

ED296810 1988-03-00 Identifying Gifted and Talented American Indian Students: An Overview. ERIC Digest.

ERIC Development Team

www.eric.ed.gov

Table of Contents

If you're viewing this document online, you can click any of the topics below to link directly to that section.

[Identifying Gifted and Talented American Indian Students: An Overview. ERIC Digest.....](#) 1



ERIC Identifier: ED296810

Publication Date: 1988-03-00

Author: Florey, Janice - Tafoya, Nancy

Source: ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools Las Cruces NM.

Identifying Gifted and Talented American Indian Students: An Overview. ERIC Digest.

THIS DIGEST WAS CREATED BY ERIC, THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER. FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT ERIC, CONTACT ACCESS ERIC 1-800-LET-ERIC

TEXT: Gifted and talented youngsters exist within any racial group or cultural setting. In this country, however, the processes and instruments for identifying gifted American Indians are little suited to the task. Giftedness is often defined by tests which reflect Euro-American middle-class standards, with virtually no attention to expectations and values of American Indian culture. But identification of gifted and talented Indians can be achieved if educators define a broader perspective than that currently used.

WHO ARE THE GIFTED AND TALENTED?

Unfortunately there is no set of widely used, standard definitional criteria by which gifted and talented students can be identified; however, many states continue to use the federal definition established by the now repealed Gifted and Talented Children's Act of 1978. The act, known as Public Law 95-561, contains four components critical to defining and serving these students. First, the act addresses the multidimensional areas of giftedness, which include general intellectual abilities, specific academic aptitudes, visual and performing arts talents, leadership, and creative and productive thinking. Second, the act calls for an increased age range of children served. Third, children who have the potential for giftedness must also be considered. Finally, those identified as gifted or potentially gifted need to receive differentiated educational services.

Although not all states use the federal definition set forth by P.L. 95-561, a study conducted by the Council for Exceptional Children for the U.S. Office of Education reported that 39 states have legislation which mentions or defines gifted and talented children (Zettel, 1980). These states generally define giftedness in terms of intellectual ability, but 75% also consider creativity, 67% include leadership, and 67% artistic talent.

HOW ARE THE GIFTED IDENTIFIED?

Procedures for admitting children to gifted programs generally follow four basic steps: (1) referral, (2) assessment, (3) selection, and (4) placement. Referrals are based on teacher judgment, parent nominations, grades, group test scores, or any combination of these. Assessment involves determining the referred child's level of abilities on a battery of tests, which generally include measures of intelligence, achievement, or problem solving. Selection occurs only after the child has been assessed as potentially gifted and his or her ability levels are determined. The decision on placement is based on this information, the needs of the child, and program options available.

WHY ARE AMERICAN INDIAN CHILDREN DISPROPORTIONATELY IDENTIFIED AS GIFTED AND TALENTED?

Although gifted and talented students are found in all racial, cultural, social, and economic segments of society, there are "factors that tend to veil the talent potential of gifted groups, hindering true readings and proper identification" (Khatena, 1982, p. 238). American Indian students are underrepresented in gifted classrooms. In fact, one 1982 study by the U.S. Department of Education revealed that American Indians comprise .8% of public school students, but only .3% of those in gifted programs, whereas the respective white figures are 73.3% and 82%.

Mitchell (1984) has reported that most states select gifted and talented students through multiple criteria. However, many school districts still use intelligence tests as the primary identifier, with cutoffs ranging from 1.5 to 2.0 standard deviations above the mean. The measurement instruments draw heavily on one racial or economic group for which they have been normed and standardized.

The use of standardized instruments to identify culturally diverse children is inappropriate. Such measures have a frame of reference that is uniquely white middle class in terms of test items and group norms. In general, culturally diverse groups do not perform well on such instruments. In the widely used Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children, Revised Edition (WISC-R), the verbal section is biased against American Indian language systems, which rely on nonverbal communication, undetailed verbal accounts, noncompetitiveness, soft speech patterns, and mythology, rather than science (Florey, 1986; Connelly, 1985). Because of these language characteristics, American Indians appear to be weak in understanding oral language, and as a result, their actual language ability is underestimated.

Efforts to correct for assessment biases in verbal language tests have been made by the use of measures that are more performance-oriented than the WISC-R. In 1984, the Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children (K-ABC) began to be used as an assessment device that was more culturally fair than the WISC-R or Stanford Binet, because it relied heavily on nonverbal skills and keys on information processing rather than pure information (Kaufman and Kaufman, 1983). The performance section of the K-ABC contains subtests involving block design, object assembly, and coding. These are more fair than other tests for American Indians, who work well with symbolic and visual images. Nevertheless, timed tasks that require rapid, organized thought are incongruent with the Indian concept of a continuous present.

American Indian values which encourage interdependence, collective decision making, and group cohesiveness are not reflected in current assessment instruments. Intelligence and achievement measures analyze individual performance without reference to the group process. Moreover, the form of test administration--in which students cannot communicate--and the emphasis placed on performance scores encourage competition between individuals.

Many factors contribute to the inappropriateness of assessment practices for American Indians. Bruch and Curry (1978, cited in Masten, 1981) list the following: --neglect of subcultural values, abilities, and knowledge in assessment instruments and procedures; --use of exclusive training in application of middle class measurement instruments; --belief that object measurement is the only way to conduct assessment; --inadequate attention to problems of motivation and negative reactions to the examiner; --failure to include sufficient numbers of minority students in

several vital considerations for identifying American Indian students as gifted. Bruch (1970, cited in Faas, 1982) contends that educators must consider whether the child: --exhibits outstanding powers in one or more abilities valued by the child's culture; --measures at a bright average level in national norms in ability and achievement; --demonstrates creativity; and --shows leadership potential.

Educators must also: --assess verbal and nonverbal responses; --provide adequate

time for students to answer; --develop questioning procedures to elicit multiple responses on items giving credit for such responses; --assess a wide range of abilities; and --use a matrix rather than one factor for making decisions.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY IN THE IDENTIFICATION OF AMERICAN INDIAN GIFTED STUDENTS?

Florey, Janice E., and others. IDENTIFICATION OF GIFTED CHILDREN AMONG THE AMERICAN INDIAN POPULATION: AN INSERVICE MODEL. Minden, NV: Douglas County School District, 1986. ED 273 399.

Frasier, M. ASSESSMENT PROFILE SHEET UNPUBLISHED FORM (RESEARCH EDITION). Athens: University of Georgia, 1984.

Julien, Paul D. and Bruce A. Ostertag. BEHAVIORAL CHARACTERISTICS OF GIFTED NAVAJO STUDENTS AS CORRELATED WITH INTELLECTUAL ABILITY AND CREATIVITY. Flagstaff and Sacramento: Northern Arizona University and California State University, 1982. ED 214 713.

Kaufman, A. S. and N. L. Kaufman. KAUFMAN ASSESSMENT BATTERY FOR CHILDREN (K-ABC): ADMINISTRATION AND SCORING MANUAL. Circle Pines, MN: American Guidance Services, 1983.

Khatena, Joseph. EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY OF THE GIFTED. New York: Wiley, 1982.

Kitano, Margie K. and Darrell F. Kirby. GIFTED EDUCATION: A COMPREHENSIVE VIEW. Boston: Little, Brown, 1986.

Masten, William G. APPROACHES TO IDENTIFICATION OF GIFTED MINORITY STUDENTS. Mississippi State University, 1981. ED 234 578.

Mitchell, B. "An Update on Gifted and Talented Education in the U.S." ROPER REVIEW 6 (1984): 161-163.

Perrone, P. A. and N. Aleman. "Educating the Talented Child in a Pluralistic Society." In D. R. Omark and J. G. Erikson (Eds.), THE BILINGUAL EXCEPTIONAL CHILD. San Diego: College-Hill Press, 1983.

U.S. Department of Education. INCREASING MINORITY PARTICIPATION IN GIFTED PROGRAMS. Washington: Mid-Atlantic Center for Race Equity, 1983.

Zettel, Jeffrey. GIFTED AND TALENTED EDUCATION FROM A NATIONWIDE PERSPECTIVE. Reston, VA: Council for Exceptional Children, 1980.

This publication was prepared with funding from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, under OERI contract. The opinions expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of OERI or the Department of Education.

Title: Identifying Gifted and Talented American Indian Students: An Overview. ERIC Digest.

Note: Because this Digest was published in colored ink, on colored paper, and in reduced type size (for compression), a full-size typescript version has also been included here.

Document Type: Guides---Non-Classroom Use (055); Information Analyses---ERIC Information Analysis Products (IAPs) (071); Information Analyses---ERIC Digests (Selected) in Full Text (073);

Target Audience: Practitioners

Descriptors: Ability, Academically Gifted, Access to Education, American Indian Education, American Indians, Comparative Analysis, Cultural Differences, Culture Fair Tests, Elementary Secondary Education, Eligibility, Gifted, Standardized Tests, Talent Identification, Teacher Role, Teacher Student Relationship, Test Bias, Whites

Identifiers: ERIC Digests

###



[\[Return to ERIC Digest Search Page\]](#)