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ABSTRACT

Discussed is the responsibility of a public school system to provide for the education of gifted children, and evaluated are alternative approaches toward meeting this responsibility. Examined and compared in terms of academic effectiveness, administrative practicability, political acceptability, and economic feasibility are the following approaches: individualized instruction, enrichment, acceleration, separate classes, and separate schools. It is concluded that the homogeneous grouping of gifted children on the basis of their ability in one or more schools for instruction purposes is the optimum approach. (Author/LS)

A DISCUSSION OF GIFTED EDUCATION PROGRAMS FOR CHARLES COUNTY

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses a number of alternative approaches toward providing for the education of gifted children in a public school system. These approaches are examined and compared in terms of academic effectiveness, administrative practicability, political acceptability, and economic feasibility. It is concluded that the homogeneous grouping of gifted children on the basis of their ability in a single, or few, school(s) for instruction purposes would be the optimum approach.

The discussion or examination of any particular aspect of a public school system (such as programs for the gifted) should be based on an understanding of the system's fundamental purpose--an understanding of why public elementary and secondary schools exist in the first place, what their responsibilities are, and what they are supposed to accomplish. There are differing perceptions, among professional educators as well as the general public, as to what this purpose is or should be. At the risk of oversimplification, they can be summarized as essentially two contrasting views:

-one view holds that the basic purpose of a public school system is to teach each student the academic skills he will need later in life, to develop his mental abilities, and to stimulate his intellectual growth;

-another view holds that the purpose of schools is to promote the self-development of each student in the personal and social sense, to instill in him a sense of belonging and a feeling of self-worth, and to assure his happiness.

As stated in the Master Plan of the Board of Education of Charles County, Maryland; FY 1975-FY 1980, the mission (or purpose) of the Board of Education is "to operate a public school system which provides for the intellectual development of each [student]". Thus, it appears that the local system adheres to the former of the two views presented above rather than the latter.

Three clarifying points are very important to make here, since this observation can very easily be misinterpreted.

First, this view does not imply that public education should be of benefit to only a few because of an emphasis on theoretical or impractical knowledge, or on learning which only prepares a student for higher education (as might be inferred from such terms as "intellectual" or "academic"). On the contrary, it includes developing the basic mental skills which every adult needs and should be able to use in the everyday process of living in our society. Such skills as reading and being able to comprehend what is read, making arithmetic calculations, communicating orally or in writing--these are in fact "intellectual" capabilities, regardless of how practical and down-to-earth they may also be.

Second, this view does not imply that education consists only of intellectual development; that, for example, character development is unimportant. It simply recognizes that certain aspects of a young person's total education are outside the responsibility of the public school and that those other responsibilities should be borne by other parts of our society--most importantly, by the family. It also recognizes the impracticality of attempting to address anything other than intellectual development in the schools, considering the limited amount of time available. (Fewer than 20% of a school-age child's waking hours are spent in school, and this hardly seems sufficient to permit an expansion of the school's basic role.) Finally, and perhaps most significantly, it recognizes that an emphasis on learning in the schools does not detract from a student's eventual ability to lead a satisfying, fulfilling life--it enhances it. Development of moral character, adjustment to life, social development, self-confidence--these are not so much alternatives to learning as they are reasons for learning.

Third, this view does not imply that, because a public school has no formal responsibilities for a student's social or emotional development, the students in the system do not derive any benefits in these areas from their school experiences. The diversity of the student population in a public school system--which simply reflects the diversity of the community--provides each student with the opportunity to associate with others of different social background, race, religion, ethnic origin, and economic situation. Through this opportunity he is able to develop some understanding and appreciation of the multi-faceted democratic society in which he will eventually live as an adult. This is an extremely valuable side-benefit of a public school education, but it derives from the context in which that education is pursued and is not--strictly speaking--a part of it.

In short, the objective of a school system is the intellectual development of each student. But this is only a statement of "what" schools are expected to accomplish; the important question of "how" to achieve this objective remains to be addressed. There are two significant aspects to be considered in this regard, which are discussed below.

The first of these, obviously, is the overall quality of the school system itself. In the task of strengthening its quality, a school system may be thought of as similar to most other organizations: it must have available the necessary resources and must manage and apply these resources effectively. For a school system, the most important of these resources would seem to be its teachers, its facilities, and its professional administrative staff. Any system striving for excellence would certainly consider capable and dedicated teachers, modern facilities, and an imaginative administrative staff to be requisites for meeting its fundamental purpose. Acquiring and developing these, in turn, involves virtually all of the facets of management required in any "business": planning, budgeting, organizing, motivating and training personnel, evaluation of ongoing and proposed programs, etc. Moreover, these are functions which are internal to the school system and are therefore largely within the control of the system--at least to the extent that any public institution controls its own operations. It can be concluded, therefore, that the responsibility and authority for improving the quality of a school system resides within that system, and that exercising these is an important part of meeting the system's objective.

But there is another aspect of public education which is outside the control of a school system, and which nonetheless impacts greatly on the system's success in providing for the intellectual development of each student. This is the range of differing capabilities of the students in the system. School systems exist to transmit knowledge and develop intellectual skills, and the degree to which a system is <u>able</u> to perform this function depends primarily on its overall quality, as discussed in the previous paragraph. But the degree to which it actually <u>does</u> perform this function depends not only on the quality of the system but also on the abilities and potential of its students. In other words, teaching is an attribute of the school system alone, but learning is not--learning (i.e., intellectual development) is dependent upon both the teacher and the student. And students possess widely differing capacities for learning. One does not need to be a clinical psychologist or to rely only on scholarly research to accept this simple fact; one's own daily experiences in dealing with others provide ample evidence

that people are not intellectually identical. Dr. Russell Stauffer, currently serving as a consultant to the Charles County school system, illustrated the degree of difference existing among children when he said recently that "a typical fourth grade class will span a performance range of seven years"; that is, some of the students in the class will be performing at the first grade level while others will be at the seventh grade level. Similar observations are borne out by the results of the standardized tests administered annually to Charles County students. Mr. A. Brian Klein, Director of Evaluation and Research for the Charles County school system, has said that the statistical distribution of measured intelligence quotients for Charles County students does not differ significantly from the distribution of IQ's nationally. Simply stated, this means that even though the majority of students have IQ's at or near the overall average level, substantial numbers have IQ's which are either very much higher or very much lower than this average. More specifically, IQ's of Charles County school children range from a low of around 50 to a high of over 150.

Faced with such a divergence in student intellectual capability, how is a school system to meet its responsibility for the intellectual development of each student? The question is particularly perplexing for a public school system which, being supported by public funds, must provide an equal educational opportunity for all students.

But what is "equality" in this context? It could be interpreted as the presentation of identical material to all the students in each grade level, addressed to the average level of capability in that grade. While this would meet the needs of the majority of students, however, it would do a disservice to both the slower and the brighter students: the former would not be able to keep up and the latter would become bored; both groups would quickly lose interest and motivation. So the result of this interpretation could not be considered equality. (Dr. Stauffer likened this to asking a shoe store for a pair of "fourth grade shoes" for a fourth grade child--the inference being that a "fourth grade education" would be an equally unsatisfactory objective to seek indiscriminately for all fourth grade students.) Another interpretation could be to present material such that all students could reach an identical level of academic achievement in each grade level. But, given the range of capabilities within each grade, this would be possible only when the material was suitable for the slowest students since their achievement would be the only level which all students could reach. In the very strict sense this would produce equal results, but certainly it could not be considered to be equality in education. (To extend Dr. Stauffer's analogy further, this would be like buying the smallest size shoes for an entire class to wear.)

The answer to this dilemma lies in the recognition of the intellectual differences among children. Each child should be afforded an education in which he can develop to the maximum of his capability, and all children should be expected to achieve such a level of development. This, then, constitutes equality in education: every student educated to the same extent relative to his capability; and such equality should be a fundamental goal of public education. Like many goals, this probably represents an ideal which can never be fully realized--but this is not sufficient reason not to strive to reach it.

Of course, teaching involves more than simply "presenting" material to students. This is at best a mechanistic way of describing the functions of a teacher. Effective teaching--teaching which promotes learning--requires capitalizing on every young person's innate desire to learn. Satisfying this desire is a rewarding experience for a student; this comes from motivation, which must be nurtured by challenge. But challenge must be carefully matched to the student's capability; too little challenge results in boredom, too much in frustration. From this need for challenge, coupled with recognition of the intellectual differences among children, it follows directly that instructional programs should exist which are differentiated according to the particular level of the student being addressed.

Special education programs are perhaps the foremost example of such differentiation in the current educational environment. These are directed toward a segment of the school population who, as a group, are at a distinct educational disadvantage: for a variety of reasons they are unable to benefit from normal school curricula and programs. They need separate, dedicated programs to enable them to reach their full potential. In recent years this need has become recognized by the general public, by the educational community, and by the legislative and executive branches of government at various levels. This group of children--the socially or economically disadvantaged and the mentally, emotionally, or physically handicapped--are a minority of the total school population, but they are nonetheless deserving of concerted attention because of their particular circumstances. Yet, in the words of Dr. Harold C. Lyon of the U. S. Office of Education, "there is another minority denoted not by race, socio-economic background, ethnic origin, or impaired faculties, but by their exceptional ability. They come from all levels of society, from all races and national origins, and are equally distributed between the sexes."

These children with exceptional ability--"gifted" children--are also at a distinct educational disadvantage. They are neither motivated nor challenged by the ordinary school curricula and they experience difficulties in the classroom, again quoting Dr. Lyon, "precisely because [these curricula] are ordinary. Education is a mass enterprise, geared by economic necessity as well as politics to the abilities of the majority--and the majority are, by definition, average, but just as a child of less-than-average mental ability has trouble keeping up with his classmates, so a child of above average ability has trouble staying behind with them. Mastering in a few days material that other children require weeks to understand he becomes bored, restless, anxious to move on. Prevented from moving ahead by the rigidity of normal school procedures--assigned to a class with others of the same age, expected to devote the same attention to the same textbooks, required to be present for the same number of hours in the same seat--the gifted youngster typically takes one of two tacks: he conceals his ability, anxious not be embarrass others or draw their ridicule by superior performance; or, not understanding his frustration, becomes a discipline problem.....It is time for us to recognize that unusual ability can prove a barrier to achievement, and that it is peculiarly in our national interest to assure the development of children who have potential to make extraordinary contributions to our common life."

A variety of approaches to differentiated instruction for the gifted can be suggested. These generally fall in the following categories:

-Individualized instruction: each child in a class receives instruction at his particular level from his regular classroom teacher;

-Enrichment: more advanced and varied work is assigned to the gifted child, again in his regular classroom setting;

-Acceleration: the gifted child is advanced one or more grades beyond the normal level for his age;

-Separate classes: gifted children within a school are grouped together (either part of the day or all day) for instruction at their level of capability;

-Separate school(s): gifted children from throughout a school system are assigned to a single school.

The distinctions between these are neither clear-cut nor absolute, since they in fact represent a continuum or range of approaches. Because of this it is difficult to evaluate them individually in absolute terms. But they must be examined and evaluated nonetheless; decisions concerning new programs in the schools should be made consciously and rationally, not spontaneously on the basis of expedience or current circumstances.

There are a number of perspectives from which such examination and evaluation should be undertaken. First, and of course most important (again bearing in mind the fundamental purpose of the school system), is the question of academic effectiveness--Does the proposed new program provide for increased intellectual development of the students? But, important as this question is, it relates only to whether the proposed program will work. Whether a program can work depends on three other questions: Is it administratively practicable? Is it politically acceptable? And, Is it economically feasible? For convenience, each of these will be addressed separately below, but it must be recognized that these four questions are all highly interrelated.

Considering academic effectiveness, there seems little doubt that a given teacher dealing with a group of students in a class can be both more effective and more efficient if that group consists of students who are relatively homogeneous in terms of academic ability. Effective because he can address his teaching efforts to the particular level appropriate for the entire class, and efficient because he need not "spread himself too thin" by attempting to devote individual attention to the few students who are either far ahead or far behind the rest of the class. The latter point constitutes the major argument against "individualized instruction" and "enrichment" as approaches to gifted education. In a class with a wide range of abilities, the teacher must of necessity devote most if not all of his time to the average students--simply because they comprise the overwhelming majority of the class. Because of this, for example, "enrichment" in practice often devolves to giving the brighter child more of the same work as the rest of the class instead of more advanced work--and more of the same work is precisely what the gifted child does not need; he has probably already mastered the work, and will only become bored. Another way in which individualized instruction or enrichment are

often implemented in practice is to simply allow the gifted child to proceed essentially on his own--on the implicit assumption that, since he is bright, he will naturally excel anyway. But this simply is not true; the gifted child needs to be taught, just as any other child. And teaching, as stated earlier, requires challenge--challenge which must be externally furnished. If the teacher does attempt to meet the gifted child's needs individually, other children in the class often show animosity toward him since to them it appears that he has been singled out for special treatment and recognition. This in turn can cause the gifted child to be reluctant to demonstrate his intellectual capability in class, for fear of being ostracized by his classmates. (Incidentally, such reticence on the part of a gifted child has the effect of masking the child's ability from his teacher; the subject of identifying gifted children will be addressed later.) The converse reaction is also possible: the gifted child may develop a tendency to behave in a superior (i.e., domineering) manner toward his less capable classmates. All of these considerations argue against leaving a gifted child in his normal classroom; or, stated differently, they argue in favor of acceleration, special classes, or special schools. There are those in education who take the position that children should not be so removed from their "regular" class, on the grounds that they need the benefit of "peer association" and that their classmates need the benefit of their leadership abilities. Each of these points can be rebutted. First, the avowed desirability of peer association seems to be founded not so much on the basis of educational need as on social need--and the proper place of social considerations in the public schools (as important side benefits but secondary to the basic educational purpose) has been previously discussed. Moreover, there is no reason to expect that a group of gifted children will be any less socially heterogeneous than the total school population from which they were selected; i.e., they will still be benefitting from peer association in the social sense. Second, removing intellectually superior students from their regular classes will not deprive the remaining students in terms of leadership; on the contrary, those remaining students will have a greater opportunity to develop and demonstrate their leadership abilities within their own group. Rather than being deprived, they will themselves benefit. These arguments also support the practice of acceleration, except that a student who has been advanced one grade may still not be among a group which shares his ability; i.e., he may still be intellectually superior to the class. In fact, considering the relatively small difference in intelligence between any two consecutive grades, the majority of gifted children probably have capabilities well above those of the students at the next grade level. For example, an eight-year old with an IQ of 125 (a level commonly accepted as representing a minimum definition of giftedness) has the intelligence of a ten-year old, a difference in this case of two grades. For students with higher IQ's, the differences would be even greater. But advancing a child two or more grades places him among students who are older, physically larger, and more mature than he. Even though he would be academically able to handle the work of the class, such an environment is likely to adversely affect his emotional well-being to the point of his withdrawing from any participation with the rest of the class. In terms of academic effectiveness, none of the objectives raised above applies to either separate classes made up entirely of gifted students or to a separate school for gifted. These approaches to gifted education (particularly the latter) permit the grouping of children who are similar not only in intellectual ability but in chronological age, physical development, and social and emotional maturity

as well. Under such conditions, a teacher can devote maximum attention to education which will reach all of his students both effectively and efficiently--the very antithesis of the individualized instruction or enrichment approaches discussed earlier.

A key factor which must be recognized concerning the second major question--administrative practicability--is the limited number of gifted children to be found among the school population in a school system. For the sake of discussion, it can be assumed that no more than ten percent of the students in a system are gifted. Furthermore, it is not unreasonable to assume that these students are distributed relatively uniformly throughout the system; i.e., that they are not concentrated in any particular age group or grade level, nor at any particular school. Under such circumstances, every classroom in every school has a likelihood of containing a small number of gifted students. If either individualized instruction or enrichment are to be implemented as the approach to gifted education, therefore, every teacher in the school system would have to receive some degree of training, preparation, and/or indoctrination in dealing with gifted children; also, it is not unlikely that each teacher would expect some support in the form of special materials or professional staff assistance. Considering the limited amount of time each teacher has available to work with a very small segment of the class, as discussed in the previous paragraph, both individualized instruction and enrichment would appear to be extremely inefficient approaches to gifted education: A large amount of effort is required to produce a small amount of results, dispersed throughout the system. In addition, dependence on the individual efforts of virtually all the teachers in the system--which would be required by the nature of these approaches--would make uniform administering of the program on a system-wide basis extremely difficult. Acceleration suffers from the same disadvantage. But the use of separate classes or a separate school for the gifted allows a degree of concentration of both students and teachers, along with the resulting administrative efficiency, system-wide management, and evaluation advantages.

The adoption of any program by a public institution is contingent upon political acceptability--"political" being used here in its legitimate, historical sense, not with the pejorative connotation often associated with the term today. This simply means that the program must be acceptable to the constituency served or (since opposition is more often vocalized than support) must not be considered unacceptable. It is in this area that implementation of differentiated gifted education faces a hurdle, on two counts. One is the belief that a child involved in a gifted education program is receiving a "better" education than a child who is not. The other is the belief that the establishment of separate gifted programs is unfair, undemocratic, and possibly even illegal. The first of these attitudes has been addressed earlier in this paper: when each child receives an education geared to his own particular capabilities, no one receives a better education than anyone else; each in fact receives an equal education relative to those capabilities. The second belief mentioned can be largely answered by this same argument, but the answer deserves elaboration because it is held not only by some members of the general public but--incredible as this may seem--by professionals in the field of education as well, including some in the Charles County system. Witness, for example, the following comments and statements:

-a Charles County school principal has said that he is prohibited from grouping students in classes according to their ability because the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare would not permit it;

-a Board of Education staff member stated that the "track system" is "illegal", the implication being that ability grouping is prohibited by law;

-another principal responded to a recent survey of individual school gifted programs in Charles County by saying that "all" of his students are gifted;

-a Board of Education staff member has referred to the grouping of gifted students in full-time, separate classes as forming "an elite cadre, like a bunch of Nazis".

Attitudes concerning the "illegality" of ability grouping probably stem from overgeneralization of recent court decisions. The courts have determined that when a school system groups children in different levels in such a way that the quality of education differs from level to level, this difference in quality tends to keep students in the level at which they were originally assigned and that these circumstances constitute unfair and illegal discrimination. Surely any rational person would agree that such a practice--the so-called track system--should be considered wrong by any standards. But should its condemnation be viewed as a blanket prohibition against any attempt to place students of similar academic capability in the same class? One would suspect not--particularly in light of the many special education programs that are being initiated for children who have lesser abilities. But it is being so viewed by at least some officials in the Charles County school system. Attitudes such as those must be recognized and dealt with if a differentiated gifted program is to be established. They would probably have little or no impact on the individualized or enrichment approaches, and perhaps only a minor impact on acceleration. But they could generate a strong negative reaction to the use of separate classes or a separate school for gifted, if the purposes for such programs were not carefully explained in a advance.

Finally, we come to the question of economic feasibility--which, second only to academic effectiveness, is probably the most important aspect to be considered in examining proposed programs for a school system. Some might argue that the money spent for education is not an expense of government but rather an investment in the future of our community and our society; that our children represent a national resource which must be developed to its fullest possible extent; that we can afford nothing less than the best educational systems. Philosophically, these arguments are correct--but practical realities still dictate that choices on how to allocate fiscal resources must be made because these resources are limited. The Charles County Board of Education, in its recent Position Statement on Legislation concerning gifted education, has stated that it is now unable to provide the financial support necessary to institute a gifted education program and must rely instead on funding from the State government. This position is no doubt based on the apparently logical assumption that such a new program would necessarily require significant additional expenditures. Perhaps individualized instruction and acceleration are approaches which would require relatively high total expenditures

because of the dispersed nature of these approaches, as discussed previously. Acceleration would seem to require little if any additional expenditures. The approaches which might intuitively seem to be prohibitively expensive are the use of separate classes or a separate school--particularly the latter, which connotes the building of a new facility and the hiring of additional teaching staff. But this assumption can be disputed by recognizing a simple fact: gifted children are now a part of the school population. Identifying our gifted children as such does not create additional students and therefore does not create a need for more teachers, different materials, or new facilities, since these children are already in the school system--being taught by currently employed teachers, using available materials, and occupying existing facilities. But they are dispersed throughout the system, in regular classrooms, and are not receiving the benefits of an education directed toward their level of capability. Bringing them together into separate classrooms or in a separate school would not require either the hiring of additional teachers or the construction of a new school building; rather, it would require the rearranging of students and teachers and teachers at facilities within the system--and this could be done without incurring major additional costs. This is not to say that the optimum quantity or quality of the resources required now necessarily exists within the system. For example, there may or may not be any teachers in the system who have been formally trained in gifted education. However, there are teachers who have shown a professional interest in this field; others could no doubt be found. The move toward a differentiated gifted program, using a dedicated facility, could be begun now; as the program became established, these teachers could direct their own professional development effort toward training in gifted education and the school system's recruiting program could seek to assure that an appropriate proportion of newly-hired teachers were qualified in gifted education.

The points made in the preceding paragraphs are shown in abbreviated form in the attached chart, which compares each of the five approaches to gifted education against each of the four evaluation factors discussed. The possible interrelationships between the various evaluation factors have not been discussed (for example, non-uniform administration of a gifted program could have a derogatory effect on political acceptability; excessive cost could limit academic effectiveness; etc.); nevertheless, the major aspects to be considered in evaluating possible gifted education programs have been covered. From this discussion, it is concluded that the establishment of a separate school for the gifted children of Charles County would be the best alternative both educationally and economically.

This paper has attempted to restrict its discussion of gifted education programs to matters of general policy, without becoming involved in the details of specific procedures or practices. There is one such specific aspect of gifted education, however, which is deserving of attention here; this is the question of how students should be selected for inclusion in a gifted program. It is suggested that, for a number of reasons, the procedures used for identifying gifted children should be objective rather than subjective. That is, to the maximum extent possible, selection should be based on the results of uniformly administered testing programs rather than the judgments of teachers or other educators. Numerous standardized tests are already being given to the students in the system, so one advantage would be that already available data can be utilized as a part of the selection process.

The use of tests also removes--to some extent--the human element from the process; leading experts in gifted education believe that teachers are likely to be unable to identify a gifted child in their classroom (one reason for this--the subdued behavior of some gifted children--was cited earlier in this paper). Some might object to reliance on testing since such tests do not lend themselves to the identification of artistically or musically gifted children. This is probably true, but since a gifted education program in Charles County would be a totally new venture, perhaps it would be advisable to limit its application to the intellectually gifted initially and expand the program into other areas of giftedness later as the program beca e established and the people involved gained experience. Finally, an advantage of using testing is that it provides a reasonably uniform and demonstrable basis for selection, which is necessary to assure that entry into the program is administered equitably and without discrimination.

The major conclusions of this paper are that dedicated, differentiated academic programs for gifted children are necessary in Charles County to meet the needs of these children; that such programs can best be implemented by grouping the children by ability (ideally, for the gifted, in a separate school); that such grouping educationally benefits all of the children in the system; and that this approach is both economically feasible and administratively practicable. One uncertainty lies in the area of political acceptability, considering the attitudes of some members of the general public and of some of the professionals in the Charles County system. Hopefully, the discussion presented in this paper will serve to change some of these attitudes.

In summary, it is recommended that:

-the program for gifted children embodied in System Objective Number 11 of the Board of Education Master Plan be implemented on a system-wide basis;

-the gifted program have as one of its basic foundations the concept and practice of ability grouping to the maximum extent possible;

-the use of already available facilities, materials, and personnel for the gifted program be thoroughly examined as a primary means for implementing the program without additional major fiscal impact on the system;

-the emphasis in identification of gifted children be on the use of objective rather than subjective techniques.

APPROACHES → / VALUATION FACTORS ↓	INDIVIDUALIZED INSTRUCTION	ENRICHMENT	ACCELERATION	SEPARATE CLASSES	SEPARATE SCHOOLS
ACADEMIC EFFECTIVENESS	Theoretically, very effective but practically limited, because of demands on teacher's time		Satisfactory for some gifted students, but not all; Benefit may be negated if student advanced more than one grade	Very effective for single school if full time (all day); Only partially effective on part time basis	Most effective for entire system; Benefits all students; Allows subject aptitude grouping as well as general intellect grouping
ADMINISTRATIVE PRACTICABILITY	Difficult to administer system-wide; Possible for individual teachers, principals to "implement" in name only (lip service)		Uniform system-wide policy required, but uniform application may be difficult to assure	Some schools may have insufficient numbers of gifted to justify classes; Implementation on part time basis likely to cause class scheduling problems	Justified on basis of total number of gifted in system; Academic departmentalization possible; More efficient program administration, evaluation
POLITICAL ACCEPTABILITY	No impact (approach is largely "invisible")	little or no impact, depending on uniformity of implementation	Mixed	Negative public reaction if classes smaller than regular classes	Potential adverse public reaction
ECONOMIC FEASIBILITY	Cost of special materials high (must be available throughout the system); Similarly for cost of preparing teachers		Little fiscal impact; No additional materials required	Teachers who are interested/qualified in gifted education may not be available at each school	Economies of scale; Use of already available resources possible; Permits hiring of teachers trained in gifted education

NOTES

1) This paper was written while the author was a member of the Advisory Representative Citizens Council's Ad Hoc Committee on Curriculum. It presents his individual views, and not necessarily those of the Committee as a whole.

2) A variety of sources was utilized in preparing the paper, including conversations with private individuals and with professional members of the educational community, discussions at meetings of the ARCC Curriculum Committee, the author's personal experiences both as a student and as a parent, and the writings of a number of scholars and observers in the field of education. Specific citations of the latter are not included in the paper; the decision to omit those was made primarily on the basis of editorial convenience, and in recognition of the basic intent of the paper: to convey the views of a single, reasonably well-informed, private citizen on one aspect of public education in an objective and rational manner. It is not intended to be a scholarly treatise, and indeed no useful purpose would be served by attempting to make it so.

On the contrary, an effort to "prove" any point made in the paper by citing the appropriate supporting literature would probably only encourage some readers to "disprove" the point by reference to the works of other writers who hold differing views. Regardless of the nature of the particular point under contention, such conflicting evidence would not be difficult to locate. If the author has learned anything as a result of his efforts in this area to date, it is that the opinions of experts in the field of education differ, that the results of research which has been conducted are either inconclusive or subject to different interpretations which lead to conflicting conclusions, and that, in short, there does not now exist (and possibly never will exist) a unified body of knowledge about education against which all educational questions can be rigorously examined and positively answered. This simply means that, in the final analysis, decisions concerning the central purpose or direction of a given public school system are essentially judgments--judgments which cannot be made solely on the basis of scientific evidence, but should take into account a variety of attitudes, opinions, experiences, viewpoints, and perceptions as well. It was in the spirit of attempting to provide advice and suggestions, rather than documented "facts" that this paper was written.

However, for those readers who have missed the point of the preceding paragraph; or are uncomfortable reading a document which is not replete with superscripts, footnotes, et seq's, et al's*; or feel that an absence of citations is an indication that this paper must be lacking in scholastic or intellectual integrity, a listing of the various items consulted in the preparation of this paper has been attached.

3) Finally, a note of appreciation is in order: the opportunity to participate in, and perhaps contribute to, the workings of the local school system has been valuable and informative. The Charles County school administration--both the Board of Education and its professional staff--has demonstrated an apparently sincere desire to actively seek the advice of the public which it serves. For this interest, which is not universally shared among public school systems, it is to be commended.

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*et cetera

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