

# WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

## PERSPECTIVES OF INDIVIDUALS INVOLVED IN GIFTED EDUCATION

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**T**HE THEME of this year's conference, Leading Conversations, reflects the Texas Association for the Gifted and Talented's (TAGT) commitment to highlight the various perspectives of diverse groups of students, parents, counselors, and educators involved in gifted education. As populations served in U.S. schools represent an increasingly greater diversity in cultures, languages, ethnicities and races, abilities, and socioeconomic statuses (Aud, Fox, & KewalRamani, 2010), education stakeholders are becoming more aware that educational settings must be sensitive and responsive to the needs of diverse learners. TAGT joins with the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) in their commitment to nurture students' affective and social needs and develop their academic potential (NAGC, 2010). This literature review, therefore, focuses on the perspectives of individuals involved in gifted education: gifted students and their teachers, administrators, parents, counselors, and peers. Having a better understanding of these differing perspectives might help in interacting, building relationships, and leading conversations to more effectively serve our gifted populations.

To identify various perspectives, this review included articles published since 2005 in *Gifted Child Today*, *Gifted Child Quarterly*, *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, *Journal of Advanced Academics* (formerly *Journal of Secondary Gifted Education*), and *Roeper Review*. To be included, articles needed to examine the perspectives of gifted students and individuals involved in their education and/or strategies

for meeting their diverse academic and affective needs in classrooms, homes, and social settings. Using these criteria, 26 articles were identified and summarized.

These articles included 19 empirical studies including quantitative ( $n = 3$ ), qualitative ( $n = 14$ ), and mixed methods ( $n = 2$ ). Authors of three articles reflected on their observations related to the affective or psychosocial aspects of gifted individuals or populations. Other authors described a cross-age mentoring program model framework, a model for developing thinking and dialogue at home, strategies for developing psychosocial skills in students, and lessons learned in working with counselors serving high-ability students living in rural poverty. Populations studied included elementary, middle, high school, and university students as well as parents, teachers, principals, and counselors.

### STUDENT AND SOCIETAL PERSPECTIVES OF CHARACTERISTICS OF GIFTEDNESS

As we begin to lead conversations concerning and in cooperation with gifted students, it's important that we are sensitive to the idea that any factor that makes gifted students different from their peers puts them at risk for being excluded in social settings (Lee, Olszewski-Kubilius, & Thompson, 2012). Coleman and Cross (1988/2014) suggested the labels of *gifted* and *advanced* often carry with them stigmatizing generalizations and expectations that might be experienced as a social handicap for some students, especially adolescents. Students that experience the social stigma that often accompa-

nies giftedness develop many coping mechanisms including the strategies of “blending” and “passing for normal” to mask their differences (Cross, Coleman, & Terhaar-Yonkers, 2014). Gifted students may begin to monitor and adjust the amount of information they share with others in an attempt to hide their unique abilities (Coleman & Cross, 1988/2014). However, just as the terms *geek* and *nerd* have evolved to

interviews with mothers and reported that, despite good intentions, some parents failed to develop their child’s internal motivation because of reliance on behavior modification strategies designed to control performance rather than to develop internalized academic motivation. Jeffrey (2007) asserted that parents who model thinking dispositions encourage their children to develop metacognitive skills.

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## THE GIFTED CHILD’S HOME ENVIRONMENT HAS AN IMMENSE IMPACT ON HIS OR HER LEARNING, DEVELOPMENT, AND WELL-BEING.

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become more socially acceptable due to a growing appreciation of intellect, Cross (2005) suggested that gifted students also have benefited from greater societal acceptance. Yet gifted students who have socially prescribed perfectionism may be more prone to depression and need more realistic expectations (Christopher & Shewmaker, 2010). Adolescence is a fragile period of life where students develop a personal vision, a sense of destiny, and personality; it is in this stage of life that gifted individuals can learn to not let their giftedness affect them negatively (Grobman, 2006). Hutcheson and Tieso (2014) found that the majority of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) students viewed the interaction between their giftedness and alternative lifestyles positively because their giftedness made them more motivated and able to seek and create safe spaces to cope.

### HOME PERSPECTIVES

The gifted child’s home environment has an immense impact on his or her learning, development, and well-being. Garn, Matthews, and Jolly (2010) explored the home environments of gifted students through

### SCHOOL PERSPECTIVES

School environments, including the individuals comprising them, were the focus of a number of studies included in our review (Coleman & Cross, 1988/2014; Eddles-Hirsch, Vialle, McCormick, & Rogers, 2012; Eddles-Hirsch, Vialle, Rogers, & McCormick, 2010; Vanderbrook, 2006). Schools are where the majority of students’ social interactions take place. Gallagher (1958/2015) surveyed elementary students about their closest friends and found that highly gifted students chose children with varied intelligence levels to be their closest friends. This mutual friendship was evident as average and below-average intellectual ability children also selected the highly intelligent as their closest friends. For LGBTQ students, positive social experiences were fostered through student-led support organizations (Friedman-Nimz et al., 2006). Although schools can provide positive social interactions, educators needed to recognize that schools might also be places where students find themselves faced with stigmatizing perceptions from peers and be prepared to meet these challenges (Coleman & Cross, 1988/2014).

Students recognized the personal development and intellectual and social benefits resulting from their participation in advanced academic classes and extracurricular activities (Peterson, Canady, & Duncan, 2012). Gifted teens enrolled in Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate

(IB) coursework reported that they were able to maintain both positive social affiliation and high academic achievement by sacrificing their sleep (Foust, Hertberg-Davis, & Callahan, 2008). Specialized programming for advanced learners may also promote positive social interactions not only among students but also among teachers (Eddles-Hirsch et al., 2012; VanTassel-Baska, Feng, Swanson, Quek, & Chandler, 2009). In a study of high school students involved in IB programming, Conner (2009) found that a cohort culture developed between students and staff, which reflected common attitudes, values, beliefs, and practices around learning and schoolwork. Vanderbrook (2006) reinforced the significant positive or negative impact that AP or IB teachers and counselors can have on students. Cross and Burney (2005) reported the need for counselors working in rural areas to build relationships with low-income gifted students in order to encourage them to select AP courses, offer them support through community mentors, and guide them in making college and career choices. To support counselors and educators who teach gifted students, principals need to provide resources and emotional support so that all teachers feel comfortable in differentiating their curriculum, instruction, and assessment (Hertberg-Davis & Brighton, 2006).

### STRATEGIES

So what strategies might be used that assist gifted students in developing their gifts and talents to their fullest potential? First, teachers and parents of gifted students need ongoing education about the diverse academic, social, and emotional needs of advanced learners so that myths about giftedness are addressed (Bain, Choate, & Bliss, 2006; Garn et al., 2010). Vanderbrook (2006) and Cross and Burney (2005) also argued for specialized training in developing effective school counselors

for gifted students. Next, gifted students need to develop swagger with humility, meaning that they show self-assurance in their assets grown with hard work and humility in recognizing that achievement is often accompanied with struggle (Cross, 2008). Third, counselors and teachers in K–12 settings can assist students in cultivating an internal motivation (Garn et al., 2010) and use older gifted students to mentor younger students in promoting leadership (Manning, 2005). Hébert et al. (2014) suggested eight different classroom activities for adolescent psychosocial development. Fourth, at the higher education level, mentoring relationships can be formed between faculty and students (Lunsford, 2011) and a culture of achievement can be developed through social organizations that spur collegiate men to higher aspirations (Hébert, 2006). Fifth, parents can establish a culture of thinking in their home (Jeffrey, 2007). Finally, it may be that partnership is the key. Leading conversations that promote ongoing education and develop collaboration between teachers, administrators, school counselors, parents, peers, and mentors might be the most effective way to propel high-ability individuals to seek their greatest potential.

## REFERENCES

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- Bain, S. K., Choate, S. M., & Bliss, S. L. (2006). Perceptions of developmental, social, and emotional issues in giftedness: Are they realistic? *Roeper Review*, 29, 41–48. doi:10.1080/02783190609554383
- Using a survey research method,

the researchers questioned 285 undergraduate students (including 81% who planned to become educators) to determine their attitudes and perceptions regarding gifted students' social, emotional, and physical aspects of development. Contrary to current literature-based theories, most participants indicated that gifted individuals were a fairly homogeneous (vs. a heterogeneous) group and were typically developmentally advanced in multiple areas. Although previous research on sibling relationships is inconclusive, the majority of participants indicated that gifted students and their nongifted siblings often suffer from unusual tension. Participants also perceived that gifted students were more likely to have social relationship problems and suffer from emotional difficulties than their peers. Although gifted students' emotional and social struggles are reported qualitatively, most empirical research does not support that gifted individuals have more social-emotional problems than their nongifted peers. Although 85% of participants perceived that early giftedness was an excellent or good predictor of exceptional adult accomplishments, the longitudinal and retrospective research on eminence in adulthood is more equivocal. Most participants disagreed that intellectually gifted individuals had the best inherent leadership potential, yet growing research tends to favor the opposite position. Interestingly, although 37% of the participants had been identified as gifted, their responses to the questions were generally consistent with the nongifted participants. The researchers argued that if the perceptions regarding social-emotional issues are indicative of the general public sentiments, then intensive efforts to educate teachers and parents are necessary to mitigate the inaccurate stigma toward gifted children. However, because the survey questionnaire only provided two dichotomous answer choices and not a continuum of responses, it is possible

that the degree of the participants' perceptions may have been exaggerated.

Christopher, M. M., & Shewmaker, J. (2010). The relationship of perfectionism to affective variables in gifted and highly able children. *Gifted Child Today*, 33(3), 20–30.

The purpose of this correlational study investigated the relationship between the perfectionism orientation of gifted learners with the affective variables of depression, anxiety, and perfectionism. The authors separated perfectionism orientation into two subtypes: Self-Oriented Perfectionism (SOP) and Socially Prescribed Perfectionism (SPP). Self-Oriented Perfectionism represented a healthy view of setting strict standards for oneself while being motivated to attain high levels of achievement. Socially Prescribed Perfectionism, on the other hand, was characterized by a perceived external expectation of perfectionism from significant others in one's life. The

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**LEADING CONVERSATIONS THAT PROMOTE ONGOING EDUCATION AND DEVELOP COLLABORATION BETWEEN TEACHERS, ADMINISTRATORS, SCHOOL COUNSELORS, PARENTS, PEERS, AND MENTORS MIGHT BE THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAY TO PROPEL HIGH ABILITY INDIVIDUALS TO SEEK THEIR GREATEST POTENTIAL.**

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study took place at a private university in a rural Texas community during a 2-week summer enrichment camp for gifted students. Participants included 240 children between 7 and 14 years old who were either identified by local school districts as gifted and talented or tested by the camp program staff. All participants were given three different measurements including the Children's Depression Inventory

(CDI), Revised Children's Manifest Anxiety Scale (RCMAS), and the Child and Adolescent Perfectionism Scale (CAPS). These scales measure variables such as depression, anxiety, and perfectionism. Descriptive statistics indicated that almost half of the participants rated themselves as exhibiting more characteristics of SOP while almost 15% rated themselves with characteristics toward SPP. From the correlational analysis, results suggest that SPP was positively correlated with depression and SOP was negatively correlated with anxiety. The authors found a negative relationship between SPP and anxiety. The study confirmed previous research findings that perfectionistic tendencies may lead to depression and that socially prescribed orientation of perfectionism can lead to unhealthy growth. The authors recommend parents and teachers help students keep realistic expectations while challenging students in a supportive learning environment. The results suggest that parents and schools communicate with students about expectations for perfection. Parents and schools can provide guidance about the potential problems of placing too much pressure on oneself. Students can harness perfectionistic tendencies and use them in healthy ways to excel. The Teaching for Intellectual and Emotional Learning (TIEL) model encourages development of cognitive and social-emotional connections. This model provides monitoring of social-emotional development and encourages students to learn to love challenges rather than becoming anxious. Through this program, students learn how to distinguish the inner drive to do well from the perceived pressure from others to be perfect.

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Coleman, L. J., & Cross, T. L. (2014). Is being gifted a social handicap? *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 37, 5–17. <http://doi.org/10.1177/0162353214521486> (Reprinted from *Journal for the*

*Education of the Gifted*, 1988, 11[4], 41–56)

Researchers interviewed 15 high school students, all 17 years old, participating in Tennessee's Governor's School (GS) for the Sciences with the purpose of improving their understanding of the experience of being gifted. Specifically, the aim of the study was to explore whether or not gifted students experienced being gifted as a social handicap. Two interviews were conducted with each participant at a three-and-a-half-week interval, once at the beginning of their time at GS, and later toward the middle of their experience. Results of the interviews found that their self-descriptions tended to be neutral and ambiguous, not wanting to brag or seem proud; however, the majority of descriptions of gifted students by others perceived gifted students as being different from their peers. When asked to give advice to their "clone" attending a local high school, the majority of students gave commonplace answers such as, "be yourself" and "get involved," things that they did not feel they themselves could do. The gifted and talented students interviewed were aware of cliques and stereotypes at their local high schools but did not feel that cliques had developed in their time at GS. The participants suggested that students attending GS were more mature and committed to academics than their peers and that if their local high school were full of students like those at GS that they would behave differently (i.e., be more outgoing, feel less excluded). The authors found that 87% of the gifted adolescents who were interviewed experienced giftedness as a social handicap and that the stigma that accompanied giftedness often led to students feeling like they had to hide details about themselves through coping mechanisms or alterations to their actions in social situations.

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Conner, J. O. (2009). Student engagement in an independent research project: The influence of cohort

culture. *Journal of Advanced Academics*, 21, 8–38. doi.org/10.1177/1932202X0902100102

Student engagement in the International Baccalaureate (IB) extended essay assignment was analyzed using a mixed-methods multisite longitudinal design. Specifically, the researcher wanted to know: How engaged are students as they work on their extended essays? Do particular school or program features, practices, or policies help to explain students' levels of engagement? The initial study included eight IB campuses, including all IB campuses from a region as well as two campuses outside of the region whose students had high success rates on the extended essay assignment. The IB coordinator on each campus was interviewed twice during the academic year and students were given an engagement survey each year to measure their level of engagement in the extended essay process. From these campuses, the researcher chose two campuses as the focus of a more in-depth case study. Four students at each of the two campuses participated in interviews and conversations about the extended essay throughout their high school experience. Results from the full study found that 41% of the 141 participating students showed disengagement with the extended essay whereas 53% experienced some form of engagement. When school differences were taken into account, researchers found that although engagement levels fluctuated over time, the relative school rankings stayed consistent. Other factors considered by the researcher included institutional and programmatic features as well as structure and support. These factors appeared to have less of an influence on student engagement than what the author called "cohort culture." Cohort culture can be defined as the attitudes, values, beliefs, and practices that develop around learning and schoolwork, which includes student leadership and teacher perceptions

of the cohort's personality. The two campuses where the author conducted in-depth case studies demonstrated very different cohort cultures. One campus had a culture of commitment, where students were engaged and supported by peers and adults, as compared to the other campus that demonstrated a culture of complaint, which was characterized by negative attitudes toward the extended essay process by students and staff. Results from this study suggest that the cohort culture may have a bigger impact on the engagement of students than any of the institutional factors analyzed.

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Cross, T. L. (2005). Nerds and geeks: Society's evolving stereotypes of our students with gifts and talents. *Gifted Child Today*, 28(4), 26–65.

Stereotypes abound for gifted students including the two most common terms: nerd and geek. In this article, the author described how these terms affected perceptions of gifted students. In the past, the term *nerd* often referred to someone highly intelligent who focused on academics and technology to the exclusion of anything else and appeared weak and boring. *Geek* was a term even more negative than nerd and carried a stigma. No one wanted to be around a geek because that person was believed to be socially deficient. In the 1980s, the typical stereotypes of gifted students began to evolve with the creation of television shows, books, and films that characterized gifted individuals as highly capable and as helpers. These characters were seen as individuals even though they still had stereotypical characteristics. Society began to identify the gifted as *people*. Today, children live in a high-tech world and can use multiple technologies. Being tech-savvy has become the norm; thus, describing someone as a tech-geek is just another way to call that person a technology expert. The term nerd has become an adjective that describes someone as acting nerdy. The author

believed that from the evolution of these two terms, an awareness is growing of the importance of intellect in our society. The gifted now are more likely to experience acceptance than feeling like an outsider.

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Cross, T. L. (2008). Swagger or humility or swagger and humility: A new goal for educating students with gifts and talents. *Gifted Child Today*, 31(1), 25–26. doi:10.4219/gct-2008-692

What does volleyball have to do with swagger or gifted students? In the article, the author used satire to point out the dangers of egalitarian societies where equality is forced upon the citizens and leaves no room for uniqueness of the individual. The author compared a group of highly confident volleyball players to gifted students. The team members' talents had been nurtured and developed to the point that the team displayed swagger—a kind of bold way of being that emanates confidence. The author proposed the same for intellectually gifted students. What if gifted students were expected just like athletes to develop swagger? The author contended that to do so, students would have to learn about their assets and limitations, to show pride in working hard, and be able to recognize these characteristics in others. Swagger *with* humility is having self-assurance and recognizing that struggling is a part of achievement. Humility and swagger go together in order to create high performance and encourages us to rethink our idea of talent development.

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Cross, T. L., & Burney, V. H. (2005). High ability, rural, and poor: Lessons from Project Aspire and implications for school counselors. *Journal of Secondary Gifted Education*, 16, 148–156. doi.org/10.4219/jsge-2005-483

The article described Project Aspire, a federally funded program that attempted to better the lives of rural

middle and high school highly abled youth. The project had two facets that included academics and counseling. Students participated in Advanced Placement (AP) coursework through distance learning and tutoring to help them in challenging courses. The purpose for the counseling component aimed to enhance counselor knowledge of the conditions that might help these students succeed in college, deal with stress, and provide career guidance. In order to educate the counselors about poverty in relation to working with gifted students, the authors discussed the book, *A Framework for Understanding Poverty* (Payne, 1998) and *Removing the Mask: Giftedness in Poverty* (Slocumb & Payne, 2000). Discussions with the counselors added to the understanding of problems that high-ability students from rural poverty encounter. The counselors noted that students viewed rigorous coursework as too difficult and did not see the benefits of participating. Many students had family responsibilities or were involved in extracurricular activities. Parents were not supportive of the extra time it took outside of school to complete the coursework. Because the schools were small, a few students could highly influence the behavior of others, which often led to negative perceptions toward advanced work. High achievement was viewed as unacceptable to the boys. Academically able students were overly concerned with GPA averages and worried that taking advanced classes might hurt their school ranking. The counselors mentioned issues with generational poverty, which included teaching students about acceptable language and behavior. Transportation was another concern for disadvantaged students. Parents tended not to encourage their students to go away to college and saw little benefit to their participating in extraschool programs. The article concluded with several implications for counselors including the importance of building relationships with students, being sensitive to the emotional inten-

sity from the gifted child, and providing community mentors to students.

Cross, T. L., Coleman, L. J., & Terhaar-Yonkers, M. (2014). The social cognition of gifted adolescents in schools: Managing the stigma of giftedness. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 37, 30–39. doi.org/10.1177/0162353214521492

Researchers developed the Student Attitude Questionnaire (SAQ) using phenomenological interviews with 15 high school students participating in the Tennessee Governor's School for the Sciences with the purpose of developing a better understanding of stigmas that accompany giftedness. The SAQ is a collection of six social scenarios in which students are asked to pick their reaction from a list of five possible responses. Student responses include (a) telling the truth, (b) placating, (c) copping-out, (d) covering up, and (e) lying. The authors suggested that these responses create what they called a Continuum of Visibility demonstrating how willing a student is to reveal his or her giftedness. The SAQ was administered to 1,465 gifted students over a 2-year period. Results of the study found that students primarily chose to placate when situations dealt with appropriate or acceptable behavior. Students were most likely to tell the truth when they were asked to choose academic over social activities. The authors suggested that students varied in the degree to which they would tell the truth depending upon the circumstances within the situation and that controlling the amount of information peers had about them was an attempt to engage in and maintain normal social interactions. These findings supported the idea that a stigma, or difference between a person's "virtual social identity" and "actual social identity," existed for many gifted students, especially those at a secondary level. The authors concluded by stating that stigmas and social interactions are

complex issues with many dimensions so multiple perspectives are needed.

Eddles-Hirsch, K., Vialle, W., McCormick, J., & Rogers, K. (2012). Insiders or outsiders: The role of social context in the peer relations of gifted students. *Roeper Review*, 34, 53–62. doi.org/10.1080/02783193.2012.627554

Using a phenomenological method, researchers interviewed and observed 27 gifted elementary students to examine the effects of social contexts in schools that actively catered to advanced intellectual needs. Students participating in this study attended three Australian schools—two of which were single sex, and the third was coeducational. Three themes emerged from the results of the in-depth interviews and classroom and playground observations: peer relations, challenging instruction, and power. The focus of this article was on the most potent of the themes, peer relations. The authors found that regardless of the type of school, all participants sought acceptance from their peer groups. The majority of the participants found that it was easier to make friends within their school's gifted and advanced programs. Although some students reported missing time spent with mixed-ability peers, researchers found that time spent with like-ability peers seemed to impact positively students' attitudes toward school. Two of the schools involved in the study actively promoted diversity and acceptance of different groups of students by incorporating character and social lessons into their curriculum. Students at these two schools reported a sense of school community and a culture of care where they felt free to be open and honest about their giftedness. The third campus, however, did little to address social needs and even tended to encourage independence. Students from this school reported feeling like they had to mask their giftedness in

order to avoid the social stigma that often accompanied the label.

Eddles-Hirsch, K., Vialle, W., Rogers, K. B., & McCormick, J. (2010). "Just challenge those high-ability learners and they'll be all right!" The impact of social context and challenging instruction on the affective development of high-ability students. *Journal of Advanced Academics*, 22, 106–128. doi.org/10.1177/1932202X1002200105

In this qualitative study, 27 gifted elementary students in grades 4–6 were interviewed about their perceptions toward extension classes and experiences within the school environment. The study took place in three different schools in Sydney, Australia. The schools varied by school context and gender. Nine students were selected from a coeducational school, 9 from a school with only boys, and 9 from an all-girls school. From the interviews, the themes of peer relations, challenging instruction, and power emerged along with subthemes of gender, change, and competition. Two of the schools emphasized social and emotional development through a schoolwide program that taught social skills, strategies, and acceptance of diversity. In contrast, the all-boys school did not have a social and emotional program in place; the students perceived that individual differences were not accepted and that any social or emotional difficulty had to be dealt with alone. The boys in the single gender school believed academic giftedness was somewhat of a stigma; the boys spent most of their day in a mixed-ability classroom and a pull-out program once a week. These boys in the single gender school held the most negative beliefs about school, compared with the students from the other two schools, and placed a higher value on the ability to play sports. In the schools where daily academic challenge occurred, students noted motivation and a desire to learn increased. The students thought teacher beliefs

were also an important part of their success. Teachers who set high goals for the students and allowed students to move at their own pace were integral to students' positive perceptions. Students reported that working with students of like ability felt like working as a team and increased academic growth. When students spent time in mixed-ability classes, they reported being bored and saw no benefit in the coursework. Females from both schools participated in more extracurricular activities and experienced more stress. The girls had more unfavorable reactions to high expectations that others held of them. Competition in the like-ability classes was a concern for the girls as well as when teachers would post grades for all to see. Creating a positive social context by addressing students' social and emotional needs promoted the students' sense of belonging, acceptance of diversity, and an overall more positive social context in which to develop their talents.

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Foust, R. C., Hertberg-Davis, H., & Callahan, C. M. (2008). "Having it all" at sleep's expense: The forced choice of participants in Advanced Placement courses and International Baccalaureate programs. *Roeper Review*, 30, 121–129. doi:10.1080/02783190801955293

In this qualitative study, the researchers interviewed 84 high school students from four schools to examine if students perceived that they had to make a choice between academic success and social acceptance. Results from semi-structured interviews with Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) students showed that students did not perceive a forced choice between affiliation and academic achievement. Most students indicated that they chose to pursue both by going to bed late, getting up early, and/or foregoing sleep. The demanding schedule needed to balance their social and academic opportunities caused the students significant levels

of stress, yet sleep remained the only sacrifice they seemed willing to make. The researchers hypothesized the students had a "superstudent syndrome" in which they felt pressure to succeed academically without the support in maintaining a balanced life. Potential disadvantageous consequences of a lack of sleep to a student's health, academic performance, and emotional well-being were explored. These findings led researchers to suggest that high school personnel might want to consider providing more support structures and analyze if the IB and AP workload could be reduced while still providing meaningful learning. The researchers suggested it might also be possible that the college admissions process that encourages difficult courses and multiple extracurricular activities actually reinforces these unhealthy practices.

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Friedman-Nimz, R., Altman, J., Cain, S., Korn, S., Karger, M. J., Witsch, M. J., . . . Weiss, M. (2006). Blending support and social action: The power of a gay-straight alliance and PrideWorks Conference. *Journal of Secondary Gifted Education*, 17, 258–264.

Researchers collected a series of interviews from participants involved in a New York high school Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) and a countywide conference developed to reduce prejudice and promote tolerance. Individuals interviewed included a teacher sponsor, past and present GSA members, as well as a school social worker. The purpose of the article was to tell the story of a successful advocacy group, the process they underwent to become a voice on their campus, and the changes in that community that resulted from their efforts. The GSA was begun with the purpose of making schools safe, inclusive, and respectful places for learning. Teacher sponsors noted that bright, creative students are often at the core of instigating groups that seek social justice, which was true for this particular GSA. When asked what made their GSA successful,

interviewees stressed the importance of balancing the group's focus on support and social action as well as delegating tasks so that every member had an investment in the club. Members also commented that involving individuals and groups from the community for resources is paramount to the success of a group like GSA. Through the development of partnerships with other school and community groups the PrideWorks conference was begun. This conference served as an opportunity for attendees to network and advocate for groups that are often labeled and marginalized in the school setting. Conferences such as PrideWorks and campus groups like the GSA offer outlets that combine education, support, and advocacy through leadership opportunities and over time can lead to changes in a community's value systems leading to fewer labels and prejudices.

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Gallagher, J. J. (2015). Peer acceptance of highly gifted children in elementary school. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 38, 51–57. doi:10.1177/0162353214565549 (Reprinted from *The Elementary School Journal*, 1958, 58, 465–470)

This study investigated the social acceptance of gifted elementary school children. Participants included 54 gifted children who all scored 150 or above on the Stanford-Binet intelligence test. The children were asked to complete a sociometric survey that included the names of the five friends in the classroom they identified as their best friends. Three classrooms were chosen randomly in grades 2–5, and participants were given a group intelligence test to determine the difference in cognitive abilities. These scores were then compared to the sociometric surveys. Results indicated that intelligence did not seem to be a factor in choosing friends; the gifted child was chosen by children with varying intelligence scores. The gifted child did not choose other intelligent children more often than children

with average or low-average ability. Using other research studies along with this one, the author suggested that the distance from a child's home may be more of a determining factor in choosing friends—the closer the children lived to one another, the more likely they were to choose one another. The author noted the limitations of the study and questioned whether the same results would be found in middle and high school contexts due to broadening aspirations and interests.

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Garn, A. C., Matthews, M. S., & Jolly, J. A. (2010). Parental influences on the academic motivation of gifted students: A self-determination theory perspective. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 54, 263–272. doi:10.1177/0016986210377657

Researchers interviewed 30 mothers to investigate parental attitudes and approaches related to motivating their gifted children academically. Specifically, the interviewer asked participants, “What approaches would you use to motivate your gifted child if you observed a lack of motivation on a particular subject or on a particular assignment?” and “What types of help, if any, do you give your child with homework?” Three themes surfaced from an analysis of the data: (a) parents as experts, (b) scaffolding, and (c) behavior modification. Although 80% of the mothers perceived themselves as authorities in understanding the unique characteristics of their gifted child, 60% reported that the process was demanding and did not always result as successfully as intended. Half of the mothers indicated that classroom practices, such as inappropriate challenges and busy-work, hindered their child's motivation and so they responded by modifying classroom assignments to fit their child's needs. Scaffolding techniques employed by 80% of parents included additional instruction, developing internalization, and connecting homework to interests. Other parental assistance

included dividing large assignments into smaller chunks, offering time management strategies, and providing project supplies. Finally, 30% of mothers interviewed commented on rewards or consequences they implemented for achievement or lack of effort. The researchers expressed concern that mothers' negative attitudes toward teacher assignments might undermine intrinsic motivation as well as discourage parent-child-teacher partnerships. Further, the researchers suggested that some parents, despite good intentions, might fail to develop their child's internal motivation because of their reliance on parental behavior modification strategies designed to control performance rather than to develop internalized academic motivation.

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Grobman, J. (2006). Underachievement in exceptionally gifted adolescents and young adults: A psychiatrist's view. *Journal of Secondary Gifted Education*, 17, 199–210. doi:10.4219/jsge-2006-408

In this article, a psychiatrist reflected on his accumulated clinical experience treating 15 exceptionally gifted youths using individual psychotherapy. In spite of supportive families, peer acceptance, and a positive educational environment, these gifted middle-class individuals, aged 14–26 years old, were referred for treatment of depression, isolation, social relationship issues, anxiety, and underachievement. Dominated by an inner compulsion, each individual exhibited a powerful drive from an early age and had strong sensitivities to varied stimuli such as sound, temperature, or texture. These individuals were headstrong and determined to do tasks on their own and in their own way. Other shared characteristics from an early age included early unique aesthetic sensibilities, perfectionism, and oppositionalism, as well as low levels of self-discipline and frustration tolerance. These gifted individuals struggled with feelings of isolation, guilt for effortless success,

worry that others were maliciously envious, and hypercriticism directed toward the self. By adolescence, they had embraced their giftedness and were examining the lives of those who had achieved eminence in the field. As they grew, their confidence and sense of destiny increased and led to a conflicted sense of grandiosity. Although these grandiose fantasies spurred them forward despite obstacles, these fantasies also produced critical and arrogant characteristics. Over time, this tendency toward invincibility and narcissism increased to worrisome levels. Early anxieties that accompanied their gifted development mushroomed into thoughts bordering on the pathological: “their most troublesome conflicts arose . . . from fear that their giftedness had distorted and twisted them as human beings” (Grobman, 2006, p. 209). Each one undermined his or her gifted development and began to act in a self-destructive manner, resorting to psychological defense mechanisms and physical self-destructiveness that limited their gifted development. Through therapy these individuals were provided with tools for managing interpersonal conflicts and learned to accept that anxiety was part of normal development. Once the individuals conceded that they needed help, the therapist led them through exploring their internal conflicts such as feelings of superiority and fear; wanting domination and to belong; or simultaneously craving independence and interdependence. Through psychotherapy these adolescents learned that their giftedness did not have to dominate them, and, therefore, they became less conflicted and destructive.

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Hébert, T. P. (2006). Gifted university males in a Greek fraternity: Creating a culture of achievement. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 50, 26–41. doi:10.1177/001698620605000104

This qualitative case-study research examined the lives of five gifted Caucasian males enrolled at a

Southeastern public university to determine how their collegiate experience was influenced by involvement in a Greek fraternity. In-depth interviews, observations, and a review of fraternity, social media, résumés and transcripts were conducted over a period of 4 years to gather data. The participants had been involved in gifted programming and enjoyed academic success that came fairly easily throughout elementary to high school. Because academic challenge was lacking in high school, the participants had time to extensively focus on athletics. In retrospect, however, the concentration on athletics may have limited their talent development in other avenues. They were recruited to the fraternity based on the perception that they would have the potential to contribute to the organization in the three A's that reflected a well-rounded individual: athletics, academics, and activities. The participants testified that their fraternity brothers encouraged their involvement in a multitude of extracurricular activities and campus leadership positions because their fraternal culture valued intelligence, academic achievement, and personal growth. These young men commented on the benefits of being surrounded by a fraternal culture of achievers and suggested that the fraternity cultivated their social growth, community service involvement, and leadership talents. Hébert pointed out that these experiences highlighted a peer-value system in high school that prioritized athletics and may deter growth in other domains. Further,

this study implied the need for talent development beyond the college classroom and that negative stereotypes of fraternities should not be generalized to all Greek organizations.

Hébert, T. P., Corcoran, J. A., Cote, J. M., Ene, M. C., Leighton, E. A., Holmes, A. M., & Padula, D. D. (2014). It's safe to be smart: Strategies for creating a supportive classroom environment. *Gifted Child Today*, 37(2), 95–101. doi:10.1177/1076217514520966

Eight different strategies to augment the psychosocial development of gifted middle school and high school students were outlined in this article. In order to cultivate a classroom community where students want to learn, teachers may choose strategies that incorporate William Purkey's philosophy of invitational education, which is built on a foundation of trust, respect, optimism, and teacher intentionality. At the beginning of the school year, two-word poems, avatars, word clouds, and mission patches may be effective in establishing relationships. After dividing into pairs, students conversed with their partners and then completed a poem composed of two-word lines. Another activity for creative introductions that incorporated technology included the construction of avatars, or self-created digital personifications. Created digitally or on paper, word clouds were another way to provide creatively a representation of one's personality. Drawing on a NASA metaphor, mission patches are symbolic depictions of one's hobbies,

interests, and goals that are accompanied with a written explanation for the chosen words and symbols on their mission patches. Two activities helped build a sense of community throughout the year: photo sharing applications and social action projects. Photo sharing might be used to build an exhibit where gifted students highlighted inspirational moments or people, as well as circumstances or people that have shaped their lives. A collaborative photojournalism assignment might encourage teams of students to consider a personally meaningful issue through photography. Social action projects were collaborative learning experiences where the students were accountable to work toward a common goal in their school or community. Blogging and journaling were the final strategies that helped students manage pressure and engage in self-reflection. Using the described strategies is one way that teachers can consistently offer support and constructive feedback to demonstrate that they value the intelligence, creativity, and interests of the gifted teens in their classroom.

Hertberg-Davis, H. L., & Brighton, C. M. (2006). Support and sabotage principals' influence on middle school teachers' responses to differentiation. *Journal of Secondary Gifted Education*, 17, 90–102. doi.org/10.4219/jsge-2006-685.

An ethnographic case study design was used to explore the influence of principals on differentiation practices at their campuses. The specific question for this study was: What



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characteristics of principals positively and negatively impact teachers' willingness and ability to differentiate instruction for all learners, including the gifted, in heterogeneous middle school classrooms? Participants included four campus administrators as well as one academic team per grade level on each of three middle school campuses. Data were collected over 3 years. Participants were involved in monthly professional development, observations, coaching sessions, and interviews (both formal and informal). Data sources analyzed include field notes from coaches at each campus, teacher reflections, interviews, lesson plans, classroom observations, student work samples, and student focus groups. Results from the case studies demonstrated that there was a wide range of levels of verbal and behavioral support offered by building principals. This level of support had a profound effect on teachers' implementation of differentiation practices. Four specific themes emerged from the analysis of the qualitative data. First, teachers' responses to being asked to differentiate, positive or negative, mirrored those of their principals. Teachers needed administrator support—both in terms of resources and emotional support—to feel comfortable with differentiating curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Effective implementation of differentiation required an administrator with both the desire to see change occur and the belief that change was possible. Finally, encouraging teachers to differentiate instruction in any systematic way required administrators to have focus and long-term vision.

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Hutcheson, V. H., & Tieso, C. L. (2014). Social coping of gifted and LGBTQ adolescents. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 37, 355–377. doi:10.1177/0162353214552563.

Retrospective semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 uni-

versity students who identified both as gifted and as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ) to explore their high school experiences. Researchers were interested in studying the coping strategies used by gifted LGBTQ adolescents, the interactions between giftedness and LGBTQ identities, and how teachers and school systems might best support gifted students who were also LGBTQ. Using a critical ethnography approach, the authors asked university students to reflect on their experiences in middle school and high school as a gifted LGBTQ student. The majority of participants reported feeling isolated and stigmatized, and some even experienced discrimination and harassment as a result of their sexual orientation. Participants also suggested that there was a sense of heteronormality, the reinforcing of heterosexuality and erasure of other identities, in many school settings that led to what the authors termed the “privilege of straightness.” Participants also reported discomfort as a result of homophobia within society and religion as a whole. Half reported feeling scared or anxious; some even experienced unhappiness or depression. Coping mechanisms used by participants included finding supportive groups of friends, hiding or downplaying LGBTQ, participating in extracurricular activities, confiding in supportive teachers, developing talents, and conducting research to understand and develop their identity. The majority of participants reported experiencing positive interactions between their giftedness and LGBTQ status, stating that they were more motivated and able to seek and create safe spaces to cope. The authors closed with recommendations for teachers that included listening to and recognizing differing student identities as well as becoming better educated about the LGBTQ community. Recommendations for schools included using more inclusive curric-

ula, policies, and resources to meet the needs of all learners.

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Jeffrey, T. (2007). Creating a culture of thinking and dialogue at home. *Gifted Child Today*, 30(4), 21–25. doi:10.4219/gct-2007-487

This article investigated how to create a culture of thinking within one's home. Culture of thinking referred to how a group communicates with one another, how the group interacts, and how values are transmitted through those interactions. The author described four ways to develop a culture of thinking at home: modeling, explanation, interaction, and feedback. In the family structure, children learn thinking dispositions by observing how parents solve problems and make decisions. Children are quick to absorb what parents do more so than what they say. Thinking dispositions such as finding multiple ways to solve a problem, persisting, risk-taking, and a desire of curiosity can be modeled by parents. The author recommended using literature with characters that exhibited good thinking. In ideal classrooms, children pose good questions; these strategies can be taught at home to encourage good questioning at home. The Tiered Questioning cueing system might be implemented at home to increase the depth and complexity of the questions children ask. Certain keywords in the system such as *function* and *significance* help children pose better questions. These keywords can be used in conversations within the family to increase depth and complexity. In order for children to become expert problem solvers, they need the practice through interacting in the environment. Parents are often overprotective and rescue a child from a potential learning situation. By giving a child freedom to make a decision, the child feels trusted and capable. Using these low-stakes situations, parents help children gain a sense of control in knowing a good decision can be made. Providing feedback helps develop a child's metacognitive skills

and encourages reflective thinking. Good teachers ask students how an answer was obtained; parents can do the same at home by asking the child to review how the answer was found. The author suggested that parents that use these four strategies can create a more thoughtful and intellectual learning for children in the home environment.

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Lee, S. Y., Olszewski-Kubilius, P., & Thomson, D. T. (2012). Academically gifted students' perceived interpersonal competence and peer relationships. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 56, 90–104. doi:10.1177/0016986212442568

This article examined 1,526 gifted adolescents' perceptions of interpersonal skills and relationships with peers. Participants previously participated in a summer program at the Center for Talent Development at Northwestern University from 2005 to 2008. Participants scored in the 90th to 99th percentile on a nationally normed achievement test in order to participate. Participants in the study ranged from the 5th to 12th grade with 52.5% male and 47.5% female. Data were collected from an online survey containing six sections developed from items on four different instruments. Items from the first instrument, Interpersonal Competence Questionnaire-Revised (ICQ-R), measured interpersonal competence. Two subscales, sociability and depression, from the Socioemotional Survey (SS) were used to measure social competence. To measure peer relationships and interpersonal ability, the Self Perception Profile for Adolescents (SPPA) was used. Items from the Social Coping Questionnaire (SCQ) measured social coping strategies. Response rate from the surveys averaged 5%, which were noted to be much lower than typical. The results indicated that overall the sample's interpersonal competence was above average; the participants were able to start up conversations, be assertive, and provide support for others. In regards to sociability and

depression, students reported positive responses of having good relationships with others, being nice to others, and making people laugh. Only 2.8% of the sample responded that life felt worthless and overall depression scores were low. Results indicated that participants held high perceptions of their social ability. Unlike other research, the sample did not believe that giftedness had any effect on the sample's ability to make friends; however, the gifted sample rated their academic self-concept higher than their social self-concept. Gender differences supported previous research in that females scored higher in interpersonal competence. Researchers noted that students who were subject accelerated tended to rate higher in interpersonal competence compared to students who did not accelerate a subject. The same was not true for those students accelerating a full grade. Subject acceleration may have allowed students to improve social skills by interacting with older students. In addition, students with high verbal skills may have had more interpersonal struggles as compared to a student who was gifted in math. Advanced language, which was something more obvious and identified the student as different, might lead to relationship issues.

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Lunsford, L. G. (2011). Psychology of mentoring: The case of talented college students. *Journal of Advanced Academics*, 22, 474–498. doi:10.1177/1932202X1102200305

This research examined how the psychological needs of the mentee influenced the quality of mentoring relationships. As a requirement of receiving a highly selective academic scholarship, students were required to participate in a faculty-student mentoring program for 3 years. Structured interviews were conducted at the end of the third year. Using archived transcripts from three cohorts comprising 128 college students, a mixed-method analysis, guided by grounded theory,

was used. After categorizing qualitative interview data, a quantitative method (multinomial logistic regression) was used for analysis. The first theme that emerged was that 23% of students who participated in the mentoring relationship did not feel mentored. The three reasons cited for this perception were: (a) a lack of personal connection with the mentor, (b) the student changed his or her major to a new area but did not seek a new mentor, or (c) the student had a faculty mentor outside of the scholarship program. The second theme was that students who had a greater connection to their career path were more likely to report a high-quality relationship with their mentor. Those who reported no mentor were either undecided or recently committed to a new career direction. Third, the researchers suggested that the best mentoring relationships included research involvement and career support such as writing articles, attending conferences, and connecting students to other faculty. Overall, a student's career commitment and his or her receptivity to mentoring appeared to influence the mentee's perceived quality of the mentoring relationship.

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Manning, S. (2005). Young leaders: Growing through mentoring. *Gifted Child Today*, 28(1), 14–21. doi:10.4219/gct-2005-163

This descriptive study provided a model for mentoring and leadership opportunities for gifted and talented children. Gifted children often exhibited many characteristics of leadership potential such as high energy, advanced sense of self-awareness, preference for challenges, and high expectations. Some of the leadership characteristics seemed innate while others emerged with time and experience. This author implemented a cross-aged mentoring program with gifted second graders and struggling kindergarten students. The mentoring strategy included seven steps for effectiveness. The first step

was *collaboration* between educators, administrators, and parents. Approval from all parties involved was imperative to creating a positive process. *Seeking* potential mentors by asking teachers to nominate potential mentors was accomplished by recruiting formally through announcements or informally in classrooms. The success of the program was dependent on the *match* between the mentor and the student's interest, gender, maturity level, and personality. The implementing teacher was responsible for *training* and facilitating work plans for mentors. The mentor had specific responsibilities during tutoring sessions such as creating a lesson plan that identified the focus of the tutoring session with the mentee. The mentors were required to keep a log of their experiences during each session. These journals were used when the implementing teacher offered *feedback* on the process. The *final product* was completed at the end of the mentoring project. Mentors used their journals to write an essay about the overall experience in the project. The final step was *evaluating* the project by the implementing teacher. Informal meetings with teachers, parents, and mentors determined ideas for future projects. The author stated that informal results from this project showed increases in meaningful relationships among mentees and mentors and improved leadership dispositions and skills such as sensitivity to individuals.

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Peterson, J. S., Canady, K., & Duncan, N. (2012). Positive life experiences: A qualitative, cross-sectional, longitudinal study of gifted graduates. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 35, 81–99. doi:10.1177/0162353211432042

Researchers investigated the perceived positive life experiences, support, and the personal qualities that aided 48 gifted students' success. Retrospective longitudinal data included the annual parental checklist recording the life

experiences their gifted child faced from elementary school through high school graduation and a retrospective questionnaire completed by the gifted high school graduate. The greatest number of students recognized positive experiences from academics and extracurricular activities. Academic themes that emerged were accomplishments, expanded opportunities, validation of personal qualities, and personal gain. The social benefits and personal development resulted from extracurricular activities such as athletics, the arts, school organizations, competitions, and experiences outside of school. Ten or fewer participants mentioned the influence of family, peers, and service outside of school. Seven graduates mentioned life-changing events such as "becoming a Christian," getting a driver's license, moving to a new location, health accomplishments, and an impromptu music performance with long-term implications. On average, each individual commented on four individuals and/or personal traits and behaviors that contributed to their success. Various internal resources mentioned included motivation, an optimistic attitude, good character, compassion, self-assurance, social skills, and mental abilities. Student practices such as study habits, self-care, spiritual practices, and choosing to be involved in activities provided support. Graduates cited teachers, coaches, parents, peers, siblings, extended family, and church workers who aided students in their personal growth and achievement. According to this research, when these gifted students "go beyond" and invest in extracurricular activities and academics, they are rewarded with personal satisfaction, increased confidence, additional opportunities, and new perspectives.

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Vanderbrook, C. M. (2006). Intellectually gifted females and their perspectives of lived experience in the AP and IB programs. *Journal of Secondary Gifted Education*, 17, 133–148. doi:10.4219/jsge-2006-396

*nal of Secondary Gifted Education*, 17, 133–148. doi:10.4219/jsge-2006-396

Five females from two different schools, a subset of a larger study, were selected to examine the challenges and experiences of gifted females attending public high schools. This phenomenological qualitative research described meaning to their lived experiences with IB or AP curriculum and instruction. Three in-depth interviews focused, respectively, on self-reflection on early school experiences, detailing their AP or IB experiences, and the formation of meaning related to these events. The three AP students (Cuban-Lebanese, Chinese, and Western European descent) were from upper middle-class homes, and the two Caucasian IB students, who lived outside the school boundaries and chose to attend the IB school, were from lower middle-class homes. With respect to challenges, each participant noted a subject or skill that required more effort to be successful, often because of a lack of previous quality instruction. Each individual recalled that school had been relatively easy until their junior year and most found the increased workload and time management strategies challenging. Three participants identified some outstanding teachers who were experts in their subject, demonstrated passion, injected humor, and established a personal connection with the individual. Ineffective teachers were also encountered. Two of the AP students felt their English instructor gave busywork, rather than a rich class discussion/analysis that would prepare them for the essay and AP exam. Both IB students reported a feeling of disconnect from all but one of their teachers who was described as excellent. Interestingly, the participants' positive and negative teacher experiences tended to correlate with their overall perceptions of their classes and the overall program. Participants

also appreciated the academically and emotionally supportive peer relationships developed as a result of their programs. Each participant realized there were many other intellectually gifted students in the IB and AP programs, which could, at times, humble, frustrate, and motivate the participants. Only one individual reported quality interactions with her guidance counselor. In fact, participants were never asked by their counselor to discuss their future lives and goals, and none of the participants had clearly defined future plans. The researcher noted the AP and IB programs had a curricular focus and were not intended to improve existing career counseling, provide emotional support, or serve the needs of gifted students. These findings provided further evidence of the significant positive or negative influence that specific teachers play in promoting effective learning as well as the need for a more effective counseling component in order to support and develop gifted students.

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VanTassel-Baska, J., Feng, A. X., Swanson, J. D., Quek, C., & Chandler, K. (2009). Academic and affective profiles of low-income, minority, and twice-exceptional gifted learners: The role of gifted program membership in enhancing self. *Journal of Advanced Academics*, 20, 702–739. doi.org/10.1177/1932202X0902000406

Underrepresentation of low-income and minority students in gifted programming has led to the development and implementation of alternative identification methods, specifically the use of performance-based assessments. Researchers used semi-structured interviews to explore the effect of gifted programming on students identified through alternative performance-based assessment. Participants included 37 seventh- or eighth-grade students from four school districts who had participated in gifted programming for 4 years after being alternatively identified. Parents and teachers

of these students were also interviewed to cross-check for similar themes and disparate conclusions. Specifically, researchers wanted to know if there were program benefits that impacted alternatively identified gifted students' cognitive, social, and emotional aspects of life. Results were first broken down into prototypes including (a) low-income White students; (b) low-income African American students; (c) low-income other minority students; (d) high nonverbal, low verbal students; and (e) twice-exceptional students. Common themes across stakeholder interviews for each prototype were discussed. The authors then reported results by stakeholder groups, dividing the data into (a) student perceptions, (b) parent perceptions, and (c) teacher perceptions. Common themes across prototypes and stakeholder groups included a generally positive view of the experience as a whole, that the program had benefited the students, and that challenge at the cognitive level and an increase in self-confidence at the affective level were most beneficial to students participating in the program.

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