in gifted education continues to be a barrier to equal education for all. It is vital for teachers nationwide to understand this relevant issue and to consider it one of matter and purpose. “If educators and decision-makers are serious about fulfilling the unfilled promises of *Brown*, the field of gifted education cannot continue business as usual 60 years after the historic *Brown* decision” (Ford & King, 2014, p. 10). This call to action suggests that teachers must look at how children are served and that it is the responsibility of educators to ensure that there are equitable practices in place. Equitable practices must include gifted-education areas and reevaluation of how we identify and serve GT students—this is of utmost importance if we want to fulfill *Brown v. Board of Education*. Ford et al. (2011) highlighted the need for educators to analyze why there are so few African American students in GT programs and to consider making practices more inclusive and



culture-sensitive. They asserted, “Therefore, with an eye toward equity, it behooves all educators, administrators, and decision-makers to analyze, with conviction, why little or less progress is being made with African American students” (Ford et al., 2011, p. 240). Bernal (2001) and Eun (2016) shed light specifically on the underrepresentation of ELL students. Like Ford and her associates, Bernal (2001) and Eun (2016) expressed that GT must be evaluated for improvements and equitable practices for students learning English as a second language (ESL). Goings and Ford (2017) discussed how students from low-income families are affected in the same manner and why they are not appropriately represented in GT. They pointed out that what children are exposed to at home and as young children is what makes the difference. This exposure leads to how students develop in school and how they demonstrate their gifts and talents. Lack of exposure does not mean that they are not gifted; rather, it means that that they will display their giftedness in other manners based on what they do know and have experienced (Goings and Ford, 2017; VanTassel-Baska, 2018a). List and Dykeman (2021) also demonstrated the belief that, even though we are a land of diversity and unique differences, we still screen students for giftedness based on how well they have adapted to western culture and how their achievements line up with western values. What compounds this issue is the fact that of the 50 states in the US, 24 work to identify GT students only, not serve them, and 20 states have mandated limited GT services (Baker, 2001; Peters et al., 2019a). No federal legislation, definition, or service mandate exists nationally, leaving it to each state to determine for its own students (Baker, 2001; Peters et al., 2019a).

Identified causes of the racial and ethnic discrepancies in gifted education include poverty, deficit thinking, referral trends, and assessment practices. Poverty continues to be a critical issue when looking at disparities in education, and regardless of a student’s race, this lack

of resources causes learning gaps. By looking at poverty trends and data according to race/ethnicity, one can find that certain groups are unequally living in poverty (Goings & Ford, 2017; Ricciardi et al., 2020). Statistically, racial minorities are a large percentage of students in poverty; therefore, we cannot look simply at races or ethnicities. We also must “examine the intersection of high academic potential, and the impact poverty can have on students bringing their potential to fruition” (Goings & Ford, 2017, p. 26). Poverty is not the only aspect that needs to be examined nationally. Teachers must also evaluate current policies and personal beliefs as they have an immense responsibility to identify gifted students (Bianco et al., 2011). The continual imbalance of minority students and students of poverty should cause every educator to stop and evaluate the systems and programs in place (Daniels, 1998). Nationwide, researchers and reformers have asked for all individuals involved in schools and education to critically examine the attitudes, beliefs, and core values of every leader and every teacher (Goings & Ford, 2017). This is not a problem that is consigned to one locality or region or state. It is the job of every educator across the nation to ensure that equal rights are found in our education system—including within areas of education that still struggle with systemic equitable practices, such as GT programs.

### **State Context**

Looking at the demographics of the GT program in Texas reveals that though state problems are similar to national ones, Texas has its own needs to address. Every 2 years, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) releases a comprehensive report of Texas public schools. Comparing the 2010 report with the 2020 report shows how the demographics have changed in a decade in public schools. Table 2 breaks down the student demographics in Texas as presented in the TEA’s 2010 and 2020 reports.

**Table 2***Student Demographics vs. GT-Student Demographics in Texas*

	Student population, 2008–2009	Student population, 2018–2019	GT-student population, 2017-2018*
African American	14.0%	12.8%	4.0%
Hispanic	48.6%	52.6%	6.0%
White	33.3%	27.4%	10.6%
American Indian	0.4%	.4%	5.8%
Asian / Pacific Islander	3.7%	4.5% / 0.2%	18.3% / 6.6%
Two or more races	Not reported	2.4%	8.2%
Total GT population	7.6%	8.1%	

*Note.* Adapted from TEA (2010, 2020b).

\* The latest data available on GT populations

Table 2 shows a decrease in White and African American students and an increase in Hispanic students in the student population. Coronado and Lewis (2017) found that by 2011, 48% of students in K–12 public education were Latino/a. Of that 48%, 76% spoke a language other than English at home (Coronado & Lewis, 2017). As can be seen in Table 2, the Hispanic population after 2011 continued to rise. Demographers have come to understand that “population trends found in Texas have a propensity to predict what will occur in the nation” (Esquierdo & Arreguín-Anderson, 2012). Esquierdo and Arreguín-Anderson (2012) also projected that the US population of Hispanics (of any race) will continue to increase by almost double its current numbers; therefore, Texas populations will still see large increases of Latino/a and Hispanic populations. With this increase, we should also see an increase in the number of Hispanic students in GT classes (Coronado & Lewis, 2017; Esquierdo & Arreguín-Anderson, 2012). A

primary concern in Texas should be ensuring that Latino/a and Hispanic students, especially those who speak ESL, have equity in GT classrooms.

## **Personal Context**

### **Where It All Began**

Students of all races, ethnicities, and backgrounds deserve a quality education. I've spent the entirety of my career thus far ensuring that every student who has entered my classroom or with whom I have interacted feels accepted, valued, and appreciated. The concept of "This is how I learned, so this is how they should learn" is not acceptable to me as a teaching philosophy.

I took classes in college on diversity and cultural competence. However, the best lessons I had were in personal experiences as a teacher in public education. During my first 13 years teaching, I worked at a very diverse Title I school in Bryan, Texas. Title I status means that a vast majority of a school's students qualify for free or reduced-price lunches. It indicates that a school serves a high percentage of students from low-income homes and serves some living in complete poverty. I learned a lot about cultural and socioeconomic-status (SES) differences and how these variations need to be a part of a teacher's planning system. Interacting with students and families—getting to know students beyond surface value—was the key to my authentic learning on the subject. In my initial year of teaching, I first understood student behavior and interactions that were different from how I would have acted at their age as a deficit in the way they were being raised. Thankfully, I had good mentors, and my school invested in quality cultural training and professional development (PD). I learned how some parents raise their kids differently and what different cultures value. Understanding these factors was critical to my growth and pedagogy as a teacher. As I grew to value different cultures and races, the learning

environment in my classroom grew more relevant, and the ways in which different races and cultures learn always played a role in my planning.

### **A Passion for Helping All Students**

As I continued on my teaching journey, I moved into a new position as an instructional coach for grades 9–12 at a large, urban high school. One of my responsibilities was to tutor and work with struggling learners, including African American, ELL, and low-income students. These students were unique and capable of learning, but they had to know that I believed in them (Stephens, 2019). They did not become all-A students because of these tutorials, but they made progress, and my passion for helping all students grew.

Fast-forward 4 more years, and I was now moving into a new position at a new school in a new school district. This district was not a Title I district, and the makeup of students was somewhat different. The new school was a fifth- and sixth-grade campus, and my new position was to serve GT students and provide enrichment for the entire campus. What I noted right away in this job is that my classroom had almost no African American, Hispanic, or ELL students. There were also very few students who qualified for free or reduced lunches on my roster. These data spoke volumes to me because African American, Hispanic, ELL, and low-income students can be gifted (Bernal, 2001; Blackburn et al., 2016; Oakland & Rossen, 2005). My rolls should have reflected the population of my school, and they did not. I started asking myself, “Why were my gifted classes missing these particular students? Why did my classroom not mirror my campus population?”

These thoughts led me to start reading literature on gifted education. I found that the underrepresentation of minority, low-income, and ELL students in gifted education is not just a phenomenon at my school. Underrepresentation of CLD students is a problem around the nation

(Ford & Grantham, 2003; Ford & King, 2014). Equal education has been a topic of interest for more than 100 years, but came to light more brilliantly while people were combating Jim Crow laws and fighting for desegregation (Ford & King, 2014). Though education has improved radically, gifted education has made little progress since *Brown v. Board of Education* (Clark-Louque & Latunde, 2019; Ford et al., 2011). Gifted classrooms are still segregated (Ford, 2010, 2014; Kornhaber, 1999). They may not be segregated by law, but they do not include all races, ethnicities, cultures, and backgrounds. Gifted classrooms tend to have mainly White and Asian students (Sarouhim, 2002). This trend is not because non-Asian and non-White students are less intelligent. Knowing this is the most significant reason that I wanted to determine the cause for GT inequity on my current campus.

### **My Research Focus**

The more I read and the more I looked into the history of GT programming in public education, the more I wanted to determine the cause for so much underrepresentation, specifically at my school. I consider my colleagues to be some of the best in the field. Our students do not have significant discipline problems, nor do we have high failure rates. Looking at our campus data would show that we have some great students and some excellent teachers. So why did my GT classroom population not mirror that of my school? This has been my focus as I remain dedicated to growing as an educator and making my gifted classroom the absolute best it can be. Moving forward, I wanted to understand why so few minorities get referred for GT testing on my campus. I also wanted to look at our evaluation processes and determine if they are culturally inclusive or favor particular students.

This topic is relevant and essential for my school to make growth measures required by the state. This research and its findings can make a difference, not only in my school but also in

other schools. As a professional educator, I have to ensure that education serves all students, including gifted students from all backgrounds, races, and cultures. This is not only the right of all people; it is the American dream fulfilled—and it is my dream as a progressive teacher and advocate for quality education for all students at all platforms and levels of learning.

### **Situational Context**

The GT population does not mirror the overall school population at the intermediate school campus on which I serve, named Suburban Intermediate School for the purpose of this study. The breakdown of ethnicities, races, and student groups for the last 3 years is displayed in Table 3. This table shows an overrepresentation of White and Asian students in the GT classes. It also reveals an enormous gap in other groups, such as African American, Hispanic, economically disadvantaged, and ELL. The district of which I am a part also holds the same discrepancies.

**Table 3**

*Overall Population vs. GT Population of Suburban Intermediate School: A 3-Year Average (2017–2020)*

Student group	Average school population	Average GT population
African American	13.6%	2.1%
Hispanic	20.1%	3.3%
White	51.8%	65.6%
Asian	10.2%	30%
Economically disadvantaged	36.2%	10.4%
ELL	8%	0%

*Note.* Adapted from TEA (2018, 2019, 2020a).

## **The Problem**

The district administration over special programs, such as GT, is currently searching for ways to include the creatively gifted in our assessment process and the groups we serve. Administration's goal is to improve our measures for identifying gifted students and to incorporate more than just academically gifted students. This is a positive yet challenging task. The challenge comes in a two-fold manner. First of all, finding credible and reliable creativity assessments is very hard, considering the depth and complexity of creativity. Traditionally, gifted students are identified through academic intelligence tests, which are numerous and easily available. Creative measures are much more subjective, and therefore, creativity is harder to define and identify. Also, few creativity assessments are readily available, verified by GT scholars, and implemented in schools. Creativity measures are needed in many districts, including my own, but they can seem daunting to find and include.

The second challenge comes in changing the minds of current teachers and staff who deal with gifted populations. Many of these individuals cling to tradition and subconsciously see no need to change the status quo. The belief that GT students "are just fine as they are" is an overwhelming misunderstanding running rampant in educator ranks. Many teachers are most concerned with students who struggle academically because of the pressure and intensity involved with preparing students for state-standardized tests. This pressure is powerful and often takes an educator's eyes and purpose off education and equity for all students. When teachers are focused on scores, found that they do not always understand creativity in students, do not create an environment that accepts or nurtures unusual ideas, and seem to undervalue creativity. To include creatively gifted students, we have to change the way that teachers and schools think about student success and what that looks like for a gifted student. Many of these students have



high grades, perform well in class, and leave little worry for the teacher. We must change this way of thinking because it leaves GT students solely responsible for their growth, and this cannot be the case. Teachers must extend learning opportunities to all students regardless of their abilities, including GT students. However, changing social behaviors and beliefs is never an easy task.

Another current goal of the leadership in my district is to include an adjusted identification matrix consisting of measures to identify more African American, Hispanic, and economically disadvantaged students for GT programming. Part of the hope is that the creativity measure will bring more students of color and low-SES backgrounds to GT classes.

Nevertheless, there is still a need to find identification measures that consider cultural differences, possible language barriers, and what giftedness looks like in various cultures.

Though we do not have all the answers now, our district, the school, and I are on a mission to change the status quo. Our GT population must mirror our campus population, and until it does, we are not done growing, improving, and refining our program. A significant hope that I have for myself and my mentors is that what we uncover, develop, and implement to improve our GT program will be an example to other districts and schools. The problem of underrepresentation will not go away overnight, but our goal is to be a frontrunner and leader of a movement of change for gifted education.

## **Relevant History**

### ***History of the School District***

To protect the identities of the district and school in which I work, they will be referred to as Suburban Independent School District (ISD) and Suburban Intermediate School. Suburban ISD has not always had the inequity issues it faces today. It was a school district built around an

agricultural college that eventually grew into a large university (Boykin, n.d.). Suburban ISD was established in 1941 to serve the children of the university professors and students (Suburban ISD, n.d.). As the university grew, so did the community around it. For many years, the students of Suburban ISD were almost primarily White and came from educated homes. Even with progressive movements during the 1960s to allow female students and students of other races to attend the university, the school district's children came from primarily White, middle- to upper-class families.

The region has rapidly grown in the last decades, and the two "sister" cities surrounding Suburban ISD have become very transient communities. Families move back and forth between these cities, and many others relocate to both from larger cities in the state. The demographics of both communities have changed, but the most dramatic changes have occurred in the city served by Suburban ISD. In the last 20 years, the school district has increased rapidly in size and has seen drastic growth in minority students, ELL students, and students of poverty (Dell et al., 2016). As the region has grown, the district's focus has been on creating equitable learning environments in which all students are successful. This ideology has caused district leaders to focus on getting low-achieving students to improve and closing gaps in the general population of students. The district is not done with these improvements, but has made substantial growth in this area. Other areas are becoming a focus for the district, and special programs such as GT services have come under inspection.

### ***What's Being Done***

The discrepancies in gifted education like those found in Table 2 have become a significant focus of Suburban ISD leadership. Currently, the GT identification process relies heavily on standardized assessments to measure students' intelligence quotients (IQs). Research

has shown that traditional IQ tests tend to be culturally biased (Frye & Vogt, 2010) and should not be the only indicator of giftedness in students. The director of special programs for Suburban ISD has emphasized finding alternative ways to identify a more diverse range of students who qualify for GT services. Bringing equity to gifted education is just as important as in general classrooms and special-education classrooms. Suburban ISD leadership recognizes this impetus and is actively working to find solutions. One emphasis is to find ways to acknowledge the creatively gifted, and another is to improve our identification matrix to include ethnicity and race measures. The goal of both of these proposals is to find giftedness in students who tend to be overlooked, such as minority, low-income, and ELL students.

Another way that Suburban ISD is trying to close gaps and ensure that more students from diverse backgrounds are being served in all education areas is by using Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) Growth assessments, which gauge what students know. They are a great way to see who is above grade level in math, reading, or science. After teachers determine where students are, they then use the information to inform their teaching methods. Students take these assessments three times throughout the school year. Not only does this process show where students are, but it also tells where they should be at the time of the next assessment. It allows evaluators to see if students are growing or not. MAP Growth includes gifted students. If GT students are not growing, then we are not serving them properly. Not only does this process inform leaders and teachers of the progress of the GT program, but it allows us to determine if students might need to be referred for GT testing. Suppose a student is in the top percentile in any of the subjects—this is an indicator that they may be an advanced student in need of extended-learning and high-level education opportunities.

A third way that Suburban ISD is working to make GT education more equitable is by educating the principals, counselors, and enrichment specialists to be aware of current issues within the gifted community. These educators met leaders with resistance at first. When current inequities were brought to their attention, they denied any problems and defended current practices. After having multiple open conversations with these teachers and leaders, they began to see what leadership was trying to show them. The use of existing literature, suggestions of strategies, and listening to teacher ideas made open conversations successful. After getting these campus leaders on board, they are now working to take what they have learned and create PD for their teachers and staff. Specifically, enrichment specialists focus on PD concerning cultural competence and learning to look for giftedness in different cultures. The specialists want to help teachers learn to look past student behaviors when those behaviors do not fall under White, middle-class cultural expectations; they want them to see past personal experiences and cultural norms to recognize students for their potential and capabilities regardless of race or background. It is not a perfect environment, but Suburban ISD is working diligently to ensure that GT services are equitable.

### **Significance of the Problem**

Gifted education is considered a high priority in the school district where I work. There are pullout programs in place for GT students, and teachers feel that these pullout classes effectively support the needs of the GT students. Similar activities used in the GT pullout classes are shared with general-classroom teachers, along with extension ideas. Nonetheless, general-education teachers are not found using the exercises, suggestions, or resources provided. Teachers' most significant concerns surround state-standardized testing and making sure that standardized test results are acceptable. GT student tends to get lost in the general-classroom

crowd because they do not need support on the general content being taught. However, this is detrimental to the growth of GT students. They may understand the classroom content, but if there are no challenges for the GT student in a general-education classroom, their growth and learning are hindered.

The most significant issue arising from this lack of focus on GT strategies manifests in the shortage of teacher referrals for genuinely GT students. We know from research by Bianco et al. (2011) that teachers play a critical role in the identification process. Because teachers look for typical well-behaved students who are motivated to make good grades and work hard, genuinely gifted minority students are underrepresented in referrals for GT testing. Every culture and family unit is different in expressing itself, interacting with others, and placing values. With this in mind, referral practices need to be reshaped around culturally proficient practices (Clark-Louque & Latunde, 2019). Teachers are not focused on looking for the unique attributes of students who may demonstrate gifted traits; instead, they are looking for what is considered a good student, which is based on predominantly White, middle-class backgrounds (Fish, 2017). This leads to minority students being left behind their White, middle-class peers in referral rates. Professional learning is necessary for all teachers and administrators who focus on cultural competence and the identification of gifted traits in students from CLD backgrounds (Clark-Louque & Latunde, 2019).

Another significant issue is that teachers are not using gifted strategies in their content lessons. There is an unspoken ideology relayed to students in this behavior that their needs are unimportant. When gifted students do not find classwork challenging, they can become bored. Boredom can manifest in various ways in students. Some students can seem aloof, others can misbehave, while still others can underperform. When this occurs, these students, often minority,

low-income, and limited-English-proficiency students, are overlooked even further for GT programs. Not only are these students underreferred for testing, but they also are inappropriately served in general-education environments.

Teachers must understand the value of gifted education, use strategies effectively in their general-education classrooms, and advocate for GT students, identified or not. Being able to share how students are underserved or how teacher beliefs can make a significant difference for these students is essential to this study's results. Finding out how our campus serves or does not serve these students is vital. I hope to reveal ways to improve gifted education on my campus while also working to eliminate the gap of underrepresented populations.

### **Research Questions**

The purpose of this research was to determine why there is a deficit in the percentage of African American, Hispanic, ELL, and low-income students (also known as CLD students) in gifted education on my campus. I wanted to see if teacher perceptions play a role in referral practices on my campus. I used teacher surveys and interviews to conduct a qualitative study on this issue. My main foci were based on the following research questions:

1. How does a teacher decide if a student needs to be referred for GT testing?
2. How do a teacher's perceptions of giftedness play a role in whether or not they refer a student for testing?

### **Important Terms**

**Bias.** "Constant or systematic error, as opposed to chance or bias, refers to a systematic under-or over-estimation of a population parameter by a statistic based upon samples drawn from the population" (Vanderslice, 1998, p. 4); prejudice in favor of or against one thing, person, or group compared with another, usually in a way considered to be unfair.

**Cultural competence.** “Suggests that teachers understand that they, and their students, are cultural beings. The teacher appreciates and understands students’ cultures and uses that as the basis upon which [the] teaching and learning process is premised” (Fry & Vogt, 2010, p. 12); the ability to understand, communicate with, and effectively interact with people across cultures; being aware of one’s own worldview; developing positive attitudes toward cultural differences; gaining knowledge of different cultural practices and worldviews.

**Culturally responsive teaching (CRT).** “Designed to acknowledge the presence of cultural diversity and to find ways for students to connect with the content material. When students are provided with CRT, they are more motivated to learn and to perform better academically” (Green, 2010, p. 32); pedagogy that recognizes the importance of including students’ cultural references in all aspects of learning, such as positive perspectives on parents and families and communication of high expectations.

**Culturally and lingually diverse (CLD).** “Students who have been traditionally and systematically marginalized and students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds” (Green, 2010, p. 32); an individual who comes from a home environment where a language other than English is spoken and whose cultural values and background may differ from the mainstream culture.

**Deficit thinking.** “Grounded in the belief that culturally different students are genetically and culturally inferior to White students” (Ford, 2010, p. 32); “when educators hold negative, stereotypic, and counterproductive views about culturally diverse students and lower their expectations of these students accordingly” (Ford & Grantham, 2003, p. 17); the notion that students (particularly low-income, minority students) fail in school because such students and

their families experience deficiencies that obstruct the learning process (e.g., limited intelligence, lack of motivation, and inadequate home socialization).

**Equity.** The quality of being fair and impartial; “as being fair, responsive, and impartial, especially for those who have the fewest resources and least advocacy, and who have experienced structural inequality due to historical exclusion” (Wright et al., 2017, p. 50).

**Sociopolitical awareness.** Being aware of the social and political factors that affect people, events, and the world around you; “presumes knowledge is constructed and used toward the eradication of injustice. The role of teacher and learner is never neutral but situated socio-culturally, socio-historically, and socio-politically” (Fry & Vogt, 2010, p. 12).

**Underrepresentation.** The inadequate representation of groups; representation in numbers that are disproportionately low; “the traditional referral-based system for identifying gifted children tends to overlook potentially eligible students from disadvantaged families” (Card & Giuliano, 2015, p. 13678); the lack of “Black and Hispanic students in gifted education is meaningful and statistically significant; at least 500,000 Hispanic and Black students are not being challenged to reach their potential in schools nationally” (Ford, 2010, p. 32).

### **Significant Stakeholders**

First and foremost, the classroom teachers who completed surveys and were interviewed for this study provided insight into why the problem of minority-student underrepresentation in gifted classrooms exists on our campus. Thus, they are the most significant stakeholders. Based on the data from these interviews and surveys, our school will benefit from what the data pinpoint as improvement areas. Our school will gain invaluable insight for direct professional learning and development for the staff.



Other crucial stakeholders include the administration on my campus, as well as the other two intermediate schools in the district. What we learn about our teachers, students, and the GT program is essential for the leadership team as they plan and prepare PD and work toward improving our campus as a whole. What we gather from this research will be sharable and can be applicable to the other two intermediate schools in the district. Furthermore, the results we determine and the changes we implement can inform district leadership on how to improve the district GT program as a whole. The purpose of the research was to identify why minorities and culturally diverse students are underrepresented in GT classes at my current school. Still, the study's implications could have an impact of significant proportions for more than just my school by identifying ways in which the district can improve the GT program of Suburban ISD.

### **Closing Thoughts on Chapter I**

As can be seen, there is a significant problem in GT education that must improve for the benefit of all students. Underrepresentation is not a singular problem and does not lie solely on the shoulders of the GT teachers or coordinator. The underrepresentation of minority and culturally diverse students is a problem that all educators must face and work to eradicate. We must serve all students with all abilities; we must ensure that GT programs are not elite groups reserved for White and Asian students. We must ensure that African American, Hispanic, low-income, and limited-English-proficiency students are provided with equitable opportunities, not only in general-education settings but in gifted programs also. Race and culture do not determine if one is gifted or not. Our job is to make this a well-known fact and change the current status quo of underrepresentation in GT settings.

In this qualitative research study, I examined teachers' perceptions and experiences on my current campus. In this way, data were provided on teacher perceptions of what giftedness

looks like and how teachers identify gifted behavior in a general-education classroom. These perceptions can significantly affect the number of teachers who refer students to be tested for GT services. The results show how teacher perceptions and identification of GT characteristics correspond with the referral process—with the goal to see if the referral practice is the problem or if the problem lies somewhere else. If teachers are often identifying gifted behaviors in CLD students and those students are not qualifying for gifted services, we would be led to believe that further research is needed on assessment practices. The goal of this research was to determine if teacher perceptions on my campus play a role in the lack of CLD-student referrals. Chapter II reviews the history of gifted education and the persistent problem of underrepresented minority and culturally diverse students in GT programs. Chapter III discusses the solution and method, Chapter IV presents the analysis and results, and Chapter V concludes the record of study.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The history of gifted education has roots deeply found in the progressive era of the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Jolly & Hughes, 2015). As school attendance became compulsory and child labor laws were put into place, attendance in public schools began to rise. With this increase, attention to students of exceptional nature was the focus of many founders of gifted education, such as Sir Francis Galton, Lewis M. Terman, and Leta S. Hollingworth. By the 1920s and 1930s, Terman and Hollingsworth had developed the baseline of research that would direct further study of gifted children (Jolly & Hughes, 2015). World War II put a halt to research, though, and it wasn't until the onset of the Cold War that the US began to invest heavily in gifted education. GT programs evolved from the growth in science, technology, and engineering programs of this Cold War era. Education leaders searched for students with aptitudes for these areas to find and create new technologies and discoveries. Further growing the attention on gifted students was the establishment of the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) and its publication, *Gifted Child Quarterly*, in 1954. Then, when the former Soviet Union launched the first artificial satellite known as Sputnik I in 1957, the Space Race began. The US felt threatened by the launch of Sputnik I and was not to be outdone by its Soviet counterpart. Education focus shifted dramatically and led to the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) of 1958. Science, math, and technology were the primary focus of this legislation, and “the identification and implementation of programming for academically gifted and talented students was an aggressive agenda pursued predominately at the secondary level” (Jolly & Hughes, 2015, p. 102).

A decline in concentration on gifted education was forced by the equalization and equity of education in general during the civil rights movement. A key element of the presidencies of John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson was “the fact [was] that one-quarter of the American K-20 schools were in a state of disrepair or suffering from unsustainable infrastructure” (Jolly & Hughes, 2015, p. 138). Enthusiasm for NDEA subsided, and the direction of national education turned away from gifted students. With education remaining a state-directed government entity, gifted education continued to grow and improve, but not in the same ways across states, nor with the impetus of rapidly mobilizing our national skills and assets.

In the decades since, education has grown and developed for gifted students into programs that center on lessons to increase their knowledge. Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) lessons have become a focus of gifted classrooms. The quality of learning for these students has significantly improved since the initial concepts of gifted learning. However, the data in Tables 1 and 2 of Chapter I reveal a gap between the demographics of general students and the demographics of GT students. Table 1 shows that the diversity of our nation is continually growing, but our representation in gifted learning is not.

This chapter includes a relevant review of prior literature regarding the underrepresentation of African American, Hispanic, ELL, and low-SES students in gifted classrooms. Giftedness may present itself differently in various cultural environments, and most of the teaching workforce is made up of White, middle-class females. The ways in which these teachers present information in school is very Eurocentric and middle-class in perspective. Not all students come from this type of background, and to teach from this lens is unfair and does a disservice to students from culturally or economically different environments. The research in this section will show that teachers need to be more culturally aware of what giftedness is and

how students from various backgrounds can be identified and supported as GT. Not only do teachers need to shift their thinking, but they should also embark upon culturally proficient PD. Closing gaps between students of color and nonminority students has been a focus for many schools, especially since the passage of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001. Schools are working to make sure that all student demographic groups are successful on state-standardized tests. Concern for equity should extend into all areas of education, including gifted education. Equity in gifted education is far behind other areas of education, and though progress has been made, there is still significant inequity found in GT classrooms.

Chapter II highlights the following individual demographic groups: African American, Hispanic, ELL, and low-SES students. This review examines how teachers traditionally perceive these students, how they are nominated for GT testing, and how their interactions with teachers affect teacher perceptions and nominations.

### **African American and Hispanic Students**

Equity in education is a primary focus of education reformers and has been since the landmark Supreme Court case *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954. Federal legislation has centered on bringing justice and fairness to students of all backgrounds, races, incomes, and abilities since the mid-20th century. However, the GT classroom has not had the same focus or impetus. Not only are minority students missing in GT classrooms, “but the present demographics of gifted education clearly show that the potential and talent of culturally diverse students, especially those of [Black or Hispanic ethnicity] are not properly discovered or nurtured” (Sarouphim, 2002, p. 36–37). Some researchers feel that the problem of underrepresentation is persistent and unchanging (Ford, 2010). Ford et al. (2011) asserted that this is a problem that every educator must recognize and address. Teachers should always be

learning as professional educators. As such, we should be willing to look deeper to determine significant factors contributing to this epidemic of underrepresentation and to identify remedies to improve this phenomenon.

Statistically, the percentages of students in gifted education vary depending on ethnicity, and though changes have occurred over the years, they are not improving for minorities. Ford (2010) found that African Americans are underrepresented by 48%, Hispanics are underrepresented by 38%, and males of these two races are the most underrepresented. Frye and Vogt (2010) also found that African American children make up 16% of the total population, but only 8.4% in gifted education during the same period. The national average of African American and Hispanic students in gifted education is substantially low compared to the overall population of these two demographic sets (Frye & Vogt, 2010). Civil Rights Data Collection found that Black and Hispanic students comprised 8.9% and 16.8% of students in GT programs in 2015, respectively (Goings & Ford, 2017). Conversely, White students were found to be overrepresented in gifted education, making up 59.9% (Goings & Ford, 2017). Card and Giuliano (2015) stated that the fractions of Black and Hispanic students in gifted programs are much lower than their White and Asian peers (p. 13683). “Underrepresentation of minority students in gifted and talented (GT) programs are a well-established fact” (Bermúdez & Rakow, 1993, p. 3), and researchers have many theories as to why this is a common occurrence. The statistics clearly show the depth of the underrepresentation plaguing minority students, especially African American and Hispanic students.

A significant finding in the literature that identifies causes of underrepresentation is deficit-thinking paradigms. Deficit thinking is considered one of the most critical issues found in public schools; it is “grounded in the belief that culturally different students are genetically and

culturally inferior to White students” (Ford, 2010, p. 32). Deficit thinking also posits that “educators hold negative, stereotypic, and counterproductive views about culturally diverse students and [thus] lower their expectations of these students accordingly” (Ford & Grantham, 2003, p. 17), leading students of color to face major disadvantages. Wright et al. (2017) described the concept of “Black faces and White spaces”—in that gifted classrooms are overenrolled by White students, taught by White teachers, and protected by White, middle-class parents. They went on to discuss that “historically, advocates for greater numbers of Black and Brown faces in gifted programs have been confronted by White power brokers or establishments that view difference as a deficit and uphold biased views of intelligence that maintain the White enrollment status quo” (Wright et al., 2017, p. 48). These authors also held that White spaces are maintained because the narrow definition of giftedness is based primarily on IQ scores and traditional theories of normative development, which are based on White, high-income standards of giftedness, thereby undermining the potential for minority students to be referred to gifted education (Wright et al., 2017, p. 49). The lack of referrals for minority students has widened the achievement gap overall, and deficit thinking is the momentum behind this deficiency (Ford & Moore, 2013). Unfortunately, most educators do not feel that they treat students differently based on their race or socioeconomic background (Daniels, 1998). Even teachers who are instructed on gifted-education strategies and practices are not immune to deficit thinking because “definitions and theories of giftedness are normed and conceptualized on middle-class Whites, which inherently serves and privileges its target population” (Wright et al., 2017, p. 51). The statistics of students caught in the achievement gap and the absence of minorities in gifted-learning environments confirm this finding (Fish, 2017; Frye & Vogt, 2010; Vanderslice, 1998). Another example of the value placed on a Eurocentric intelligence measure can be found in situations

where Black students who perform well on academic measures are told that they are “acting White” (Ford et al., 2011).

Another major misfortune caused by deficit thinking is that many school districts do not see a problem with their gifted populations and feel no obligation to make improvements to the systems in place (Ford, 2010). Not only does this defeat the equity required by *Brown v. Board of Education*, but this “deficit thinking is also a systematic problem that influences all aspects of gifted education” (Card & Giuliano, 2015; Ford, 2010, p. 32; Harris et al., 2007). Many teachers work under the premise that they are color-blind, and therefore, they treat students fairly and equally (Bernal, 2001; Ford, 2010). However, as Ford (2010) stated, “treating everyone the same, even in the context of culture is not only unrealistic but also impossible and contradictory to the goals of gifted education” (p. 32). Clark-Louque and Latunde (2019) specified that when teachers believe that the cultures of students should make no difference in learning, cultural blindness is the reason. This blindness is considered a paucity, and the goal of teachers should be to move away from this toward cultural competence and proficiency, where “individuals accept and respect cultural differences, continually assess their own cultural knowledge and beliefs, and make various adaptations of their own belief systems, policies, and practices and use them appropriately in various cultural settings” (Clark-Louque & Latunde, 2019, p. 4). Ford and Grantham (2003) conjectured that any type of perception, whether negative or positive, about cultural and racial backgrounds, influences definitions, practices, and policies. The status quo thus far is that “definitions of giftedness are primarily normed on middle-class Whites and predicated on IQ tests and/or achievement tests” (Howard, 2018, p. 554). This White, middle-class thinking that determines and decides definitions and policies turns into a cyclical process that continues repeating itself unless confronted by educators and leaders (Ford & King, 2014;



Howard, 2018; Irizarry, 2015). Many times, leaders decide on new training or PD activities to help confront this issue. However, Frye and Vogt (2010) determined that “teachers cannot ‘learn’ culturally responsive pedagogy as one learns information or teaching strategies. Cultural responsiveness is dispositional, attitudinal, and political” (p. 12); nevertheless, CRT and sociopolitical awareness need to be a part of every teacher’s train of thought. This way of thinking must be a part of the campus atmosphere and attitude. Leaders can’t simply throw PD at teachers and hope it sticks. They must consistently work with staff to raise cultural awareness and bring about the proficiency deserved by all students of color and students from low-income backgrounds (Clark-Louque & Latunde, 2019). Mun et al. (2021) called for a reexamination of leadership practices and systematic traditions.

Another major barrier for students of color is the misconceptions held by teachers about how students with gifts and talents look and act. When their looks and actions do not match the teachers’ beliefs, the actual performance of students who are GT in a typical classroom environment can go unnoticed if displayed by an atypical student (Jolly & Hughes, 2015). Fish (2017) shared a valid point to this effect:

Indeed, research indicates that children’s behaviors are perceived differently by their teachers depending on race/ethnicity, as teachers rate non-white students more poorly on behavioral outcomes. It also suggests that teachers perceive high ability as a natural characteristic of white students, while they fail to recognize high ability among students of color, even when presented with objective evidence of this ability. (p. 329)

Another significant challenge caused by poor identification and referral processes stems from the fact that schools and education agencies are left to their own devices in determining how and why students qualify or do not qualify for gifted services. Bhatt (2011) found it

“interesting to note that even though many states provide guidance on how to identify gifted students, many local education agencies (LEAs) are given the freedom to choose their own identification strategies and are not always monitored by the state” (p. 562). Howard (2018) found that “definitions of giftedness are primarily normed on middle-class Whites and predicated on IQ tests and/or achievement tests” (p. 554). Lack of consistent standards and the reality of biased identification practices are widening crucial gaps between White students and students of color in gifted education. Also, far too often, “educators hold low academic expectations of Black, Hispanic, and low-income students” (Grantham, 2012, p. 217). Goings and Ford (2017) found that “even when Black students performed like White students, teachers under referred them for gifted programs” (p. 33).

### **English Language Learners**

ELLs come from all ethnicities and backgrounds and are one of the most rapidly growing populations in schools, yet their numbers are not growing in gifted classrooms (Mun et al., 2021). Bermúdez and Rakow (1993) found that “out of the estimate of 7.9 million students whose home language is other than English, only 3% percent of these students are considered gifted” (p. 14). ELL students can also be African American and/or Hispanic, as well as come from poverty. Though they can fall into all three categories, they have a unique set of challenges that leads to their underrepresentation in GT programs.

One of the most significant barriers for these learners is the type of identification assessments in place. The traditional IQ tests that include verbal assessments do a disservice to students learning ESL (Harris et al., 2007). ELL students’ true potential and what they are capable of is hidden behind a language barrier (Blackburn et al., 2016). ELL students are traditionally served in ESL pullout classes, in which English is taught on a much lower academic

level than the student's current grade level (Eun, 2016), thus leading to lower verbal scores on assessments. Eun (2016) analyzed Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory regarding inclusive practices of ELL students and emphasized the use of challenging curriculum for all students while also providing needed differentiation and support for students to master content curriculum, regardless of their first-language acquisition. Referring to the support of culturally diverse and ELLs in academically gifted environments, Eun (2016) said it best:

Considering the fact that cultural and linguistic diversity is the norm rather than the exception in many parts of the Western world, people cannot afford to be ignorant of others' cultures and languages. This is because social interaction, which is the origin of human development, is dependent on the values, norms, and beliefs of the interacting individuals. The values, norms, and beliefs of individuals, in turn, are determined by the culture in which they were fostered. As institutions are responsible for socializing students into becoming culturally competent individuals, schools should promote the development of each and every student by providing them with ample opportunities to interact, relying on the rich and diversified resources they possess. Furthermore, as human mediators, teachers should be encouraged to support the students' acquisition and use of various cultural tools for expanding their repertoire of knowledge and skills. As everyone interacts and learns in a culturally gifted classroom, the diversity evidenced among them becomes the tool and the path towards development for all. (p. 130)

Another issue for these students is that parents can refer their children for GT assessment, but they are not aware of this ability or do not know how to accomplish it, especially parents who don't speak English (Harris et al., 2007). There is a lack of parental training in recognition of gifted traits (Bermúdez & Rakow, 1993), thus leading to a disadvantage for some parents.

Also, parents whose primary language is not English may not understand flyers or information sent to them regarding referrals for GT testing (Harris et al., 2007). It may sometimes appear that parents of minority students are uninvolved or do not care about their child's education. Parents of ELL students do care, but they do not always have enough social, cultural, educational, or fiscal capital to help their children in their academic endeavors (Ford & Moore, 2013, p. 403). Students show notably higher levels of achievement when families are enabled and supported by schools and when schools focus on improving the academic potential of students traditionally left behind, such as ELL students (Ford & Moore, 2013). Thus, there must be an impetus on including parents who may struggle with English. Educators must also realize that ELL students do not come from a single group. They are not homogenous, and they do not have the same cultural backgrounds (Blackburn et al., 2016). Simply printing flyers in Spanish is not an answer when discussing how to get parents of ELL students involved in school activities. It's a good idea for parents from Latin cultures, but ELL students also come from Asian, European, and African backgrounds. We must find a way to be inclusive of all of our ELL students and their families.

Teachers are the largest percentage of people who refer students for GT assessment. Teacher beliefs and attitudes about giftedness and CLD students have a significant impact on the rate of ELL students referred. Mun et al. (2020) found that "implicit beliefs related to intelligence, giftedness, SES, and language ability may influence how teachers view the abilities and potential of ELLs in their classrooms" (p. 306). ELL students are not only learning English but also new cultural expectations. When a student does not understand social cues or cultural boundaries, this can affect their chances of being nominated for GT assessment. Mun et al. (2020) found that "teacher nominations reflected a valuing of verbal and social skills,

achievement, and work ethic, which . . . were reflective of dominant cultural biases that ultimately led to no ELLs being recommended” (p. 307). This would point to the need for PD activities grounded in cultural competence and growth.

### **Low Socioeconomic Status**

Low-SES students have similar issues as minority and ELL students, but they can also be overlooked for different reasons. Students who come from low-income households are exposed to fewer academic and literary activities than their high-income peers. Juntune et al. (2017) found that students from low-income homes enter the school system with 400 fewer hours of vocabulary and academic-readiness activities. Children from middle-class, high-income homes with educated parents enter school with a substantially higher vocabulary than students from poverty (Juntune et al., 2017). These students do not demonstrate knowledge in the same way as students from higher-income homes and therefore can be overlooked in traditional forms of GT referral. Card and Giuliano (2015) found that many qualified students from low-income, nonnative, and underprivileged families are overlooked in this process, providing further evidence of barriers in the referral process. Students referred by teachers tend to be students with outstanding behavior and good grades—typical middle-class standards (Bianco et al., 2011).

Criteria for qualifying for gifted-education services rely heavily on standardized academic intelligence tests. Assessments for gifted services are a significant factor hindering the access to GT programs by diverse and economically disadvantaged students (Sarouphim, 2002). “Identifying academic talent and potential in culturally and linguistically diverse students is of great concern to educators” (Mills & Tissot, 1995, p. 210), and attempts have been made to account for the disproportionate number of specific student groups in GT learning environments. Nevertheless, the issue is that standardized tests are biased against certain groups of children

(Mills & Tissot, 1995). Also, performance on IQ tests is determined by past opportunities and experience. Students from low-income families or ESL families don't have as many of these opportunities (Vanderslice, 1998). Parents who do not speak English cannot converse with their child in English to help them advance their English-language skills, therefore denying children the opportunity to learn the art of dialogue (Vanderslice, 1998). In a study on poverty and its effect on verbal scores, Kaya et al. (2016) found higher-income students to have higher scores on all of the dependent variables than students classified as low-income. "These results suggest that significant differences in students' verbal intelligence scores as well as in vocabulary, reading comprehension, language and spelling achievement scores were associated with students' household income level" (Kaya et al., 2016, p. 8). Standardized IQ tests require mastery of oral, writing, and reading skills in English; thus, the reliance on this type of standardized test is inappropriate for ethnic and linguistic minorities and has been identified as a root cause of underrepresentation of such students in gifted-education settings (Harris et al., 2007). Luria et al. (2016) ascertained that though IQ tests have improved in the last 30 years, they are often misused and misinterpreted, and they hold unbalanced importance. Also, they stated that the creativity measure and multiple intelligences are often left out of the equation with IQ tests (Luria et al., 2016, p. 45). Kornhaber (1999) pointed out that intelligence tests draw too narrow a range of intellectual abilities, they require students to translate problems in linguistic and notational forms instead of being able to manipulate in three dimensions, and the activities measured are those that are nurtured, not inherent by nature (p. 145). Kornhaber (1999) even quoted Howard Gardner, known for his theory of multiple intelligences, saying that even he felt "that intelligence is not adequately assessed by intelligence tests" (p. 145). Peters and Engerrand (2016) added to the conversation of inequity found in standardized tests by pointing out that

opportunities to learn (OTLs) are a critical factor in the lack of fairness of these assessments. They explained that most analyses of knowledge or ability expect some level of similarity in background exposure for a given normative group. Thus, students with differing OTLs may not meet the standardized assessment threshold, but only because the norm is culturally or ethnically unfair (Peters & Engerrand, 2016). There is a definite need for improvements in traditional GT evaluations to make them more inclusive of other cultures, language learners, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

### **Recommendations for Improvement**

Suggestions on ways to improve gifted education for minority, ELL, and low-income students can also be found within the literature, beginning with a discussion of changing deficit thinking. “Educators have an obligation to critically evaluate their roles in educating students who are young, gifted, and [are a minority] and promoting culturally responsive pedagogy” (Green, 2010, p. 10). It is incredibly challenging to help teachers move from deficit thinking to being culturally responsive, but it is a necessity. Frye and Vogt (2010) stated, “Teachers cannot ‘learn’ culturally responsive pedagogy as one learns information or teaching strategies. Cultural responsiveness is [a] dispositional, attitudinal, and political” issue (p. 12). This has led education researchers and leaders to recommendations for intense and ongoing PD in this area, as well as building a culturally competent environment for all who enter the school (Green, 2010). “One key recommendation lies in the vital need for effort to directly, aggressively, and consistently address contributing social, educational, and cultural/familial factors” (Ford & Moore, 2013, p. 411) to the way students learn, participate in class, behave, and achieve. If we train preservice teachers to be culturally responsive and aware, we can redefine education and ensure more equity for all students (Frye & Vogt, 2010). We must also work to create a culturally conscious

environment that transcends classroom doors and infiltrates the entire school system (Ford & Grantham, 2003; Ford & Moore, 2013; Goings & Ford, 2017). “The standard processes for gifted screening are based on teacher referrals, and there is evidence of under-referral of qualified students from disadvantaged backgrounds” (Card & Giuliano, 2015, p. 13678)—which tells us that there is a lack of cultural responsiveness. Moving forward, this must be a prominent focus on all campuses. Leaders must make cultural understanding, diversity, and cultural appreciation a key focal point in their campus improvement plans. Green (2010) said it best:

We must move toward a curriculum that is culturally responsive because all of our students deserve to be educated equitably. Therefore, we, as educators and administrators, must continue to transform the educational system. When deciding who will be in gifted and talented programs/classes, we must consider the entire community of students of all socioeconomic backgrounds, races and ethnicities, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and abilities. (p. 10)

Wright et al. (2017) suggested several ways to increase equity and combat the deficit paradigm. First of all, educators need to analyze and disaggregate underrepresentation data. They asserted that this allows attitudes of ignorance, prejudice, deficit thinking, indifference, and racism, along with inequitable policies and practices, to be brought forward, confronted, and addressed. They also recommended equity allowances, data collection on gifted minorities’ experiences, cultural responsiveness, improved teacher preparation for preservice and in-service teachers, and promotion of cultural competence among teachers (Wright et al., 2017). If campus leaders move toward fostering cultural competence and honest evaluation of current practices, they will confront and begin to diminish the deficit paradigm.



The ways in which students are referred for GT testing also need notable improvements, and research has outlined several ways to do this. One of the first suggestions presented by Oakland and Rossen (2005) is for the GT program to describe and define specific program goals and create nomination, screening, and selection processes that mirror these goals. They also suggested that “the nomination process should begin as early as feasible and no later than the second grade” (Oakland & Rossen, 2005, p. 61). Another suggestion has been to ensure the training of intercultural competence among teachers (Card & Guiliano, 2015), training that affirms what has already been suggested for changing deficit thinking in schools. Another way to prevent the underrepresentation of certain ethnic groups is to implement universal screening at younger grades, such as kindergarten and first grade (Sarouphim, 2002). After analyzing a universal screening program, Card and Guiliano (2015) determined a minority or low-income student having increased odds of being identified as GT to be 174%, with a 118% increase for Hispanics and a 74% increase for Blacks. When students are younger and have not had time to fall into the achievement gap, there is a higher chance to catch more gifted students of all ethnicities (Daniels, 1998; Ford, 2014; Ford & Moore, 2013; Ford et al., 2011). Still another suggestion to improve the referral system has been to train teachers and parents on the characteristics of gifted children, to make sure that information for parents is printed in a language they can read, and to build relationships with parents so that they feel comfortable interacting with school personnel and advocating for their children (Green, 2010; Harris et al., 2007). “As educational leaders are prepared to foster quality teaching and student success, schools can benefit from educators who are proficient in facilitating strategies that promote parent engagement” (Robinson, 2017, p. 2), consequently giving parents the confidence and

knowledge of how to support their children in the best way. Improving the system for GT referrals would instigate a massive advancement for minorities in gifted education.

Improving the assessment piece of identifying gifted students is the third area of recommendations. Mills and Tissot (1995) experienced a significant challenge in finding an appropriate process or instrument able to identify the academic and gifted potential of racially diverse students. Their central belief was that the standard and most common forms of intelligence testing are biased against certain groups of children (Mills & Tissot, 1995). “The many different kinds of abilities and talents that students possess require different types of instruments” (Mills & Tissot, 1995, p. 216). These researchers studied student results on three different assessments: Raven’s Progressive Matrices (RPM), Raven’s Advanced Progressive Matrices (APM), and the School and College Ability Test (SCAT). They found the APM to identify significantly higher proportions of minority children than traditional measures. The RPM also appeared useful in identifying students with limited English proficiency. Their conclusion was that not one type of assessment should be used, but multiple, so as to catch the different gifted traits in students (Mills & Tissot, 1995). Kornhaber (1999) also contended that various assessment measures could make a difference in the underrepresentation of minority students in GT classes. She studied three different types of assessment data against eight criteria: (a) children understand tasks, (b) children are encouraged to do their best work, (c) evaluators are trained to carry out the work, (d) clear scoring procedures exist, (e) observer reliability exists, (f) abilities are assessed beyond traditional tests, (g) assessment is intelligence-fair, and (h) assessment is domain-based. Data were analyzed using the Discovering Intellectual Strengths and Capabilities while Observing Varied Ethnic Responses (DISCOVER) model, the Problem Solving Assessment (PSA), and the Gifted Model Program. Using this variety of assessments

yielded more students of color as having gifted characteristics and abilities (Kornhaber, 1999). Still, the author concluded that though valuable, these should just be an interim step toward better assessment methods. She suggested continuation of improvement in our assessment process by ensuring multiple facets for identification and culturally responsive evaluation measures (Kornhaber, 1999). What is interesting is that intelligence tests are not entirely rejected in the research. According to Luria et al. (2016), “despite the sophistication of current IQ tests, they are easily misused” (p. 45), hence the need for multiple assessment measures, observations, and feedback from teachers, parents, and peers. Another proposed improvement by Peters and Engerrand (2016) is the use of group-specific norms, especially when applied together with local standards and universal screening. This strategy allows for “the best potential for increasing the equity of gifted education programs while maintaining the nature of gifted education as services that develop domain-specific talents” (Peters & Engerrand, 2016, p. 169). Hodges et al. (2018) also summed up how multiple identifications methods can benefit students of color and can decrease gaps found in gifted education:

The use of multiple identification methods and pathways would address the limitation of a single method. However, it is also important to adopt a more inclusive process in selecting gifted students for services. This can be done by providing services to students who are identified through any of the methods used by the schools and not requiring them to only be served when identified through multiple methods. Implementing talent development programs for traditionally underserved youth in which they can develop strengths, skills, and interests might help these students demonstrate and develop their potentials and thereby be identified for further services. The representation gap will likely

take years to close, but this should not discourage researchers and educators from seeking to improve proportionality in gifted programs. (p. 169)

The most important takeaway from these suggestions is that the area of assessment should continue to evolve as educators and policymakers look for more equitable ways to identify gifted students.

Two other areas that can be improved upon are teacher and parent perceptions. Teacher perceptions can be aligned to more beneficial learning systems when the aforementioned culturally proficient and responsive atmosphere is created in a school setting (Ford, 2010; Green, 2010). “There is a need for more studies that use a critical lens to examine teacher and school leaders’ beliefs and attitudes about students of color who live in poverty” (Goings & Ford, 2017, p. 33), thus helping teachers evolve into stronger and more equitable professional educators. Teachers need to be aware of microaggressions that they might hold and do not even realize (Ford, 2014) while working with school leaders to improve the school climate and belief systems (Oakland & Rossen, 2005). Cornell et al. (2005) wrote that “researchers should examine the self-concepts of high-ability minority students with caution since it appears that the distinction between academic and social self-concepts employed with white students may not necessarily apply to high-ability minority students” (p. 206). Understanding minority-, ELL-, and low-income-student beliefs about themselves (Cornell et al., 2005) and grasping the need to transform teaching atmospheres to culturally responsive environments is the major point to know when wanting to improve teacher perceptions and roles involved with gifted education (Cornell et al., 2005; Ford, 2010; Sarouphim, 2002). Green (2010) firmly believed that “educators have an obligation to critically evaluate their roles in educating students who are young, gifted, and Black and promoting culturally responsive pedagogy” (p. 32) and that it would behoove all teachers to

comprehend this. As Ford (2014) stated, “it is unprofessional and unethical to trivialize, tolerate, accept, or permit the inequitable distribution of resources and opportunities to marginalized students, many of whom are African American and Hispanic students” (p. 143); making this a reality would lead to equitable services within gifted programs.

Parent involvement, understanding of GT identification processes, and knowledge of gifted-program benefits must improve (Ford et al., 2011; Robinson, 2017). Morgan (2019) found that “participation in gifted classrooms helped Black and Hispanic students make achievement gains at a large urban school district” (p. 157). Helping parents of these students understand these benefits is critical to closing the gaps in gifted education. Robinson (2017) also noted that “district and school administrators [must] implement a supportive parent engagement program district-wide” (p. 10). Robinson (2017) also promoted the idea that parents should be integral pieces of the school system and that their roles should be central in planning for gifted education.

### **Closing Thoughts on Chapter II**

The GT population is unique and full of individuals with a diversity of needs. “Gifted students can and do differ as much from their peers as students with disabilities, and having these differences acknowledged, identified, served, and appreciated” is of utmost importance (Jolly & Hughes, 2015, p. 187). Acknowledging this concept is key to the rectification of minority-student underrepresentation in gifted programs. It should be the focus of every teacher, principal, and education leader (Lindstrom & Van Sant, 1986). As Ford (2010) profoundly stated,

The fundamental belief is that underrepresentation negatively affects the lives and future of Black and Hispanic students, as well as the school district, the community, the state, and the nation. This is both a national and international problem that hinders our ability to

compete and thrive globally. Simply put, underrepresentation is not their problem; it's everyone's problem. (p. 31)

If the field of education is to advance gifted education, then all educators need to realize the seriousness of fulfilling what *Brown v. Board of Education* promised our citizens of color (Ford & King, 2014). Equitable education is a right of all, American citizens, regardless of race, ethnicity, or gender—this should be found in our gifted classrooms just as in our general classrooms. This review of literature is an endeavor to identify the circumstances that continue to lead to the underrepresentation of minority, low-income, and ELL students in gifted education. Identifying these issues and considering ways to combat them are critical to the improvement of gifted education and the inclusion of students from diverse backgrounds. As the literature has revealed, a change from deficit thinking into cultural responsiveness has to occur in our current ranks of teachers, and a grand emphasis is moving toward making this an influential aspect of preservice training (Ford & King, 2014; Frye & Vogt, 2010; Green, 2010; Irizarry, 2015; Jolly & Hughes, 2015; Lindstrom & Van Sant, 1986; Wright, et al., 2017). The literature also has recognized that referral processes are inadequate and require revamping to provide cultural fairness in the process of testing students for GT services (Bianco et al., 2011; Card & Giuliano, 2015; Ford & Moore, 2013; Ford et al., 2011; Peters & Engerrand, 2016). Finally, the research has highlighted the inequity in current assessment practices and pointed out the Eurocentric orientations in standardized intelligence tests (Ford et al., 2011; Kornhaber, 1999; Luria et al., 2016). An emphasis on using multiple evaluation tools to identify students with gifted potential is on the rise, and current findings have advocated for this change (Mills & Tissot, 1995; Oakland & Rossen, 2005; Peters & Engerrand, 2016). Improvements to gifted education are essential. We can no longer look past the needs of thousands of unidentified gifted students.

Moving forward, I want to identify trends in my school's GT referral and assessment data. By analyzing these figures and evaluating teacher perceptions of students referred, I can determine appropriate action pieces for the school and for students with whom I interact daily. Putting the recommendations found in the literature into place, the possibility of improvement is much more likely. There are meaningful implications found in historical and current research. Performing this record study in my school not only provides further information to direct advances in our GT program, but could have meaningful implications for other schools and suggestions for further investigation and study.

Other questions that still resonate fall under two key ideas. First, how do we take current practices and improve them without completely sabotaging the system? Moving too quickly and aggressively can cause a lot of tension, stress, and teacher burnout. We want teachers to move toward culturally responsive teaching, not away from teaching altogether. The opposite side of the continuum, though, is the fact that we can't tarry. We cannot delay improvements any longer. How do we find the happy medium of professional growth with positive results and adequate progress? This insight is of notable interest to me as a continual learner, and in this research, I look at findings, current practices, and new initiatives to try and answer these questions. Secondly, the recommendations made in research or even in the findings of my school may not be taken into consideration by administration. What can I do to further the conclusions from hours of study and research? How can change genuinely be affected by so many tiers of leadership? I can provide information and suggestions, but it will be another aspect of growth and learning to see how these suggestions are received. The implications of the literature review, personal research, and findings of this study add to the current literature. Hopefully, this will

begin to make progressive changes for the minority, ELL, and low-income students who are gifted but have been overwhelmingly neglected in the area of gifted education.



CHAPTER III  
SOLUTION AND METHODOLOGY

**Problem Statement**

There is a definitive gap in the percentage of CLD students in the GT pullout program at Suburban Intermediate School versus the school’s overall population. The NAGC has acknowledged that a representation index (RI) can help schools determine if their gifted population represents their general population (Peters et al., 2019b). Peters et al. (2019b) calculated RI by dividing the percentage of gifted students from a demographic group by the percentage of students of the same demographic group in the general population, as shown in Figure 1. School data collected from the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) clearly identify this problem, as seen in Table 4, which applies an RI to my particular school.

**Figure 1**

*RI Formula*

$$\text{RI} = \frac{\% \text{ gifted of demographic group}}{\% \text{ general population of same demographic group}}$$

*Note.* Adapted from Peters et al. (2019b)

**Table 4***RI for Suburban Intermediate School*

Student group	School population, 2020–2021	GT population, 2020–2021	RI
African American	23%	1.5%	$1.5/23 = 0.06 = 6\%$
Hispanic	21%	4.7%	$4.7/21 = 0.2 = 20\%$
White	66%	60%	$60/66 = 0.9 = 90\%$
American Indian	1.8%	0%	$0/1.8 = 0\%$
Asian	9%	33%	$33/9 = 3.7 = 370\%$
Pacific Islander	0.15%	0%	$0/0.15 = 0\%$
Economically disadvantaged	39%	4.7%	$4.7/39 = 0.1 = 10\%$
ELL	13.4%	3%	$3/13.4 = 0.2 = 20\%$

*Note.* Adapted from PEIMS data from Suburban Intermediate School (2021)

Table 4 details the population totals for Suburban Intermediate School for the 2020–2021 school year based on PEIMS data. The percent of each demographic group in the school is compared to the percentages of the same groups in GT. To find the RI, the percentage of a student group in GT is divided by the student-group rate in the school population. For example, 23% of the school population is African American, and 1.5% of the GT population is African American. To determine the RI, 1.5% is divided by 23%, producing an RI of 0.06 (6%) for African Americans. The closer the result is to 1.0 (100%), the better the representation (Peters et al., 2019b). Peters et al. (2019b) also acknowledged that an RI of 1.0 (100%) is a bit unreasonable, so they encouraged that “a little more or a little less” is okay. If we aim to reach an RI of close to 1.0 (100%), then 0.06 (6%) represents a considerable gap. The RI gives educators a visible representation of how various groups are present or not present in GT classrooms. This should also be a tool that helps teachers and leaders see what areas need improvement. As can be seen in Table 4, African Americans, Hispanics, and low-income students are significantly underrepresented at Suburban Intermediate School. Representation of White students seems relatively equitable, but Asian

students are significantly overrepresented. Table 4 identifies the areas with the most significant gaps—our CLD populations.

### **Proposed Solution**

The proposed solution is to determine how teacher perceptions at Suburban Intermediate School play a role in this phenomenon. I investigated teacher perceptions of CLD students and their beliefs about giftedness. What do teachers look for in students to consider them gifted if not already identified? How are student behaviors and personal interactions viewed by teachers? By surveying, observing, and interviewing teachers on campus, I was able to evaluate teacher attitudes and beliefs of GT students to address the research questions at hand:

1. How does a teacher decide if a student needs to be referred for GT testing?
2. How do a teacher's perceptions of giftedness play a role in whether or not they refer a student for testing?

### **Outline of the Proposed Solution**

The first step was to survey teachers at Suburban Intermediate School to get an overall view of their understanding of gifted education and diverse students' needs. Teachers were asked about their views and understanding of the GT program at Suburban Intermediate School, as well as what they look for in students to refer them for testing. After sorting through the data, I narrowed the pool to four teachers for observation and interview in order to gain a more in-depth perspective on their beliefs about gifted education, minority groups, and demographic groups' representation on our campus. I explored their views on how gifted students interact and work in general-education classrooms, and I looked at what catches their attention so as to refer a student for testing. I also observed these four teachers to gain a personal perspective on how they interact with students of all backgrounds and to determine how they choose students for GT referral.

The results of the teacher surveys, observations, and interviews informed the creation of suggestions for campus and district administration on how to improve staff referral practices, understanding of the benefits of a gifted program, and how we as a community can work together to close the gaps seen in Suburban Intermediate School's RIs. A formal presentation will share the findings and offer suggestions on future PD opportunities and ways to improve the gifted program at Suburban Intermediate School.

### **Justification of Proposed Solution**

The research intended to reveal whether teacher perceptions and interactions with students affect referral rates of underrepresented groups of GT students on the Suburban Intermediate School campus. Assuming a connection between teacher perceptions and underreferrals of CLD students, this revelation can inform teachers and leaders of areas in which they need to grow and improve. PD could be developed with the specific purpose to help teachers grow more culturally competent and to help them understand how giftedness may present itself in minority, ELL, and low-income students. If no connection exists between the two variables, other areas of the campus or district will need to be investigated for answers to the gaps already discussed.

### **Purpose of the Research**

The purpose of the research was to determine if there is a relationship between teacher perceptions and the underrepresentation of specific student groups in referrals for the GT pullout program. What do teachers identify in students that would lead them to refer a student for GT assessment? How do teacher classrooms, lessons, and interactions with students play a role in teacher referrals? The purpose was to determine if teachers have a culturally competent understanding and how this affects their views and interactions with students. By understanding

how teachers view students and giftedness, we can then work to grow and improve our campus based on the data revealed from this study.

### **Study Context and Participants**

The study took place at Suburban Intermediate School, a fifth- and sixth-grade campus. The first step in the study was to send a survey to teachers to gather data on their perceptions of different demographic groups, gifted students, and how to identify them in a general-education classroom. This information was collected, sorted, and coded based on emerging ideas. The next step was to identify connective impressions among staff answers, and from there, the focus turned to four teachers with connective ideas. Subsequently, these four teachers were observed in their classrooms, with the focus on their interactions with African American, Hispanic, ELL, and low-income students. By observing teacher interactions with all students, including the GT students, at Suburban Intermediate School, more data were able to be gathered about the relationship between teacher perceptions and overlooked demographics in teacher referrals.

Notes taken during observations were sorted and coded based on connective ideas. These ideas helped me prepare specific questions for each teacher I observed for the next step, interviewing them individually in a semiformal environment. The interviews represented the final piece in the combination of survey beliefs, classroom observations, and interviews to meld the overall ideology held by these teachers. Assuming the teachers seemed to be culturally competent and were referring various students for GT assessment, teacher perceptions may not be the reason for the underrepresentation phenomenon at Suburban Intermediate School. In the alternate case, the teachers' views and understandings would help leadership in planning future PD opportunities.

## **Proposed Research Paradigm**

Constructivist grounded theory served as the basis for this study. The theoretical framework supporting constructivist grounded theory is interpretivism. Interpretivism focuses on understanding the social world without using a positivist perspective, considering cultural and historical interpretations of social structures (Bhattacharya, 2017). Specifically, symbolic interactionism is the type of interpretivism used to understand the data in this study.

Comprehending social realities and how people see themselves and others is the primary foundation of symbolic interactionism (Bhattacharya, 2017; Creswell & Gutterman, 2019), thus the basis for its establishment of grounded theory. Grounded theory aims to “generate and discover a theory or a unified theoretical explanation” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 82).

Researchers who use this research paradigm focus on a process and look for a theory to explain it (Bhattacharya, 2017; Creswell & Poth, 2018). I wanted to find a theoretical explanation for the underreferral of certain student demographic groups at Suburban Intermediate School.

“Grounded theorists explain the feelings of individuals as they experience a phenomenon or process” (Creswell & Gutterman, 2019), and I sought to explain how teachers feel when thinking about various students, their abilities, and referring them for gifted services. I wanted to understand what teachers at Suburban Intermediate School think about the students and what leads them to refer some students to GT and not others.

## **Data Collection and Data Analysis Methods**

In the first data collection method of purposeful sampling, teachers completed surveys using a Likert-type scale and open-ended response questions (Appendix A). Because a “characteristic of grounded theory research is to collect data more than once and keep returning to the data source for more information” (Creswell & Gutterman, 2019), I then used the surveys

to determine whom I would like to observe and interview through stratification sampling. The survey was anonymous; however, at the end of the survey, teachers were asked if they would feel comfortable allowing me to observe and interview them. The observations and interviews were voluntary, but purposeful sampling focused on two teachers with fewer than 10 years of experience and two teachers with more than 10 years of experience. The purpose of focusing on years of experience was to determine if attitudes and perceptions vary between younger and older teachers. Younger teachers have the most recent training, and undergraduate programs are ever evolving per students' changing needs. I wanted to see if younger teachers view GT students and characteristics differently from their older colleagues and peers.

The survey gathered data on teacher information such as years of experience and race/ethnicity. It also included a series of statements for which teachers could identify their comfort with each statement on a Likert-type scale. Teachers could also add comments for each statement if they wanted to share more information. The following statements were posed to the teaching staff:

- I understand how the GT referral process works at Suburban Intermediate School.
- I know where I can access material and information about the GT referral process at Suburban Intermediate School.
- I know where I can access material and information about the GT-testing window at Suburban Intermediate School.
- The referral window for GT testing is a sufficient amount of time.
- The GT-testing process at Suburban Intermediate School is easy to understand.
- The GT program is necessary for our gifted students.
- Our school does a good job of identifying students for GT services.

- Improvements need to be made to the GT program at Suburban Intermediate School.
- Improvements need to be made to the referral process for GT testing at Suburban Intermediate School.
- Improvements need to be made to the testing process for GT at Suburban Intermediate School.
- The students in the GT program effectively represent our overall student population.
- The classroom teacher plays a significant role in supporting the GT student.
- The enrichment specialist plays a significant role in supporting the GT student.
- Our teachers do a good job of supporting GT students.
- Our administration does a good job of supporting GT students.
- It is the job of the entire staff to support GT students.

After sorting the data from the surveys, I observed and interviewed four teachers to see how they interact with students in their classrooms and then discuss with them their beliefs about GT students and those needing to be referred for testing.

In addition to years of experience, I chose four teachers based on the core criteria identified from the original teacher surveys and from those who volunteered. I observed these teachers for multiple class periods and with various student groups to evaluate their interactions with students. After each day of observation, interviews of the same four teachers occurred to get their feedback on how their classes went, how students behaved, whom they believe to be the brightest students in each class, and why. I coded the observation and interview notes with open coding and then recoded them with axial coding. After determining central themes from the analysis of class observations and interviews, I entered the third phase of coding that allowed me to form interrelationships between categories, also known as selective coding (Creswell &



Gutterman, 2019). The selective coding phase then led me to an emerging theory of teacher experiences in explaining why they do or do not refer individual students for GT evaluation. I applied a systematic, structured approach to compare the various data pieces so that a theory evolved from the fullness of analysis (Bhattacharya, 2017).

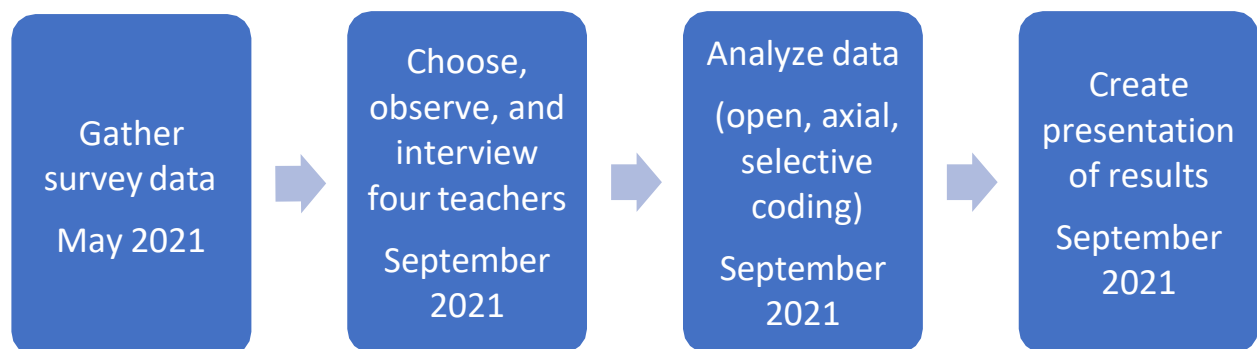
Approval from my university’s Institutional Review Board was sought for human research, but was not considered necessary, as all data-gathering efforts were for the explicit purpose of completing the record of study (Appendix B).

### **Timeline**

The timeline for this record of study is shown in Figure 2. There was a 2-week window to distribute and collect teacher surveys from the 32 general- and special-education-certified teachers on campus. The summer months of June and July 2021 included sorting, coding, resorting, and recoding as the process moved through open, axial, and selective coding. In August and early September 2021, I performed observations and interviews. The analysis and conclusion were prepared in September 2021.

**Figure 2**

*Timeline of Research*



As I planned and prepared, I took into consideration time constraints and uncontrollable events. The time of study was a strange one due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with many prevention protocols in place. If something unforeseen had happened during the research window, such as a school or district closure, an alternative plan would have been set in motion, such as meeting virtually with my committee, amending the schedule and process of data collection, and having virtual conversations with teachers.

### **Validation and Subjectivities**

I chose qualitative research because I was endeavoring to understand teachers' personal experiences regarding GT referrals, testing, and services. My goal was to develop a theory grounded in their encounters that might explain why African American, Hispanic, low-income, and ELL students are all underrepresented at Suburban Intermediate School in the GT pullout program. Creswell and Poth (2018) pointed out the question that every researcher must ask themselves: "Is this data and analysis accurate and valid, and by whose standards is it deemed so?" I had to determine and validate that the data and analysis are accurate and valid. The validation strategy that I employed through the researcher lens is triangulating the data from multiple data sources (i.e., surveys, observations, and interviews). This triangulation of data illuminates the central theme evolving from the research and validates the emerging theory (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I also must disclose that I am the enrichment specialist at Suburban Intermediate School, and my job entails pulling GT students for STEM lessons and activities. I also provide enrichment opportunities for all students and support staff with advanced academic needs. In essence, I *am* the GT program at Suburban Intermediate School, and therefore, it was critical for me not to take things personally or make participants feel pressured. I was also cautious not to have prejudices based on my values and experiences that could damage the data

analysis. By clarifying my bias and exposing the “dark matter” of my individual experiences in gifted education, I bring validity to the study and protect the integrity of the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Another way I brought validation is through the participant lens. The teachers I observed and interviewed were allowed to examine the analyzed data’s codes and structure. This step allowed for feedback from them to judge the accuracy and credibility of how I interpreted their interactions and views (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I also collaborated with participants to bring validity to the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The participants were given full access to the data, and I allowed them to offer ideas for questions I should have asked or a focus that they see in the information that I did not.

### **Closing Thoughts on Chapter III**

This research aimed to provide specific data related to the underrepresentation of CLD students at Suburban Intermediate School. The data clarify the theory behind the impact of teacher and parent perceptions and beliefs on student percentages and representation in GT classes. The purpose of this study was to provide information and direction for future campus decisions. Mandinach and Jackson (2012) posited that if “schools, districts, and states are going to rise to the challenge of helping all students meet [and exceed] academic standards, there must be high-quality training for teachers and administrators in the use of data to improve performance” (p. 54). I want the data from this study to be a tool that will help the leadership and staff improve campus decisions. The overarching themes that evolved and the theory derived from the data should be a guiding point for the campus to improve its practices regarding gifted-education practices and processes.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

#### **Process of Data Collection and Analysis**

A survey was sent to 32 general- and special-education-certified teachers at Suburban Intermediate School. Out of the 32 teachers who received the study, 17 completed it. The survey questioned teachers on their views of the GT program on campus, their understanding of the referral process, and the needs of GT students (shown in Appendix A). The answers to the survey were analyzed, looking for overarching, big ideas. This analysis framed how I would observe teachers for 1 week. The end of the survey asked participants who felt comfortable with being observed and interviewed to add their names in the comments section. There were 7 out of the 17 teachers who entered their names to volunteer to be observed. I looked through the seven teachers who volunteered and chose two with fewer than 10 years of teaching experience and two with more than 10 years of teaching experience. Of the two teachers with fewer than 10 years of experience, one teaches sixth-grade social studies, and the other teaches sixth-grade science. The two teachers with more than 10 years of expertise include a sixth-grade English/language arts teacher and a fifth-grade math and science teacher. I visited at least three classes for each teacher and took notes on what the students were doing and how the teachers interacted with them. The observation protocol I used is shown in Appendix C. Interviews of the four teachers were the third piece of analysis. The teachers were asked specific questions related to what was observed in their classes and some general inquiries on their views and thoughts of the students they teach.

## **Data Findings**

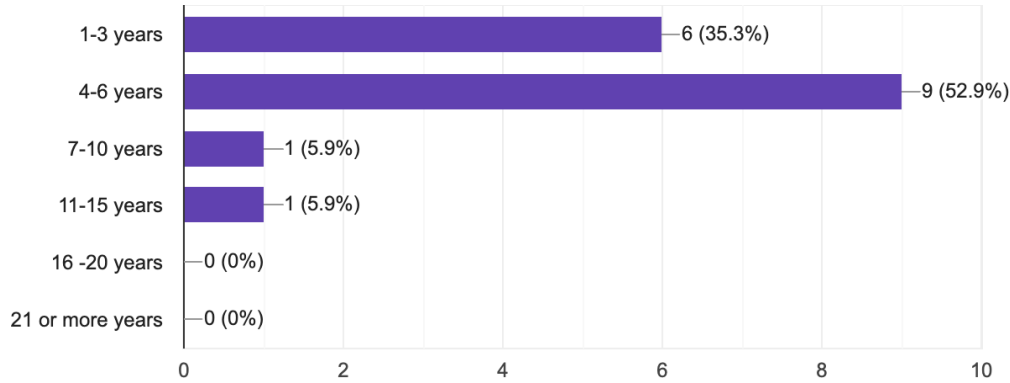
The purpose of this research was to determine how teachers' views of students affect the referral rates for students to be tested for GT services. The data collection occurred in three phases: teacher survey, teacher observation, and teacher interview. The initial teacher survey asked teachers various questions about their perceptions of GT students and the gifted program at Suburban Intermediate School. The classroom observations allowed me to see how teachers interact with students. The interview process allowed a more profound investigation of the views and thoughts of the teachers.

### **Teacher Survey**

Of the teachers who responded to the survey, most of the participants have been at Suburban Intermediate School for fewer than 10 years, as seen in Figure 3. However, the overall teaching experience of these teachers includes more years. Figure 4 shows the diversity of years of experience and signifies a variety of skill levels and backgrounds. A little more than half (53%) of teachers who completed the survey have more than 10 years of experience, and 47% have fewer than 10 years of experience. Looking at how many years a teacher has been in the classroom, we know that the more experienced individuals will have more hands-on experience. In contrast, the teachers with fewer years in the classroom have the most recent pedagogical preparation. One of the questions I wanted to answer is if years of experience affects how teachers interact with students.

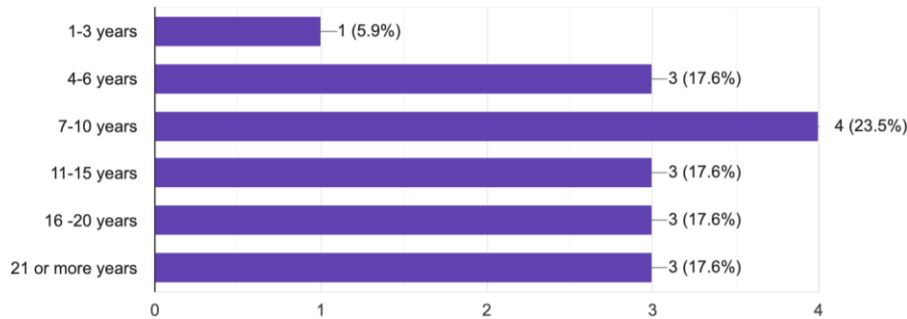
**Figure 3**

*Teacher Experience at Suburban Intermediate School*



**Figure 4**

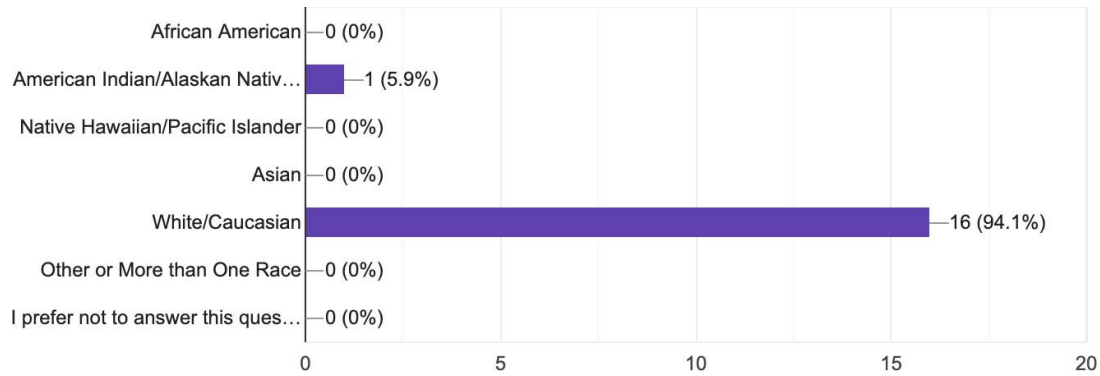
*Teacher Experience in the Classroom*



Another survey question asked teachers about their race and ethnicity. Figure 5 shows that 94% of the participants identified as White or Caucasian, and 100% are non-Hispanic. This is very similar to what was found in previous research by Wright et al. (2017), stating that most classrooms or gifted programs are run by middle-class Whites. Fry and Vogt (2010) also found that a majority of teachers look for giftedness based on their White, middle-class backgrounds.

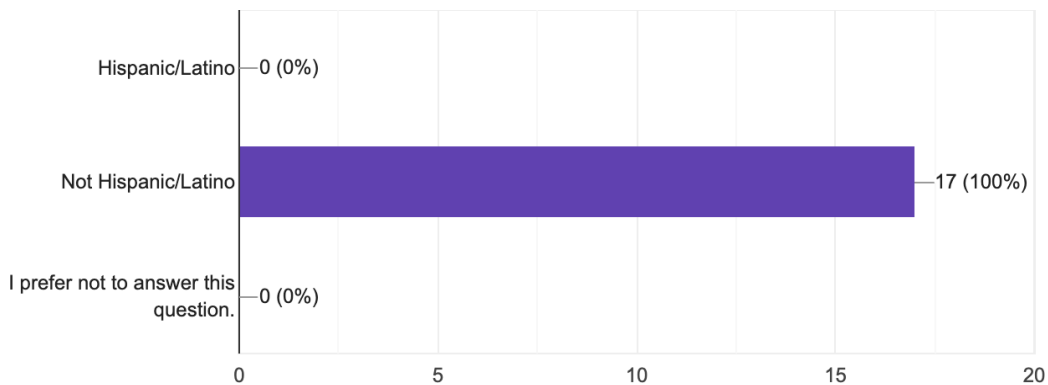
**Figure 5**

*Race of Teachers*



**Figure 6**

*Ethnicity of Teachers*



The remainder of the survey asked teachers to rate their understanding of statements regarding the GT referral and GT-testing processes, as well as the need for GT programs and student in-class support for gifted individuals. Teachers answered on a Likert-type scale as shown in Figure 7. Teachers rated each statement from “completely disagree” to “completely agree.” Teachers could also add a comment to any statement if they felt led to.

**Figure 7**

*Likert-Type Scale for Teacher Survey*

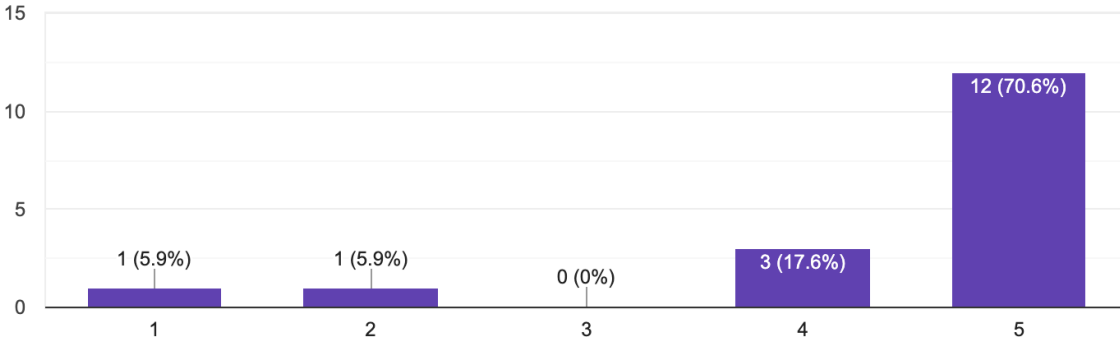


The first question related to Suburban Intermediate School’s GT program asked teachers their level of understanding regarding the referral process using a Likert-type scale. The responses are summarized in Figure 8. A majority (70%) of respondents completely agreed, and another 17.6% somewhat agreed, which identifies 87.6% of the respondents as understanding the referral process. One comment was added to this statement: “I know we email you (Gilmore), but that’s it.”



**Figure 8**

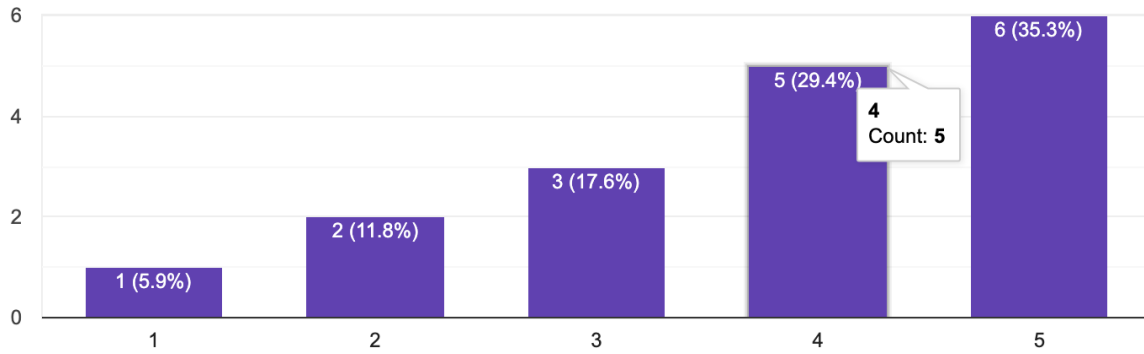
*Teacher Responses: I Understand How the GT Referral Process Works*



When asked about materials and information regarding the referral process, a majority (64%) of teachers somewhat agreed or completely agreed with knowing how to find and access them (Figure 9), with comments including, “I do not know where to find material for the GT referral process, but I know I can always email you if I have any questions,” “I just ask you,” and “I don’t specifically know but I could find it with a quick search or asking Mrs. Gilmore. She is very approachable.” Also, a majority of teachers (76.5%) stated that they know where to access materials and information regarding the testing process (Figure 10), with comments including, “I know you email us this information, but I wouldn’t know where else to find it,” “I just ask you,” and “We have received emails with this information, and I feel fairly confident that I could look in [Suburban] Campus Drive or [Suburban] Campus Schoology - GT group to find more info.”

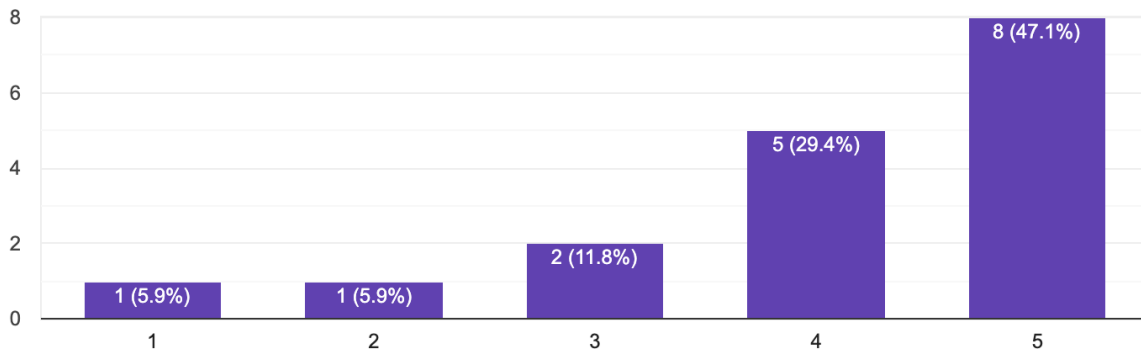
**Figure 9**

*Teacher Responses: I Know Where I Can Access Materials and Information on the GT Referral Process*



**Figure 10**

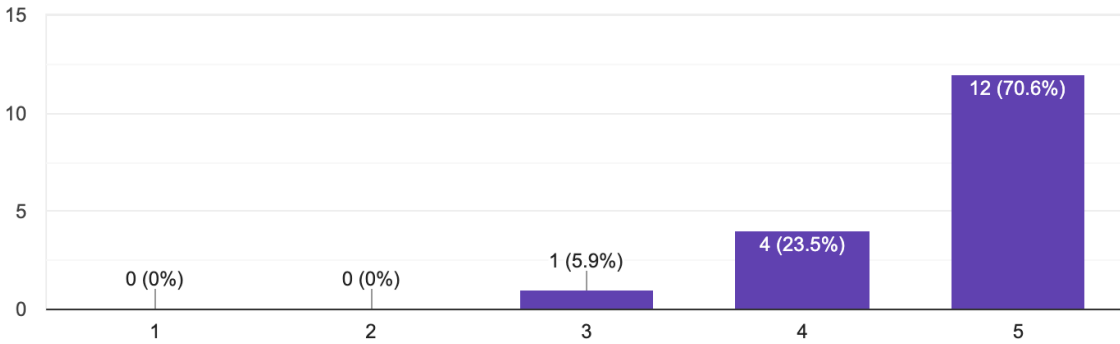
*Teacher Responses: I Know Where I Can Access Materials and Information on the GT-Testing Window*



Regarding whether the testing window is a sufficient amount of time, 94.1% expressed that it is (Figure 11), with no comments being added.

**Figure 11**

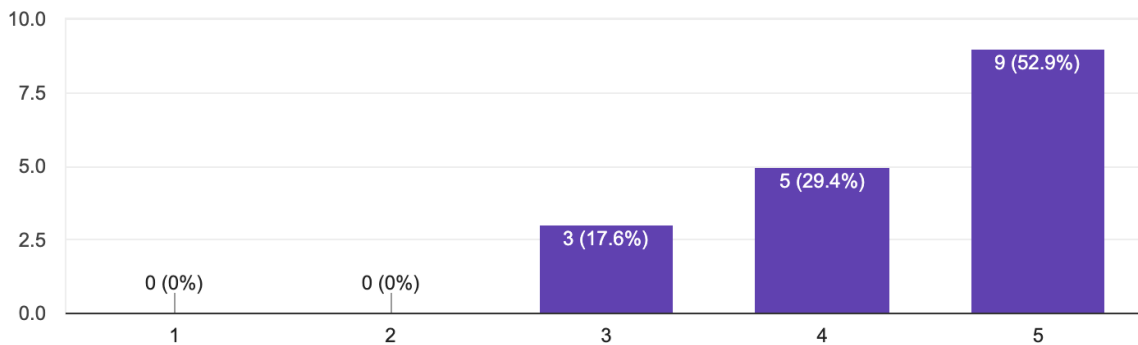
*Teacher Responses: The Referral Window for GT Testing Is Sufficient*



Teachers also said they feel that the testing process is easy to understand, with 82.3% somewhat or completely agreeing with the statement (Figure 12), with only one comment added: “I just submit names, but I don’t follow what happens after that.”

**Figure 12**

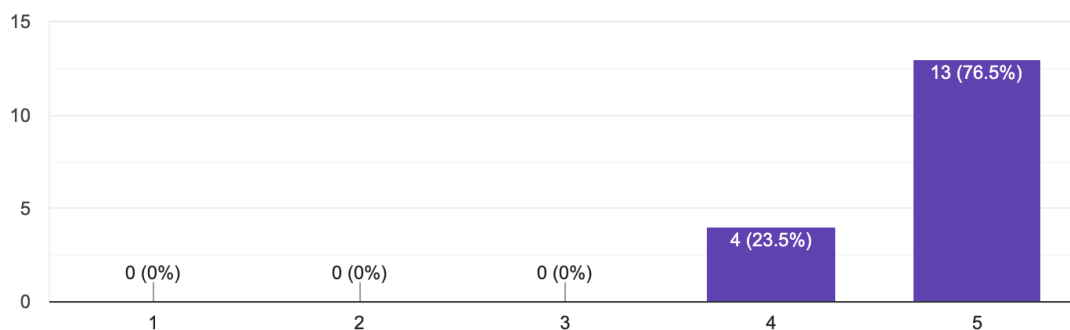
*Teacher Responses: The GT-Testing Process Is Easy to Understand*



Teachers who responded also feel that the GT pullout program at Suburban Intermediate School is necessary (Figure 13), with comments including “It is VERY necessary - just like we fulfill the specific needs of Special Ed students, we must also fulfill the needs of GT students” and “Our GT students crave enrichment and time with peers who enjoy being engaged on challenging activities. It provides them opportunities that I cannot”; that we do a good job of identifying students for services (Figure 14), with one comment that “I would like to see GT offered to students based on their individual talents instead of just the students who excel at everything”; and that few changes need to be made to the GT program overall (Figure 15) (with comments of “Maybe there should be more activities for students labeled as GT during advisory” and “Enrichment for multiply disciplines”), to the referral process (Figure 16) (with a comment that “I believe there should be a paper resource on how to do referrals. If there already is one, I just don't know where it is”), or to the testing process (Figure 17) (with comments of “Test for multiple disciplines separately” and “I do not know”).

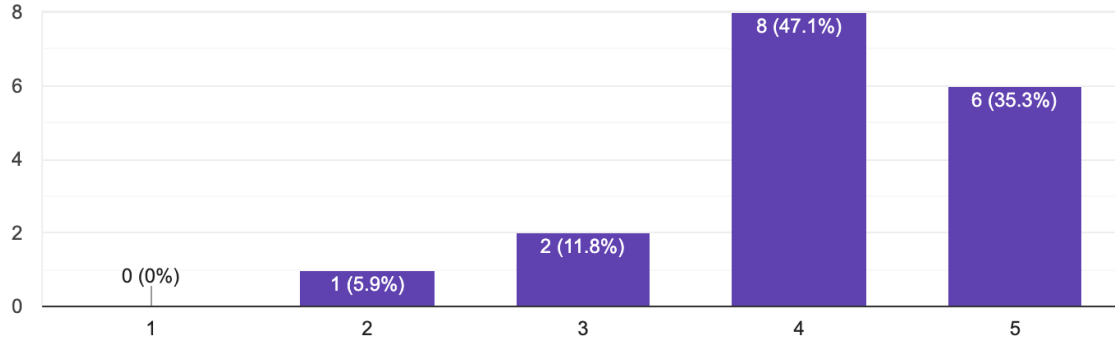
**Figure 13**

*Teacher Responses: The GT Program Is Necessary for Gifted Students*



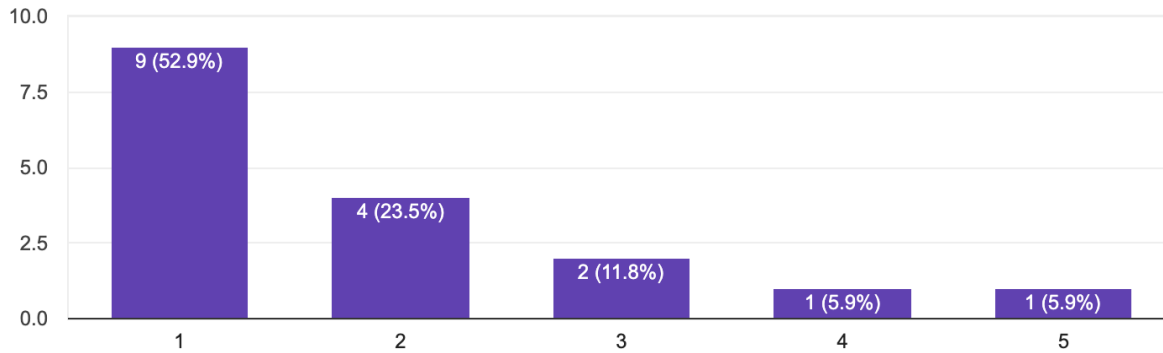
**Figure 15**

*Teacher Responses: The School Does a Good Job Identifying Students for GT Services*



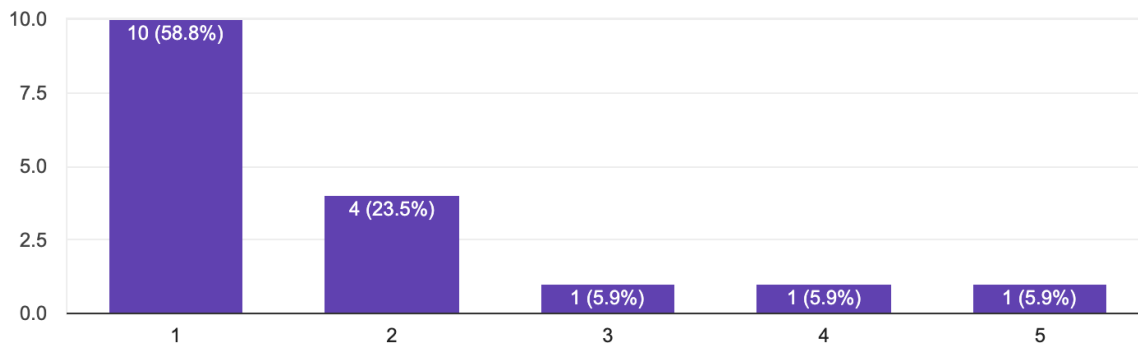
**Figure 14**

*Teacher Responses: Improvements Are Needed for the GT Program*



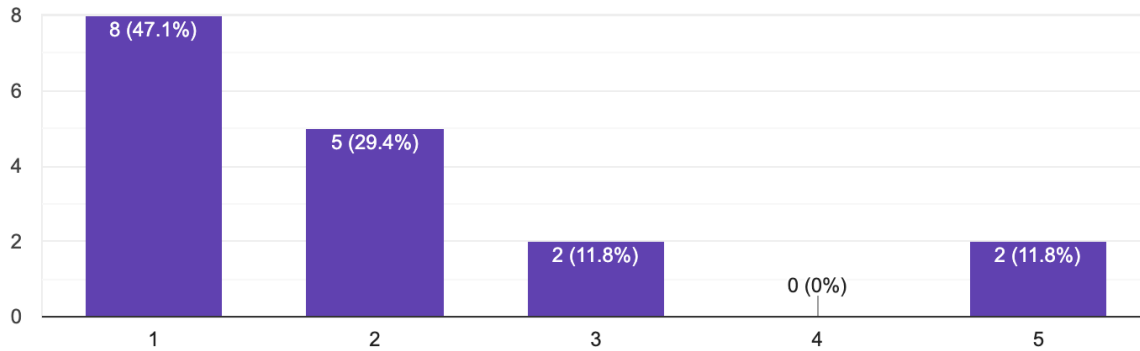
**Figure 16**

*Teacher Responses: Improvements Are Needed for the GT-Testing Referral Process*



**Figure 17**

*Teacher Responses: Improvements Are Needed for the GT-Testing Process*

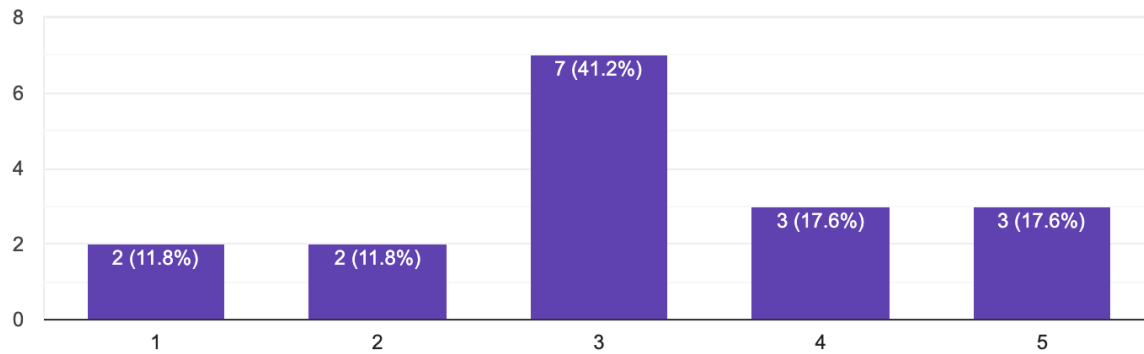


When asked if they believe our GT population effectively represents our overall population (Figure 18), many teachers expressed not knowing, with 41.2% choosing the middle of the Likert-type scale. For this question, 23.6% of teachers do not believe the GT students represent our overall population, while 35.2% do believe they represent our population. One comment was added for this question: “I believe there is a statistical equivalent in gender distribution in the GT program, but I’m not sure the ratio of the GT population matches the ratio of the general population in regards to race.”

**Figure 18**

*Teacher Responses: Students in the GT Program Are Representative of the Student*

*Population*

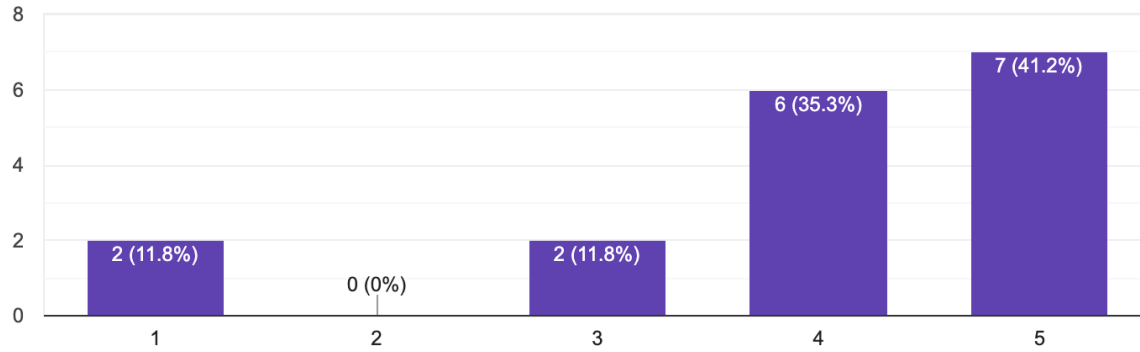


Figures 19 and 20 show teachers' views on their role in supporting GT students, as well as the role of the enrichment specialist. A majority of teachers (76.5%) somewhat or completely agree that they play a significant role in supporting GT students, with comments including, "The 30 hours initial GT training has been very helpful!" "Teachers are made to focus on the lower achievers more than anything else," and "The school focus is primarily on intervention in the classroom rather than GT." The teachers feel even more strongly that the enrichment specialist, who pulls the students for GT classes, plays an even more significant role, with 82.4% completely agreeing and 94.2% somewhat or completely agreeing on the scale. One comment was made for this question: "Without an enrichment specialist, the GT program will not be as robust and GT students will be underserved."

**Figure 19**

*Teacher Responses: The Classroom Teacher Plays a Significant Role in Supporting the GT*

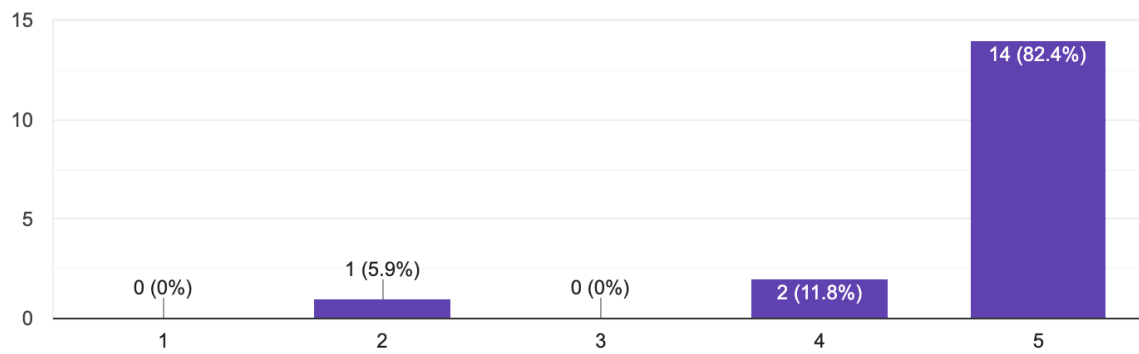
*Student*



**Figure 20**

*Teacher Responses: The Enrichment Specialist Plays a Significant Role in Supporting the*

*GT Student*



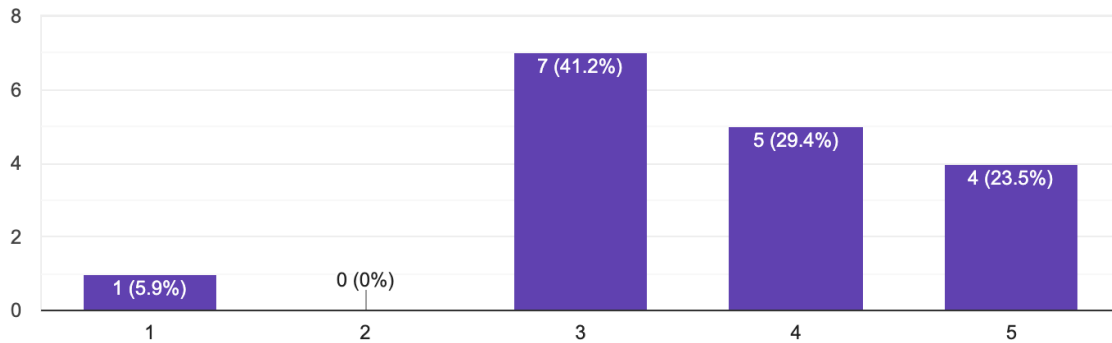
When asked if teachers and administration at Suburban Intermediate School do a good job of supporting the GT-student population, a majority of teachers answered that they either somewhat agree or completely agree (Figures 21 and 22). However, a large percentage of



teachers on both questions answered in the middle of the Likert-type scale, meaning that they neither agree nor disagree. There were no comments added on these questions.

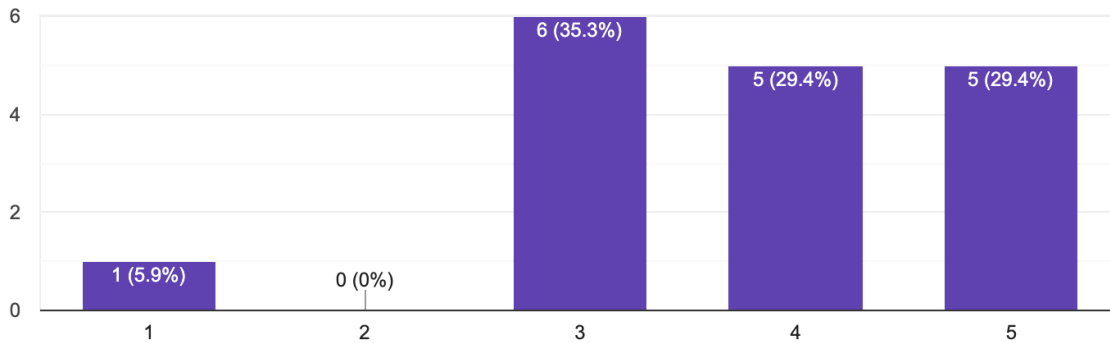
**Figure 21**

*Teacher Responses: Teachers Do a Good Job Supporting GT Students*



**Figure 22**

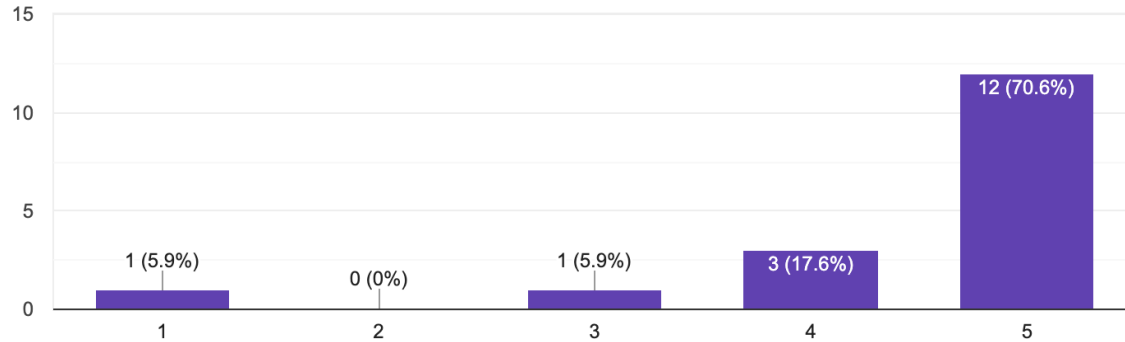
*Teacher Responses: Administration Does a Good Job Supporting GT Students*



The last question related to the teachers' perceptions of the GT program at Suburban Intermediate School asked them about the role of the entire staff in supporting GT students. Figure 23 shows that a majority of teachers somewhat or completely agree that it is the job of the entire staff to support these students. Again, there were no comments added on this question.

**Figure 23**

*Teacher Responses: It Is the Job of the Entire Staff to Support GT Students*



### **Teacher Observation**

The second part of data collection involved observing teachers who had volunteered by identifying themselves at the end of the survey. The observation protocol found in Appendix C outlines the organization of the classroom observations. The focus was on how the teacher interacts with students and vice versa. Quite interesting across all the classroom visits is that I found all the teachers' interactions toward all students to be positive, supportive, and student-centered. For anonymity, the teachers are referred to as Teacher 1, Teacher 2, Teacher 3, and Teacher 4.

#### ***Teacher 1***

Teacher 1 has more than 10 years of teaching experience and teaches English/language arts. During all observation times, Teacher 1 focused on personal connections and building relationships. I was able to observe on-level and advanced sections. The activities and student output were different between the two types of class, but the teacher interacted the same with both groups. Regardless of the level of the student, the teacher differentiated questioning and

support for struggling students, students who seemed on par, and students who also appeared way ahead of their peers.

Tables 5 and 6 break down the student populations for each class of Teacher 1. Table 5 indicates the number of students in each class, how the classes are broken down by subpopulation, and the total numbers of all three classes of Teacher 1. Table 6 takes the information from Table 5 to calculate the percentages of each subpopulation and the overall percentages. Note that populations considered “double dippers” are italicized. These are students who could also be identified in a race/ethnicity subcategory. For example, a White student could also be economically disadvantaged and learning ESL. These students were counted in each category in which they qualify. The race/ethnicity percentages should equal 100%, but economically disadvantaged, ELL, and GT should not, nor should they be included in the 100% calculated using the races/ethnicities of the student population.

**Table 5**

*Student Totals for Teacher 1*

	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3	Total
Total students	20	19	23	62
White	8	12	17	37
African American	4	3	3	10
Two or more races	0	0	0	0
Hispanic	8	3	1	12
Asian	0	1	2	3
<i>Economically disadvantaged</i>	8	5	4	17
<i>ESL/ELL</i>	0	0	1	1
<i>GT</i>	0	0	6	6

**Table 6***Student Percentages for Teacher 1*

	<u>Class 1</u>	<u>Class 2</u>	<u>Class 3</u> <u>(advanced section)</u>	<u>Total</u>
White	40%	63%	74%	60%
African American	20%	16%	13%	16%
Two or more races	0%	0%	0%	0%
Hispanic	40%	16%	4%	19%
Asian	0%	5%	9%	5%
<i>Economically disadvantaged</i>	40%	26%	17%	27%
<i>ESL/ELL</i>	0%	0%	4%	2%
<i>GT</i>	0%	0%	26%	10%

The data for Table 6 indicate that Teacher 1 has various percentages of students in each class. What stands out is the difference between the on-level sections and the advanced section. The percentage of White students was much higher, and the economically disadvantaged percentage was much lower in the advanced class. Also, there were no GT students in the two on-level classes. The representation of African American and Hispanic students was also much lower in the advanced class. Though there are clear differences between the breakdown of student demographics in the different class sections, I did not feel that the teacher treated students differently based on race, but instead differentiated for student needs regardless of who the students were.

***Teacher 2***

Teacher 2 has fewer than 10 years of experience and teaches social studies. The students were a different set of kids, and there was no advanced section. All students are randomly assigned classes, leading to various abilities in this teacher's courses. Teacher 2, much like Teacher 1, used relationships and connections to manage the behaviors of the classroom and

differentiated for all levels of students. This teacher seemed to know which students were struggling and which were ahead. Again, ability and student-level did not hinder the differentiation of needs. The demographics for Teacher 2’s classes are found in Tables 7 and 8, with italicization again used for double-dippers.

**Table 7**

*Student Totals for Teacher 2*

	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3	Total
Total students	26	26	17	69
White	13	14	12	39
African American	1	6	2	9
Two or more races	0	1	0	1
Hispanic	3	4	2	9
Asian	7	0	1	8
Native American	1	0	0	1
<i>Economically disadvantaged</i>	4	12	5	21
<i>ESL/ELL</i>	1	0	0	1
<i>GT</i>	5	4	0	9

**Table 8**

*Student Percentages for Teacher 2*

	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3	Total
White	50%	54%	71%	57%
African American	4%	23%	12%	13%
Two or more races	0%	4%	0%	1%
Hispanic	12%	15%	12%	13%
Asian	26%	0%	6%	12%
Native American	4%	0%	0%	1%
<i>Economically disadvantaged</i>	15%	46%	29%	30%
<i>ESL/ELL</i>	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>GT</i>	19%	15%	0%	13%

Teacher 2's classes also vary across the classes, and there are no advanced sections for this subject. Nonetheless, the class with the most GT students also had the lowest percentage of African American and Hispanic students. Another statistic that stands out is that 30% of students in these three classes were economically disadvantaged—a lot more than expected and the highest overall percentage of the four teachers. There was a good percentage of GT students in the first and second class, but none in the third class. There were also no ELL students in any of these classes. Still, this teacher accommodated for the variety of students. Students were treated equitably, and the teacher worked with students as needed.

### ***Teacher 3***

Teacher 3 is an older teacher with more than 10 years of experience who currently teaches math and science. This teacher was rigorous in her interactions with students. However, they were taking a quiz, so a requirement of silence was in place. The teacher was also modifying and providing accommodations for students while testing. One student in the science class had an outburst, and the teacher was very harsh toward him. When I asked about this student, the teacher explained some extenuating circumstances that led to his abrupt response. The student has a behavioral intervention plan (BIP) through the special-education department, and the teacher was trying to follow the BIP directions and accommodations. Tables 9 and 10 illustrate the numbers and percentages of students in these classes, with italics representing double-dippers.

**Table 9***Student Totals for Teacher 3*

	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3	Total
Total students	20	25	25	70
White	10	11	12	33
African American	1	3	2	6
Two or more races	2	1	2	5
Hispanic	5	7	7	19
Asian	2	2	2	6
<i>Economically disadvantaged</i>	4	8	7	19
<i>ESL/ELL</i>	2	1	1	4
<i>GT</i>	0	0	0	0

**Table 10***Student Percentages for Teacher 3*

	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3	Total
White	50%	44%	48%	47%
African American	5%	12%	8%	9%
Two or more races	10%	4%	8%	7%
Hispanic	25%	28%	28%	27%
Asian	10%	8%	8%	9%
<i>Economically disadvantaged</i>	20%	32%	28%	27%
<i>ESL/ELL</i>	10%	4%	4%	6%
<i>GT</i>	0%	0%	0%	0%

The most astounding data in this group of classes are that there were no GT students in any of the classes. The dispersion of demographics across the classes were all fairly similar. Given the teacher's style of classroom management, I didn't get to see as much interaction as I would have liked. This teacher has been working on helping these classes succeed behaviorally

and academically, so the atmosphere was more structured than the other observations. However, the teacher worked to meet the needs of all students regardless of race or ethnicity.

***Teacher 4***

Teacher 4 has fewer than 10 years of experience and teaches science. This teacher had a very quiet and compliant class. The students were very in tune with what the teacher was explaining. This teacher also encouraged students to answer questions when they knew the correct answer but were fearful of speaking up. I wanted to know how this teacher knew when students knew the answer, and I learned that listening to their discussions when students would turn and share with a neighbor to apply what they learned was a way to gauge student comprehension. I also wanted to know how this teacher knew if students had mastered the concept and not simply complied with directions. The statistics for Teacher 4’s classes are found in Tables 11 and 12, with italics showing double-dippers.

**Table 11**

*Student Totals for Teacher 4*

	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3	Total
Total students	19	26	22	67
White	10	13	14	37
African American	5	8	4	17
Two or more races	0	1	1	2
Hispanic	1	3	1	5
Asian	3	1	2	6
<i>Economically disadvantaged</i>	3	<i>11</i>	4	<i>18</i>
<i>ESL/ELL</i>	4	<i>1</i>	0	5
<i>GT</i>	3	0	3	6



**Table 12***Student Percentages for Teacher 4*

	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3	Total
White	52%	50%	64%	55%
African American	26%	31%	18%	25%
Two or more races	0%	4%	5%	3%
Hispanic	5%	12%	5%	8%
Asian	15%	4%	9%	9%
<i>Economically disadvantaged</i>	15%	42%	18%	27%
<i>ESL/ELL</i>	21%	4%	0%	8%
<i>GT</i>	16%	0%	14%	9%

The statistic that stands out is that the class with no GT students was also the class with the highest percentage of economically disadvantaged students. This points to the idea that students from poverty are less likely to be referred or considered for GT services (Juntune et al., 2017). Be that as it may, the teacher interacted the same with all students and made accommodations for those who needed them.

***Teacher Observation Summary***

The four teachers whom I observed are all different, yet I truly feel that they worked for every student in the room. I did not feel that they treated students of other races or ethnicities differently. I also did not see them interact differently with students depending on ability level. They all worked to modify or extend learning depending on what the individual student needed, as well as the class as a whole. These observations led to the next part of the study—interviews. Each interview was specific to the teacher and was based on what I observed in their classrooms.

## **Teacher Interviews**

Appendices D, E, F, and G show the specific interview protocol for each teacher. Each interview had a few similar questions, but some questions focused on specific students or interactions I observe in class. The reason these students were pointed out was because they exhibited traits differently from their peers. I was curious as to why the teachers interacted in a certain way with some students or what they thought about fast finishers. I was looking for students that stuck out for academic, behavioral, and social reasons. Teachers' thoughts on these types of students was intriguing and provided insight into teacher thoughts and perceptions.

The teachers were very open in their interviews. When I asked about specific students, they seemed reflective and aware of the characteristics that make students gifted versus high-achieving. For students who finished work early or who seemed ahead of the class, the teachers were mindful of each student's ability and had already identified them as either high-achieving or possibly gifted with a need for enrichment. I was pleasantly surprised at the level of knowledge and understanding the teachers exhibited toward the needs of gifted students. I was also very impressed with how each teacher worked to identify student levels of ability and meet their specific needs, even though they teach between 100 and 130 students each.

One issue did arise, however, for which protocol had to be adjusted. Teacher 1 was absent after the week of observations because of COVID-19. I was unable to interview this teacher semi-formally, but I did document small conversations we had while I was observing.

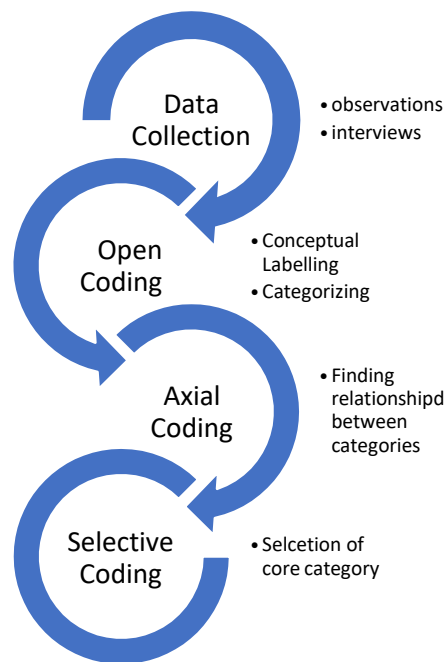
## **Data Analysis**

Data analysis was based on constructivist grounded theory. As Creswell and Gutterman (2019) described, grounded theory helped me explain teachers' feelings when working with

students who are gifted or who display gifted characteristics. Figure 24 illustrates the method used in the analysis of all data collected.

**Figure 24**

*Grounded Theory Analysis Using Axial and Selective Coding*



*Note:* Adapted from Chetty (2020) and Cho & Lee (2014)

## **Open Coding**

For open coding, I analyzed the survey responses, classroom observations, and teacher interviews looking for themes or main ideas. Open coding revealed the following ideas:

- Teachers have a strong understanding of the referral process.
- Teachers depend on the enrichment specialist for information and materials.

- There is a generally positive view of the process of referring and testing students.
- There is a generally positive view of the GT program.
- Teachers seem to genuinely enjoy their classes and students.
- Differentiation and scaffolding are provided for all levels.
- Teachers recognize all student ability levels.
- Teachers can decipher between high-achieving and gifted traits.

All of the open-coded ideas were narrowed down and/or combined to identify three overarching ideas:

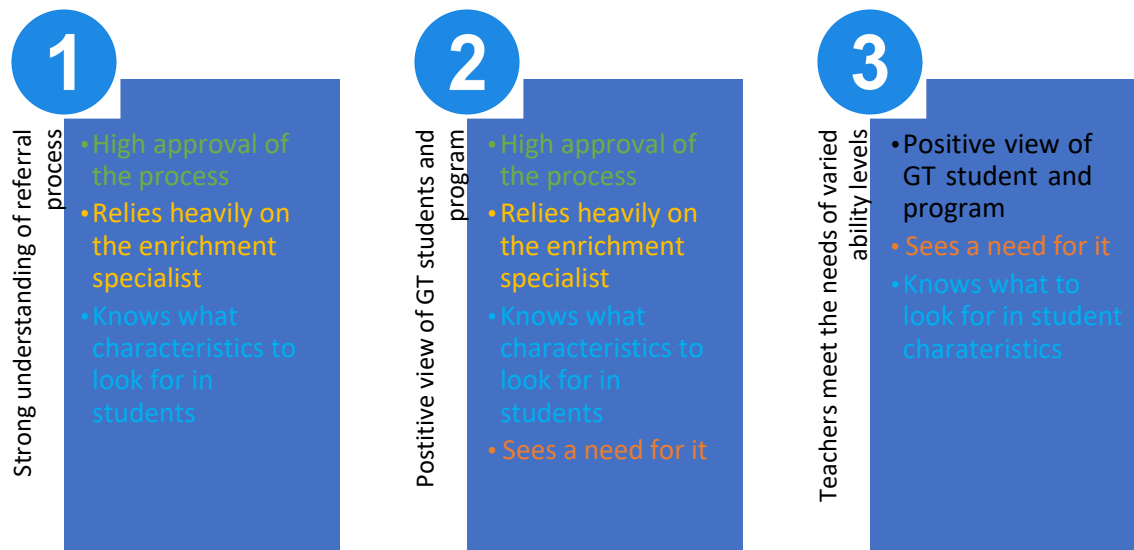
1. Teachers at Suburban Intermediate School have a good to strong understanding of the GT referral process.
2. Teachers at Suburban Intermediate School have a positive view of the GT program and of GT students.
3. Teachers at Suburban Intermediate School see the varied needs and abilities in their students and want to meet the needs of all levels.

## Axial Coding

Axial coding is about drawing connections and finding the relationship between different ideas. Figure 25 shows the links drawn between the three major themes that evolved.

**Figure 25**

### *Axial-Coding Connections*



The statements are color-coded to show relationships among the three emerging ideas. “High approval of the process” appeared in Ideas 1 and 2 representing support of the referral process and of the GT students and the program. “High dependence on the enrichment specialist” emerged in Ideas 1 and 2 as well. “Knowing the characteristics of giftedness” was found in all three main ideas. Idea 3 was also closely connected to Idea 2—teachers meet the needs of students through differentiation because they see a demand for GT services and have a favorable view of the GT program and students. The ideas seem symbiotic, weaving in and out of one

another. The process to finalize the main idea took all of the axial codes and meshed them into one theory.

### **Selective Coding**

For selective coding, open-coding and the axial-coding relationships were used to discover one significant theory. The core value that emerged is that teachers at Suburban Intermediate School perceive the GT program, students, and differentiation as a needed aspect of our school and value GT services and students.

### **Results of Research**

The results of the data analysis revealed that neither the interactions between teachers and students nor the teachers' perceptions appear to affect GT referrals at Suburban Intermediate School. In fact, through the survey, observations, and interviews, teachers were shown to have a strong understanding of the characteristics of giftedness. The interview of Teacher 2 posed the following question: "[Student sixth period] finished the assignment very quickly and began reading a book. Do you see any GT characteristics in him? If so, what? If not, how do you feel about his academic performance and abilities?" The student was a White student who is not ELL or low SES. The presumption was that this student might be seen as GT since he's a fast finisher and looks like most of the other students in the GT program. However, the teacher's response was as follows:

[Student] is a capable student; he completes work in a timely and accurate manner. With that, he doesn't seem to possess any of those unique GT qualities. He is simply a highly intelligent and focused, though not necessarily unique, student. Completing work efficiently does not qualify a student as exceptional.

A similar question was posed to Teacher 4: “Do any of your students that are not classified as GT exhibit GT characteristics? If so, what are those characteristics?” The teacher answered in this way:

There are definitely students I have taught over the years that I consider to have GT tendencies and were not classified as GT students. A GT student can show those tendencies in so many ways! It’s hard to convey them as only a certain set of characteristics because they can be so varied, but if I were to list some they would be as follows: 1) An insatiable curiosity - almost as if there is never a satisfaction to how something works the way it does. 2) They can sometimes miss simple details because they are diving into the why instead of just what the concept simply is. 3) Not all GT students are just thirsting for knowledge, some can be more artistic, can be introverted, can even prefer sports over chess club. But, whatever their passion is, they can have really deep understandings of that subject!

I also asked a specific question about an African American female student during Teacher 4’s interview. “You encouraged [student] to answer because you knew she knew the answer? What are your thoughts on her academic abilities? Does she exhibit GT characteristics? If so, what? If not, explain your thoughts on her.”

I encouraged her because she was hesitating but I had already heard her earlier talking to her classmates. She knew the material and just needed the confidence to step out!

Students are sometimes so worried about answering the question wrong that they miss out on the fact that I just want them to participate, to just try sometimes! I’ve only known these students for a couple of weeks so I’m not sure if I see GT tendencies just yet, but I

just saw a student who was doubting herself. She needed someone in her corner to push her a little bit!

Both of these teachers exhibited a sincere knowledge of the needs and characteristics of gifted students and also demonstrated the desire to look for gifted traits in students. I feel that these two teachers are not the exception, but rather the norm at Suburban Intermediate School. Based on the data gathered, the teachers at Suburban Intermediate School have a solid understanding and view of the GT program and the specific characteristics of giftedness.

### **Analysis Using the Research Questions**

Returning to the initial research questions helps organize the data analysis even further.

#### ***Question 1: How Does a Teacher Decide if a Student Needs to Be Referred for GT Testing?***

Teachers at Suburban Intermediate School know their gifted students and have a strong understanding of the referral and testing process. However, teachers showed a strong dependency on the enrichment specialist, as seen in the comments section on the survey and in the interviews. The teachers' confidence in the GT program also came through with statements such as, "We know we can ask the Enrichment Specialist if we need to," and "I'm not always certain, but I can just ask the Enrichment Specialist." This begs the question, then, if they would perceive the gifted program and the referral process so positively if an enrichment specialist were not present.

The teachers displayed a strong sense of understanding of and the requirement for differentiated practices for the varied needs of their students. They also showed a strong knowledge of the characteristics of gifted students and the difference between those and high-achieving traits. If a student shows GT characteristics, I feel confident that the teachers at Suburban Intermediate School will refer them regardless of race or ethnicity. Still, the



unanswered question remains: Do teachers know what to look for in students from poverty or different backgrounds?

***Question 2: How Do a Teacher's Perceptions of Giftedness Play a Role in Whether or Not They Refer a Student for Testing?***

The teachers at Suburban Intermediate School displayed a strong knowledge of the differences between giftedness and high achievement, especially in the interview process. They also seemed very knowledgeable about their different students. Given the favorable attitude toward gifted students at Suburban Intermediate School, if students exhibit gifted traits and are not classified as GT, the teachers will refer them for testing. The perception of teachers is that the gifted program is needed and vital for students and for the school. The enrichment specialist was identified the most strongly as carrying the responsibility for serving these students. However, teachers recognize their role in supporting these students also.

**Interaction Between the Research and the Context**

The context of this study is that there is a lack of CLD students in the gifted program at Suburban Intermediate School. Our school mirrors a problem found around the nation and is one for which many researchers are working to find solutions. The research of this study intended to determine if teacher perceptions of giftedness and the needs of gifted students affect who is referred for testing. The stakeholders involved in data collection were very willing to help with data gathering. The teachers who offered to let me visit their classrooms were very welcoming and curious as to what I was actually observing. I explained that I was just observing interactions between them and their students. I could tell that the volunteering teachers were still a bit curious, so after the interview, I allowed them to ask me questions, and I was open and honest about why I was gathering the data.

I did not feel resistance to the study, but out of 32 teachers, only 17 participated in the original survey. There could be a variety of reasons for this low return, but some could have felt uneasy about answering questions regarding a program that I run. Of the teachers who did participate, one participant rated everything pretty lowly on the Likert-type scale. This teacher chose to remain anonymous, but I would love to have had a conversation with them to really dig into why they feel the way they do.

After observing each teacher, I shared the notes I took during their classroom observations. I allowed them to ask questions and add comments to what I observed. Also, the teachers were given access to my summaries of each of them in this study. They could share feedback or thoughts or even disagree with my thoughts on the observations and interviews. No one responded or wanted me to make changes.

For future study, I would like to dig into teacher knowledge of CLD students. Do they know what to look for in students from diverse backgrounds with a variety of limitations, whether income, language, home support, etc.? I would like to ask teachers about the needs of CLD students and their perceptions on how we meet their needs at Suburban Intermediate School.

#### **Closing Thoughts on Chapter IV**

To gather data, I surveyed, observed, and interviewed teachers at Suburban Intermediate School. The goal was to determine if teacher perceptions and ideas about gifted students and gifted services make a difference in who gets referred for GT testing on the campus. The data revealed that the teachers have a generally positive outlook on gifted students and the GT program. Also, teacher interactions were the same across the classroom experiences. The level of experience also didn't really change how teachers interacted with students. All four teachers worked and

communicated with students for the betterment of all individuals. It is my opinion that based on the data gathered and analyzed, the teachers of Suburban Intermediate School will refer any student needing to be tested for GT services. Based on the data, I do not feel that teacher interactions are a cause for the underrepresentation of CLD students in the gifted program at Suburban Intermediate School.

CHAPTER V  
SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

**Summary of Findings**

This study sought to find if teacher perceptions and views of gifted students and programs or teacher interactions affect student referrals for GT services. Through analysis of teacher surveys, classroom observations, and interviews, I determined that teacher referrals at Suburban Intermediate School are not the cause for underrepresentation of CLD students in the GT program. The data revealed that the teachers involved in data collection have a favorable opinion of the GT program at Suburban Intermediate School. They also indicated believing the program to be essential to serve GT students. The data showed that teachers understand the referral and testing processes, but heavily depend on the enrichment specialist. The information also showed that teacher interactions do not appear different regarding different student populations. The teachers at Suburban Intermediate School have a strong knowledge of the traits and characteristics of gifted students and know the difference between them and high-achieving traits. The data are encouraging to me as an educator at Suburban Intermediate School, but disappointing to me as a researcher. The cause for the gaps in the gifted program is still undetermined.

**Discussion of Results in Relation to Extant Literature or Theories**

The underrepresentation of CLD students in the GT pullout program still exists. If teacher perceptions are not affecting referral rates, then there must be other causes. First of all, we must consider that students in the GT program at Suburban Intermediate School may have qualified for GT any time before arriving on our campus—from kindergarten through fourth grade. The

stakeholders at Suburban Intermediate School cannot control what occurs before students enter fifth grade.

Previous research has highlighted several ideas that could be causing the deficit. Central topics addressed in the research include parent roles in referrals, types of tests, deficit-thinking paradigms, and teacher roles in identifying GT characteristics in students. The teachers at Suburban Intermediate School do not seem to struggle with identifying gifted traits, nor can they control the types of test or qualification criteria. These come directly from the district and are uniform across the schools. I want to focus on what could help the teachers and the GT program at Suburban Intermediate School. Teachers at Suburban Intermediate School can improve their pedagogical understanding of GT by training on and learning about how giftedness displays itself in students of different races, ethnicities, and socioeconomic backgrounds, as well as students with English-language deficits. The current literature that would most benefit Suburban Intermediate School is research on cultural competence and proficiency in teachers and leadership. Mun et al. (2021) informed that district leaders need to create a vision to serve a broader range of students instead of having rigid cutoffs on achievement tests. Mun et al. (2021) also found that “administrators, teachers, and other key stakeholders [need] a unified focus, in executing a shared vision, mission, and goals to improve the system” (p. 138). Because we cannot control what the school district decides to do, we focus on what we can control. Our campus leadership should provide culturally proficient PD that focuses on better serving CLD students and building teacher pedagogical skills (Mun et al., 2021; Payne, 2010). Schools need collaborative communities and culturally responsive learning among education areas to improve GT programs (Green, 2010). Once a campus creates a goal toward improving its identified

deficiencies and focuses on meeting that goal, teachers need to create opportunities for all students, regardless of background, to learn and grow academically (Peters & Engerrand, 2016).

### **Discussion of Personal Lessons Learned**

I was pleasantly surprised at the results of the collected and analyzed data. I was not sure how teachers felt about the GT program or how they viewed GT students. The professional learning opportunities experienced by teachers on identifying and serving gifted students have made a difference.

I also realized that I could learn from these teachers as well. The interviews with Teachers 2 and 4 gave me insight into the depth of their knowledge of giftedness. I wanted to ask questions unrelated to the study about their personal experiences dealing with gifted education as students when they were younger. I believe collegial discussion in our monthly professional learning communities (PLCs) would help us learn from our peers and their experiences.

Lastly, there is still much work to be done. We may have determined that teachers' roles and perceptions do not hinder the referral process at our school, but we still lack minority students in the GT pullout program. This tells me that we must be diligent in improving our GT program and the way we serve CLD students in all areas of our campus. I must stay up to date on new research, and I must work with campus leadership to advocate for these students.

### **Implications for Practice**

#### **Context**

The context of this study is that CLD students are underrepresented in the GT program at Suburban Intermediate School. The purpose of this study was to determine what role is played by teachers at Suburban Intermediate School in the identification of gifted traits and in referrals for GT testing. The data revealed that the teachers have a positive view of the gifted students and the

GT program and that they know what traits to look for in giftedness. Because most of the students who qualify for GT services do so in kindergarten through fourth grade before they begin intermediate school, there is much out of the control of the campus teachers and leaders. Current literature has suggested that universal screening at younger ages, various types of assessment and data gathering for identification, and culturally responsive teachers and programs are some ways to affect positive change and close gaps (Clark-Louque & Latunde, 2019; Grantham, 2012; Kornhaber, 1999; Mills & Tissot, 1995; Mun et al., 2021; Sarouphim, 2002).

There are several implications for Suburban Intermediate School. First of all, we have to find a way within the confines of district guidelines to improve the GT program and lessen the CLD gaps that exist. Because the staff members who responded already have a positive view of the GT program, the hope is that we can include professional learning opportunities and collegial discussions that lead to a better and more complete understanding of the needs of CLD students. The more teachers grow their cultural proficiency and pedagogical understanding, the more inclusive and supportive they can be to CLD students. Smith and Campbell (2016) discuss how teachers gain support all students to help them achieve high standards. This type of growth helps to cultivate the growth unidentified gifted CLD students. “All these gains would support one larger aim, that of improving the educational outcomes for all children, but alongside equipping teachers to understand more fully the cultural and systemic practices which have biased certain groups of children and disproportionately seen them attain highly. In this sense, a close and critical engagement with research on gifted education could be one means through which teachers can contribute to a social justice agenda in education” (Smith & Campbell, 2016, p. 265). Teachers must focus on how they interact and serve students who come from varied backgrounds. The focus should be to provide CLD students with OTLs in ways they haven’t

been able to before. We should provide hands-on and innovative lessons that not only teach students a concept, but give them a thirst for learning and connect them to the real world. When we provide students with these types of OTL, we can better assess our CLD students for GT characteristics.

Along the lines of providing OTLs to students, we must ensure that CLD students are receiving the services that are said to be provided, but also, we must ensure that African American, Hispanic, ELL and low-SES students are given opportunities to experience these OTLs with peers like them. Providing environments where students can thrive with individuals of similar backgrounds. As mentioned in the literature review, peer pressure plays a critical role in discouraging African American students when they are accused of acting White (King et al., 2011). Students who show exceptional traits need to be encouraged and nurtured. For CLD student, part of that is seeing more students like them in gifted and enrichment classes. When they can learn and grow in this type of environment, it leads to a thirst for more learning and an excitement about education.

A third implication for the context of this study is for our campus to change the dynamic that has been created by systemic boundaries. The Suburban school district has a set way of identifying gifted students. Suburban Intermediate can work within these boundaries to lessen the gaps in GT. Cooke et al. (2020) discuss the importance of open race dialogue between parents, teachers, administration, and community members. “White participants and participants of color both discussed learning more about participants’ cultural identities during the dialogues” (Cooke et al., 2020, p. 138). These conversations built trust and relationships among school and family stakeholders. This type of trust allowed for parents and students to feel more comfortable



expressing concerns and led to better learning environments for students of color. Having these types of conversations at Suburban Intermediate is a step toward understanding our own biases and growing cultural competence.

Another implication is for the staff at Suburban Intermediate to have specific goal for including more CLD students in GT referrals. Lamb et al. (2019) found that “Even though the Texas policy for gifted education clearly communicates the expectation for equitable access and defines that at the highest level as reflective of the total school population, no specific metrics are mentioned on what is reasonably meant by reflective” (p. 219). Lamb et al. (2019) promote the idea of more inclusive and well-rounded assessment practices that institute varied data and identification practices. For the specific purposes of Suburban Intermediate, what can the staff determine as other ways to unofficially identify gifted students? The staff need to have a goal to aim for equity in referral practices.

Lastly, further research can be conducted on the stakeholders at Suburban Intermediate School. Gathering data on who teachers have referred in the past and analyzing the demographics of those referrals could lead to further areas of possible growth. Though the current data showed positive perceptions in teachers, further study could reveal bias or lack of CLD referrals.

## **Implications for Practice**

### **Field of Study**

An implication for the field of study is that there is still research needed at secondary campuses. Much of the current research comes from the elementary years and makes

recommendations for students as early as 4 years old. If we are trying to improve programs on our campus, we can only work to make a difference while students are in fifth and sixth grades. New research on how intermediate and secondary campuses can improve the gaps in gifted education is much needed.

Another implication is that educators must know how culture, background, income, and language acquisition can affect how students demonstrate giftedness. Teachers must stay current on research regarding campus and classroom needs. If a school's population is growing in specific demographic areas, then the GT program should reflect that. Understanding the need for culturally competent pedagogy must be a pillar of every campus, especially intermediate campuses and above, because they cannot control which students come to them or how previous schools functioned and interacted with incoming students.

A further suggestion is to continue to not only study teacher perceptions at Suburban Intermediate, but to work on understanding biases. Bias is a hard notion to identify in people, as it is highly personal and subjective. Teachers are well versed in what they should do and say, and very few will willingly admit they have a bias. Some teachers may also not even realize they have a bias. As in the recommendations for the context, open race discussions, professional learning communities, and offering OTLs are a few ways to work toward understanding and identifying biases within one's self and within a social structure of a school.

A final implication is for me as a gifted educator. I need to stay up to date and relevant on the PD I offer teachers. If teachers need culturally proficient strategies, then I need to support them in learning these strategies. I not only need to work to support gifted students on my campus, but I need to ensure that teachers on my campus are adequately equipped to serve both previously identified and unidentified gifted students. The knowledge of culturally proficient

strategies isn't just a benefit for gifted students—it benefits all students on my campus as we continue to grow and diversify.

### **Lesson Learned**

The most encouraging aspect of this study came from my evaluation of how teachers perceive the referral and testing process for GT identification and how they view GT students and the program. I honestly didn't know how teachers felt, and to have such positive results was encouraging. Observing and talking with the teachers in the study also gave me insights into their understanding of GT characteristics and how they apply their knowledge in classroom interactions. I learned to have more faith and trust in the teachers on my campus regarding the professional learning I have offered thus far. When we ask for GT referrals in the spring, I feel confident that the teachers will have already identified students whom they would like to submit. That is so encouraging and inspiring as an enrichment specialist.

I also feel that just because we have a problem on campus, we may not have caused that problem. After surveying, observing, and interviewing teachers, I realized that what I thought was a problem really isn't. Some of our more challenging behaviors come from students of different ethnicities and incomes. I was expecting to see frustration and possibly impatience when working with students who can be somewhat disruptive. However, I did not find this to be the case at all. The teachers I observed were very patient and treated all students with equity.

### **Recommendations**

I intend to share the data found in this study with my campus administration. Appendix H shows the presentation that I would like to share, which outlines our deficits in the GT program at Suburban Intermediate School compared to state and national data. The presentation also includes a synopsis of the evidence collected through this research study and its analysis and

findings. Finally, it outlines a suggested next step for our campus to move toward professional learning.

**Figure 26**

*Table of Contents for Identifying and Serving Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Gifted Students*

**Table of Contents**

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Introduction	ix
<b>Section I: Foundational Principles Composing the Education of the Gifted CLD Learner</b>	
Chapter 1: Second Language Acquisition	3
Chapter 2: Giftedness in the CLD Student	21
<b>Section II: Examining Existing Programmatic Structures</b>	
Chapter 3: CLD Representation in Gifted Programs	39
Chapter 4: Blending of Programs: Models and Design	53
<b>Section III: Service Delivery</b>	
Chapter 5: Curriculum and Instruction	69
Chapter 6: Professional Development	83
Chapter 7: Family and Community	95
Chapter 8: Program Evaluation	105
Conclusion	111
References	113
About the Authors	117

My first suggestion to the campus leaders is to share this information with teachers and staff to understand what dilemma we face. Then, I would like for the team to complete a book study together as our next PD activity—*Identifying and Serving Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Gifted Students* by Lezley Collier Lewis, Annie Rivera, and Debbie Roby. This book is about 100 pages and is a relatively short read to break up over the school year. It is divided into three sections and eight chapters. Figure 26 displays the table of contents for this book.

By understanding founding principles, examining existing practices, and improving our service delivery, we can improve our GT program and efforts to close the underrepresentation gaps. This book would be a great discussion piece for our monthly PLCs. The chapters are concise and hold quality information that will help teachers grow professionally. Being culturally proficient not only helps GT students, but benefits all students on our campus.

Another recommendation to the administration is for our staff to make a goal for our campus to strive for equity in referrals for gifted education. The first step in the process of this research was to gain an understanding of what teachers know. The second step would be to evaluate what these teachers do with what they know. A suggestion for administration would be to work with teachers to set a tentative goal of how many CLD students will be referred for testing each year and a timeline of how the school will reach equity in the GT pullout program. From this point forward, the stakeholders will need to track their actions as they continue to work toward change. For example, teachers will need to be cognizant of who they refer and what demographic groups they fall into. Along with the growth attained from the book study, teachers can look for traits within their CLD populations for students who demonstrate giftedness and a need for gifted services. Teachers also have the ability to nominate students for enrichment services. These are for students who are not classified as GT but demonstrate a need for advanced learning support. Having teachers specifically choose CLD students to be a part of the enrichment program offers several benefits. CLD students can experience STEM lessons with students similar to them, they have opportunities they don't normally have in a general education experience, and the cultivation of a joy and excitement in learning. All of these can lead to

students becoming more confident, building their academic and social-emotional learning skills, and having a stronger probability of being referred for GT testing by teachers. When students begin to feel comfortable in high-level learning environments, they will demonstrate characteristics of giftedness more freely.

A final recommendation to administration is the need for culturally relevant leaders to approach district leadership with recommendations (Ezzani et al., 2021). Equitable assessment practices are definitely needed. The primary way students are identified in Suburban ISD is through IQ tests. However, there is a need for more balanced and encompassing ways of identifying gifted learners. Suburban Intermediate could pilot portfolios or other various ways to look at student potentials. The administrator can then take the results and examples of how they are working toward equity to district administration to push for change.

The most important factor to remember is that we cannot accept status quo. If we truly want to affect change on our campus, we must find ways to do that. Book studies, professional learning communities, CLD enrichment classes, school equity goals, and advocating at the district level are just a few of the devices we can employ to make affective change.

### **Closing Thoughts on Chapter V**

Working to close any education gap is challenging. Education leaders will face difficulties no matter what the focus is, but good leaders and good teachers never stop working toward improving their practice. Identifying the needs of a campus is critical, and we have to work as a cohesive staff to meet those needs. Identifying our visions, setting goals, and actively working to meet those goals is imperative to improving Suburban Intermediate School. One issue that needs to be brought to the forefront is that African American–, Hispanic-, low-income-, and

ELL-student representation in GT programs is not equitable. Our GT population does not mirror our general population.

I began this study with two questions: (1) How does a teacher decide if a student needs to be referred for GT testing? and (2) How do a teacher's perceptions of giftedness play a role in whether or not they refer a student for testing? I found that the teachers at Suburban Intermediate School decide that students need to be referred when they exhibit expert-level knowledge of a topic, can self-teach, articulate ideas well, have an insatiable curiosity, dive into the "why" of something and not just the details, and can be passionate about certain subjects, sports, or activities. The ways in which teachers expressed their understanding of giftedness gave me confidence that these teachers are looking for these gifted individuals. Teacher perceptions of giftedness play a positive role in referrals at Suburban Intermediate School because they expressed seeing a need for GT services and having positive views of program structures and students.

The results were not what I was expecting. Nonetheless, they provide quality information on what steps to take next. We can't control who comes to us identified as gifted, but we can work to serve CLD students to the best of our abilities in all areas. When we expand our cultural proficiency, we will make a difference for students who may have been overlooked for GT services in the past.

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APPENDIX A  
TEACHER SURVEY

This is an anonymous survey to gather information on your understanding of the processes and structure of the gifted and talented program of the [Suburban] Intermediate. Please circle one answer per question for the first section.

1. How many years have you worked at [Suburban] ?

1 - 3            4 - 6            7 - 10            11 - 15            15 - 20            20 or more

2. How many years have you worked in education as a classroom teacher?

1 - 3            4 - 6            7 - 10            11 - 15            15 - 20            20 or more

\*\*NOTE: For questions 5 - 6 you do not have to answer if you would rather not say.

5. What is your Ethnicity?

Hispanic/Latino            Not Hispanic/Latino

6. What is your Race?

African American

American Indian/Alaskan Native

Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander

Asian

White/Caucasian

Other or More than One Race

For the following questions, please rate on a scale of 1 - 5 how you agree with each statement (1 - completely disagree; 5 - completely agree). Please circle one answer per question. You may add comments or reflections to any of the below questions.

7. I understand how the Gifted and Talented (GT) referral process works at [Suburban].

1      2                      3                      4                      5

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8. I know where I can access material and information about the GT referral process at [Suburban].

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

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9. I know where I can access material and information about the GT testing window at [Suburban].

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

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10. The referral window for GT testing is a sufficient amount of time.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

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11. The GT testing process at [Suburban] is easy to understand.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

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12. The GT program is necessary for our gifted students.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

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**13.** Our school does a good job of identifying students for GT services.

1                                  2                                  3                                  4                                  5

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**14.** Improvements need to be made to the GT program at [Suburban].

1                                  2                                  3                                  4                                  5

---

---

**15.** Improvements need to be made *to the referral process* for GT testing at [Suburban].

1                                  2                                  3                                  4                                  5

---

---

**16.** Improvements need to be made *to the testing process* for GT at [Suburban].

1                                  2                                  3                                  4                                  5

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**17.** The students in the GT program effectively represent our overall student population.

1                                  2                                  3                                  4                                  5

---

---

**18.** The classroom teacher plays a significant role in supporting the GT student.

1                                  2                                  3                                  4                                  5

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**19.** The Enrichment specialist plays a significant role in supporting the GT student.

1                                  2                                  3                                  4                                  5

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**20.** Our teachers do a good job of supporting GT students.

1                              2                              3                              4                              5

---

---

**21.** Our administration does a good job of supporting GT students.

1                              2                              3                              4                              5

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**22.** It is the job of the entire staff to support GT students.

1                              2                              3                              4                              5

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APPENDIX B

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD DETERMINATION

DIVISION OF RESEARCH



NOT HUMAN RESEARCH DETERMINATION

Type of Review:	Initial Review Submission Form
Title:	Gifted Education and It's Underrepresented Populations
Investigator:	Mary Margaret Capraro
IRB ID:	IRB2020-0139
Reference Number:	105665
Funding:	
Documents Received:	IRB Application (Human Research) - (Version 1.0)

Dear Mary Margaret Capraro:

The Institution determined that the proposed activity is not research involving human subjects as defined by DHHS and FDA regulations. Data gathering efforts are intended solely to fulfill the student's record of study requirements.

Further IRB review and approval by this organization is not required because this is not human research. This determination applies only to the activities described in this IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made you must immediately contact the IRB about whether these activities are research involving humans in which the organization is engaged. You will also be required to submit a new request to the IRB for a determination.

Please be aware that receiving a 'Not Human Research Determination' is not the same as IRB review and approval of the activity. IRB consent forms or templates for the activities described in the determination are not to be used and references to TAMU IRB approval must be removed from study documents.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB Administrative Office at 1-979-458-4067, toll free at 1-855- 795-8636.

Sincerely,  
IRB Administration

750 Agronomy Road, Suite 2701  
1186 TAMU  
College Station, TX 77843-1186  
Tel. 979.458.1467 Fax. 979.862.3176 <http://rcb.tamu.edu>

APPENDIX C  
OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

	Student actions	Teacher actions
First 10 minutes of class:		
Direct Instruction:		
Class activities:		
Independent Practice:		
Miscellaneous interactions:		



## APPENDIX D

### INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR TEACHER 1

1. How do you think the lessons went while visiting your classes?
2. Did you feel there was any difference between your on-level and advanced classes regarding their success on the day's activities?
3. Do you see a variety of levels among your students' abilities?
4. Do any of your students that are not classified as GT exhibit GT characteristics? If so, what are those characteristics?
5. In your on-level class, students took a grammar pre-assessment. How will you use the data from this assignment?
6. Several students in your on-level were a little rowdier than the other students: [REDACTED], [REDACTED], and [REDACTED]. Does this have significance? Why do you think they act the way they do?
7. [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] all finished pretty quickly. What does that mean to you?
8. Looking through your rosters, are there any students that stand out to you for any reason: academics, behavior, etc.? If so, what are your thoughts on them?

## APPENDIX E

### INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR TEACHER 2

1. How do you think the lessons went while visiting your classes?
2. Do any of your students that are not classified as GT exhibit GT characteristics? If so, what are those characteristics?
3. ■■■ (■■■ Period) finished the assignment very quickly and began reading a book. Do you see any GT characteristics in him? If so, what? If not, how do you feel about his academic performance and abilities?
4. You used ■■■ handout as an example and she answered many questions asked to the class. What are your thoughts on her academic performance and abilities?
5. Looking through your rosters, are there any students that stand out to you for any reason: academics, behavior, etc.? If so, what are your thoughts on them?

## APPENDIX F

### INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR TEACHER 3

1. How do you think the lessons went while visiting your classes?
2. Do you have students that finish early or seem to always be ahead? If so, what does that mean to you? If not, why do you think this is?
3. What are your thoughts on [REDACTED] and his academic performance and abilities?
4. Do any of your students that are not classified as GT exhibit GT characteristics?
5. Looking through your rosters, are there any students that stand out to you for any reason: academics, behavior, etc.? If so, what are your thoughts on them?

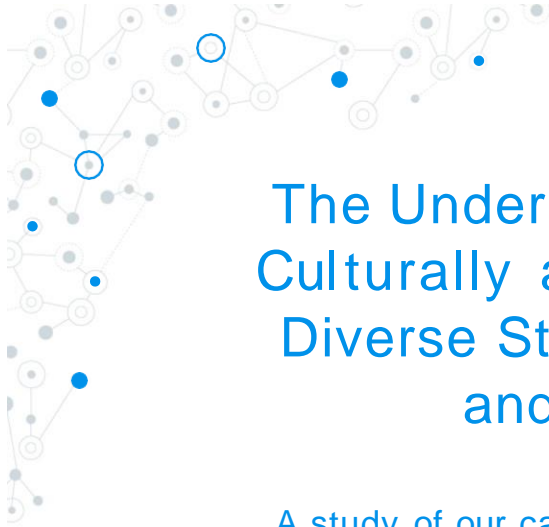
## APPENDIX G

### INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR TEACHER 4

1. How do you think the lessons went while visiting your classes?
2. Do you have students that finish early or seem to always be ahead? If so, what does that mean to you? If not, why do you think this is?
3. When students are super quiet and compliant (as yours were), how do you evaluate their abilities or know who is on task?
4. Do you see a variety of levels among your students' abilities?
5. Do any of your students that are not classified as GT exhibit GT characteristics? If so, what are those characteristics?
6. You encouraged [REDACTED] to answer because you knew she knew the answer? What are your thoughts on her academic abilities? Does she exhibit GT characteristics? If so, what? If not, explain your thoughts on her.
7. Looking through your rosters, are there any students that stand out to you for any reason: academics, behavior, etc.? If so, what are your thoughts on them?

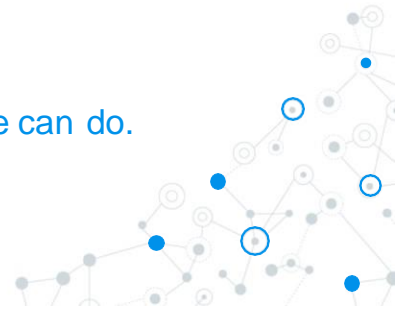
APPENDIX H

PRESENTATION FOR CAMPUS ADMINISTRATION



# The Underrepresentation of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students in Gifted and Talented

A study of our campus and what we can do.



# 1. National Data

## Gifted and Talented CLD students

*United States: Gifted and Talented Population vs. General Population*

Race	Percentage of General Population in the U.S.	Percentage in GT in the U.S.
American Indian or Alaskan Native	1.0%	.7%
Asian	5.2%	9.9%
Hispanic or Latino of any race	27.2%	18.3%
Black or African American	15.1%	8.2%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	.4%	.2%
Two or More Races	3.8%	4.2%
White	47.3%	58.4%
English Language Learners	10.4%	2.4%
Economically Disadvantaged (2015- 2016)	51.1%	*

# 2.

## Texas Data

### Gifted and Talented CLD students

*Texas Student Demographic Statistics vs. Texas GT Demographics*

	2008-2009 Overall Population	2018-2019 Overall Population	Texas G/T Populations (2013-2014)*
African American	14%	12.8%	4.0%
Hispanic	48.6%	52.6%	6.0%
White	33.3%	27.4%	10.6%
American Indian	0.4%	.4%	5.8%
Asian	3.7%	4.5%	18.3%
Pacific Islander		.2%	6.6%
Two or More Races	Not reported	2.4%	8.2%
Total GT Population in Texas	7.6	8.1	

# 3. Suburban Data

## Gifted and Talented CLD students

**Suburban Interm. General Population vs. GT Population: A Three-Year Average (2017-2020)**

	Average School Population	Average G/T Population
African American	13.6%	2.1%
Hispanic	20.1%	3.3%
White	51.8%	65.6%
Asian	10.2%	30%
Economically Disadvantaged	36.2%	10.4%
English Language Learners	8.0%	0%





“Transformative school leaders question the existence of inequities and advocate for change in the social fabric of society. They do this not only with an eye toward improving the experiences of those in school organizations but also with intentions to help shape the wellbeing and life trajectories of individuals and groups. Transformative leaders are conscious of justice and democracy, and they are continuous champions for improved life outcomes for the individual and the collective” (Robinson, 2017, p. 5).

8

### Suburban's Representation Index

	2020-2021 School Population	2020-2021 GT Population	Representation Index
African American	23%	1.5%	$1.5/23 = .06 = 6\%$
Hispanic	21%	4.7%	$4.7/21 = .2 = 20\%$
White	66%	60%	$60/66 = .9 = 90\%$
American Indian	1.8%	0%	$0/1.8 = 0\%$
Asian	9%	33%	$33/9 = 3.7 = 370\%$
Pacific Islander	.15%	0%	$0/.15 = 0\%$
Economically Disadvantaged	39%	4.7%	$4.7/39 = .1 = 10\%$
English Language Learners	13.4%	3%	$3/13.4 = .2 = 20\%$

9

## Suburban's Underrepresented Populations in GT

- ⊙ African American
- ⊙ Hispanic
- ⊙ Low-Income
- ⊙ English Language Learners

❖ It is our job to lessen these gaps.

## Research Study at Suburban Intermediate

- ⊙ Surveyed 32 general and special education teachers
- ⊙ 17 surveys were completed and returned
- ⊙ 7 teachers volunteered to be observed and interviewed
- ⊙ 4 teachers chosen: 2 teachers with 10+ years of experience; 2 teachers with less than 10 years of experience.

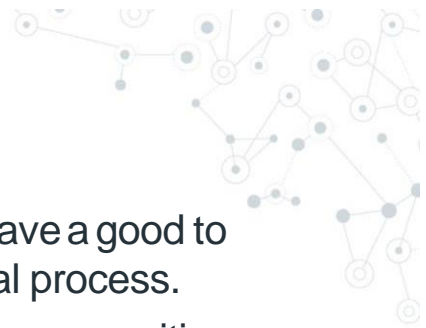
⊙ 3 teachers interviewed after observations

10

11

## Results of the Study

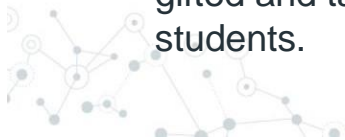
- ◎ Teachers at Suburban Intermediate have a good to strong understanding of the GT referral process.
- ◎ Teachers at Suburban Intermediate have a positive view of the GT program and GT students.
- ◎ Teachers at Suburban Intermediate see the varied needs and abilities in their students and want to meet the needs of all levels.



12

## Core Value

- ◎ Teachers at Suburban Intermediate perceive the GT program, students, and differentiation as a needed aspect of our school and value gifted and talented services and students.



13

# Implication



- ⦿ Teachers referrals are not the cause of gaps in the GT program.
- ⦿ Teacher perceptions have a positive affect on gifted students.



## Moving Forward

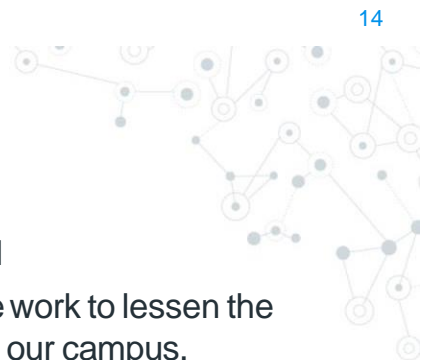
### Cannot Control

1. The students that come to us identified as gifted.
2. The programs and referrals at the elementary level.
3. District guidelines on referrals and testing.



### Can Control

1. How we work to lessen the gaps on our campus.
2. Our cultural competence and proficiency.
3. Our professional learning.
4. The opportunities we offer to students.

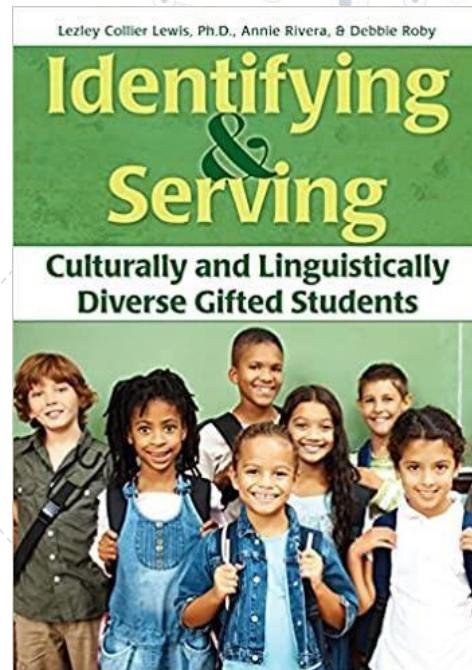


14

15

## Step 1: Book Study

- ⦿ Together, our staff can complete a book study to grow our cultural competence.
- ⦿ The chapters are short yet full of quality information
- ⦿ We can read it throughout the school year and then discuss in PLCs or through Schoology discussion boards.



16

## Step 2: Set Campus Equity Goals

- ⦿ As a staff, identify how many CLD referrals are needed to aim towards equity.
- ⦿ Identify how many CLD students teachers have referred in the past.
- ⦿ Look for CLD students to be a part of enrichment classes.
- ⦿ Grow a love of learning in all students.

17

### Step 3: Be an Example & Advocate for Change

- Try portfolios or alternative ways to identify students.
- Serve these students in enrichment (gifted-like) environments
- Take our results and data to district leaders.
- Advocate for change

○ We cannot accept what is given us. We have to work for the betterment of our students!

18

