Seeking Equity for Under-Represented Gifted Students (Black, Hispanic, & Low-Income)

Donna Y. Ford, PhD.
Professor & Cornelius Vanderbilt Endowed Chair
Dept. of Special Education & Dept. of Teaching and Learning
Vanderbilt University
email: donna.ford@vanderbilt.edu
website: www.drdonnayford.com
twitter: @donnayford

Why does this topic matter?

SCHOOL FACTORS
- Fear & Safety (gangs/ethnicity)
- Instructional Technology
- Class Size
- Teacher Preparation
- Teacher Experience
- Parent Participation
- Talking & Reading
- Excessive TV Watching

HEALTH FACTORS
- Rigor
- Teacher Absence & Turnover
- Parent-Pupil Ratio
- School Changing
- Low Birth Weight
- Hunger & Nutrition
- Fear & Safety (gangs/ethnicity)
- Environmental Damage

HOME FACTORS
- Parent-Pupil Ratio
- School Changing
- Summer Ach. Gains/Loss

Correlates ... 2003 to 2009
Loss, Maintenance, Gains/Progress, Inconclusive

Barton and Coley (2009)
Checking the achievement gap W
Meeting the Needs of CLD Gifted Students: Bridging Fields

Multicultural Education

Gifted Education

Advanced Placement

Academic
Cognitive
Affective
Psychological
Social
Cultural

Fields Merged/Bridged

Multicultural
Gifted and AP
Education

Needs and Development
Academic and Cognitive
Affective and Psychological
Social and Cultural
To evaluate gifted education instruments, policies and procedures, and documents in order to:

1. provide recommendations to address under-representation. This does not include developing the criteria and writing policies and procedures
2. set equity goals (Note: these goals are not quotas; they represent minimal representation goals for a district to be equitable, even if under-representation exists). More on the equity allowance appears in this 2013 court case McFadden v. Board of Education for Illinois School District U-46 at http://gct.sagepub.com/content/37/3/188.extract and Ford (2013) Recruiting and retaining culturally different students in gifted education.
3. provide professional development training

Questions Reviewed for Cheltenham School District (CSD)

- What are the district’s racial and economic demographics?
- What is the representation of students in the district by race, income, and race by income?
- What is the representation of students in the district vs. gifted program by (1) race, (2) income, and (3) race by income?
- Do instruments, and policies and procedures reflect best and equitable practices? How might they contribute to under-representation? What are the pros and cons of each?
- What equity goals should be targeted for specific under-represented students?
- What changes are recommended to reach equity goals (e.g., instruments, policies and procedures, professional development)?

Equity Formula

Equity Allowance Formula for MINIMAL Representation in Gifted Education

\[ \text{Equity} = \text{MINIMAL} \times \text{SUCHNESS} \]

*designates inequitable*

1. Black students = 19% of school district but 10% of gifted program. Calculate 20% of the total % of Black students in the school district. 

\[ (20\% \times 19\% = 3.8\% ) \]

2. Using the percentage from #1, calculate the adjusted target percentage. This will provide the target representation for Black students in the gifted program. 

**EQUITY GOAL** 

\[ (19\% - 3.8\% = 15.2\% ) \]

The **minimal number/percentage** of Black students who should be identified and served in the school is 15.2%. If the percentage is less than this, then under-representation is unreasonable and discrimination may be at work.

**MUST INCREASE GIFTED REPRESENTATION FROM 10% TO MINIMUM OF 15.2%**

2nd method: 

\[ 80\% \times \text{Total percent of Black students in district} \]

\[ (0.8 \times 19 = 15.2) \]

Summary of Findings by Race, Economic Status, and Race by Economic Status (NON-ED focus)

**ECONOMIC STATUS**
- Overall, NON-ED students are over-represented in gifted education
- Over-representation is significant

**RACIAL STATUS**
- White students are significantly over-represented in gifted education

**ECONOMIC STATUS BY RACE**
- NON-ED White and Asian students are significantly over-represented in gifted education.
- NON-ED Black, Hispanic, and Multi-racial students are significantly under-represented.

Regardless of their economic status, White students are significantly over-represented in gifted education.

Summary of Findings by Race, Economic Status, and Race by Economic Status (ED focus)

**ECONOMIC STATUS**
- Overall, ED students are under-represented in gifted education
- Under-representation is inequitable

**RACIAL STATUS**
- Black, Hispanic, and Multi-racial students are under-represented in gifted education
- Under-representation is inequitable

Regardless of their economic status, under-representation is inequitable for Black, Hispanic, and Multi-racial students.
The world we have created is a product of our thinking. We cannot change things until we change our thinking.
- Einstein

Under-Representation of Black and Hispanic Students in Gifted Education and Advanced Placement

Under-Referral (deficit thinking)

- Test bias
- Test selected
- Test-taking skills
- Stereotype Threat (Steele)
- Inadequate modifications

Which test(s) can be used
- Cut off scores
- Testing not on-going
- When children are tested
- No universal screening
- SEM ignored
- Reliance on national norms
- Weighted matrices
- Communication with families
- Etc.

Student
Family
Administrator

Donna Y. Ford

- Ford et al. (2009). Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students in Gifted Education: Recruitment and Retention Issues. Exceptional Children
- Grissom & Redding. (2016). Discretion and Disproportionality: Explaining the Underrepresentation of High-Achieving Students of Color in Gifted Programs. AERA Open
- Grissom et al. (2017). Teacher and Principal Diversity and the Representation of Students of Color in Gifted Programs. Elementary School Journal

Donna Y. Ford
Grissom and Redding (2016)
Discretion and Disproportionality: Explaining the Underrepresentation of High-Achieving Students of Color in Gifted Programs

Abstract

Students of color are underrepresented in gifted programs relative to White students, but the reasons for this underrepresentation are poorly understood. We investigate the predictors of gifted assignment using nationally representative, longitudinal data on elementary students. We document that even among students with high standardized test scores, Black students are less likely to be assigned to gifted services in both math and reading, a pattern that persists when controlling for other background factors, such as health and socioeconomic status, and characteristics of classrooms and schools. We then investigate the role of teacher discretion, leveraging research from political science suggesting that clients of government services from traditionally underrepresented groups benefit from diversity in the providers of those services, including teachers. Even after conditioning on test scores and other factors, Black students indeed are referred to gifted programs, particularly in reading, at significantly lower rates when taught by non-Black teachers, a concerning result given the relatively low incidence of assignment to own-race teachers among Black students.

Gardner and Sternberg (2017)
Families by Race

Nominations/Referrals
Completing Checklists

Donna Y. Ford