DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 355 675 EC 301 903

AUTHOR Gallagher, James; And Others
TITLE Cooperative Learning as Perceived by Educators of Gifted Students and Proponents of Cooperative Education.
INSTITUTION North Carolina Univ., Chapel Hill. Gifted Education Policy Studies Program.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE Jan 93
CONTRACT R206A00596
NOTE 36p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Cooperative Learning; Curriculum; Elementary Secondary Education; *Gifted; *Heterogeneous Grouping; Interpersonal Competence; Leadership; *Teacher Attitudes; Teaching Methods

ABSTRACT

In an attempt to understand the perceptions of educators toward the use of cooperative learning (CL) with gifted students, a survey was designed to look at the attitudes of educators from both gifted and CL associations. One hundred respondents were randomly selected from the mailing lists of four such associations; the return rate was 75%. The survey focused on: teacher preparation; forms of CL that work best with gifted students; combining CL with gifted education; meeting social and emotional needs of gifted students through CL; evaluation of CL with gifted students; and the use of ability grouping during CL activities. The study found considerable differences in the two groups' perceptions. The gifted and talented (GT) educators felt strongly that the curriculum used in CL is not challenging enough for gifted students, while this idea was rejected by the CL group. The GT group also felt that there has been little evaluation of what CL techniques work best with gifted students, while the CL group disagreed. The CL group felt that gifted students develop critical social and leadership skills through cooperative learning, while GT respondents did not. GT respondents believed that gifted students resent being the "junior teacher" in heterogeneous cooperative groups, while CL respondents disagreed. A copy of the survey is included in an appendix. (Contains 24 references.) (JDD)

COOPERATIVE LEARNING AS PERCEIVED BY EDUCATORS OF GIFTED STUDENTS AND PROPONENTS OF COOPERATIVE EDUCATION

James Gallagher
Mary Ruth Coleman
Susanne Nelson

Gifted Education Policy Studies Program
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Suite 300, NationsBank Plaza
137 E. Franklin Street
Chapel Hill, NC 27514
(919) 962-7373

COOPERATIVE LEARNING AS PERCEIVED BY EDUCATORS OF GIFTED STUDENTS AND PROPONENTS OF COOPERATIVE EDUCATION

James Gallagher
Mary Ruth Coleman
Susanne Nelson

January, 1993

This research was conducted by the Gifted Education Policy Studies Program at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The views expressed in this report are those of the author(s) and are not necessarily shared by the U.S. Department of Education nor the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, which provided funding under grant number R206A00596.

Abstract

This study on the perceptions of the use of cooperative learning with gifted students was completed as part of the work of the Gifted Education Policy Studies project. In an attempt to understand the perceptions of educators toward the use of CL with gifted students, we designed a survey to look at the attitudes of educators from both gifted and cooperative learning associations. The survey was developed with assistance from experts in both CL and gifted education. Initially, six areas of concern were identified: (a) teacher preparation; (b) which forms of CL work best with gifted students; (c) combining CL with gifted education; (d) meeting social and emotional needs of gifted students through CL; (e) evaluation of CL with gifted students; and (f) the use of ability grouping during CL activities.

The survey included 24 Likert items asking respondents to agree or disagree with statements like: "Cooperative learning is a strategy which enables teachers to educate all students effectively within a heterogeneous classroom." The items were written so as to evoke a strong response. A second section of the survey asked respondents to rank, in priority order, their top three concerns based on the six themes which guided the survey development. The third section of the survey offered respondents a chance to provide written commentary if they so desired.

One hundred respondents were randomly selected from the mailing lists of four organizations: The International Association for the Study of Cooperation in Education (IASCE); the Cooperative Learning Network of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD); The Association for the Gifted (TAG); and the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC). The return rate was 75%. The initial data analysis was completed using a MANOVA. Because of the large number of respondents, however, we elected to move to the use of effect size to better capture the degree of difference between the CL and GT educators.

Considerable differences seem to exist in the two groups perception of the use of CL with gifted children. These differences seem to hinge on whether the curriculum can be challenging enough, the existence of evaluation of CL with gifted students, the role of gifted students as the junior teacher, and the potential self-esteem gains for gifted students. The groups were in consensus that more and better teacher preparation is needed in the uses of CL with gifted students, and also agreed that some administrators might view CL as a strategy to do away with additional services for gifted students. Recommendations for continued and increased collaboration and sharing of information between CL and GT educators were made.

The emergence of cooperative learning (CL) as one of the mainstays of the reform and restructuring movement in American education has been a clear indication that many educators wish to see change in both the instructional strategies or teaching methods, and in the way we structure our schools, as exemplified by the middle school and site-based management movements.

The CL movement has had several acknowledged leaders, including Robert Slavin (1988), David Johnson and Roger Johnson (1989, 1990) and Spencer Kagan (1990a), each of whom has a somewhat different approach to defining and using cooperative learning. Despite these variations, the basic concept of CL is to establish small groups of students (two to six) who address a common task, with an emphasis not only on lesson context but also on learning the social skills needed for group interaction. CL stresses social skills such as training the students how to work cooperatively together, to praise one another, and to check each other's work. In most cases, these small groups are formed heterogeneously by ability, gender, race, etc.

There are many variations on cooperative learning activities. Jones (1991) described three identifiable models, as follows:

STUDENT TEAMS ACHIEVEMENT DIVISION (STAD) -- The teacher makes a traditional presentation. After students study together in cooperative teams, they take individual tests. Points are given for improved achievement with the top team being recognized.

JIGSAW -- Each student on a team is assigned a different topic on which to become an "expert." The student experts from each team meet to explore their common topic. These experts then return to their respective teams and teach that topic to their teammates. Individual tests and group recognition are given.

TEAMS/GAMES/TOURNAMENT -- Traditional classroom instruction is presented to all students, followed by team study in which each team focuses

on helping its members master the material. Students then compete against students from other teams. Points are given to teams for the number of correct answers given by the team members, and team points are averaged with the top team receiving recognition.

Kagan (1990b) has presented a wide variety of possible structures that can be used within the classroom to carry out cooperative learning. These structures include both cooperative and competitive objectives. As with any instructional technique, the impact of cooperative learning depends, to some degree, upon the particular approach used and the efficiency with which it is applied (Kohn, 1991).

Cooperative Learning and Gifted Students

The issue of how cooperative learning affects gifted students has received considerable attention. Articles have even been written suggesting how teachers should respond to parents and others who raise questions on the effect of cooperative learning on gifted students (Johnson & Johnson, 1989). Advocates such as Joyce (1991), Johnson and Johnson (1991), and Slavin (1991b) have written specifically on the virtues of CL for gifted students, pointing out how it could be used to meet objectives such as higher-level thinking skills and mastery and retention of material, while providing opportunities for developing the social skills such students need.

Although there is an impressive literature base covering the utility of CL for improving the achievement level of low- and middle-level achievers and for increasing the positive feelings of students toward one another (Johnson & Johnson, 1990; Slavin, 1984; Kagan, 1990b), debate continues over the usefulness of this technique with gifted students -- particularly in the heterogeneous grouping model (Allan, 1991; Robinson, 1990; Feldhusen, 1991; Slavin, 1991a, 1991c). The various complaints raised by educators of gifted students revolve around: (a) concern about lack of challenge for the gifted student in the heterogeneous group, (b) the tendency to make

gifted students "assistant teachers," (c) the likelihood that the gifted students will end up doing the majority of the work for the group, and (d) that the pace of learning will inevitably be too slow for the gifted students.

Another factor which may cause tension between the two professional groups (teachers of gifted students and proponents of CL) has been a tendency for some school districts to accept the following argument: Cooperative learning can be used so effectively to the benefit of all students within the framework of the regular class that no additional special services should be needed for gifted students. This argument has been used to disband some programs for gifted students (Allan, 1991).

Ability Grouping and Cooperative Learning

Ability grouping itself is an issue because the stress in CL has been placed on heterogeneous grouping in the small groups. There have been numerous attempts to pull together the vast and often aging literature on whether grouping students by ability is beneficial or harmful. Slavin (1988, 1990b) has done one of the most recent of these analyses and maintains that there is little evidence to support the procedure of ability grouping. In this review he does not include studies that had gifted students as a particular area of interest.

Kulik and Kulik (1987) reported a metaanlaysis (a statistical synthesis of a literature review) which indicated that, for gifted students, grouping has a strong positive effect when combined with a modified curriculum and program and has a minor effect when no major changes are made at the program level.

Concerns have been expressed about the use of the literature of ability grouping as it affects gifted students because of numerous technical flaws in the data base of available studies (see Callahan & Caldwell, 1986; Gallagher & Gallagher, 1993). These concerns focus mainly on (a) the ceiling effects on the instruments used, (b) the inability of these studies to use instruments that measure high level thinking

processes, and (c) the inability to measure additional content that was learned in gifted programs. It does seem that gifted students profit from ability grouping, whereas low performers do not (Kulik, 1991). This finding provides an interesting problem for educational administrators. There is substantial cause, therefore, to pursue the issue of grouping to see if some resolution or greater agreement can be reached between these two camps which, at present, have reached contradictory conclusions.

The current authors embarked on the present study to determine if CL programs could also benefit gifted students and to explore the attitudes of professionals from each group (teachers and administrators committed to cooperative learning and teachers and administrators working with gifted students) to see whether their perceptions of cooperative learning and its impact on gifted students differed. A follow-up study involved the observation of five school programs that have been committed to the goals of both CL and gifted education. The results of that study will be reported in a future publication.

Method

The first task in the study was to design a survey instrument that could tap the attitudes of random samples of teachers and administrators. In order to ensure adequate coverage of the issue, a questionnaire was sent to 20 acknowledged experts in cooperative learning or in gifted education asking them to comment upon what they believed were the key issues related to CL and gifted students.

Six major themes were identified throughout this process: (a) teacher preparation; (b) which forms of CL work best with gifted students; (c) combining CL with gifted education; (d) meeting social and emotional needs of gifted students through CL; (e) evaluation of CL with gifted students; and (f) the use of ability grouping during CL activities. These themes, together with a literature review, formed the basis for the development of a draft survey of 27 items; the revised survey was then returned

to the 20 experts for further comment. The survey was revised again as a result of additional comments, and was then used as the final instrument (See Appendix A for a copy of the survey).

In addition to this Likert-type scale, there were two other parts to the overall survey. In the second section of the survey, we asked the respondents to rate six major themes by ranking their top three concerns. The third section of the survey allowed the respondents to provide us with additional comments on these issues. Fifty-two percent of the respondents took advantage of that offer and provided written comments. A separate report will be made on the qualitative statements (see Nelson, Gallagher, & Coleman, in press).

We then obtained mailing lists from four organizations: the International Association for the Study of Cooperation in Education (IASCE); the Cooperative Learning Network of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD); The Association for the Gifted (TAG); and the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC). We chose 100 names randomly from each list and sent them the survey with a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Four weeks after the original mailing, we sent a second mailing to all of the non-respondents.

The response to the survey was quite remarkable. We received 157 of 200 responses (78%) from the Cooperative Learning Groups and 144 of 200 (72%) from the Gifted Education groups, for a total of 75% response. This gave us confidence that the results represented the sample we originally selected. To compile the survey data, we developed a coding system assigning an identification number to each respondent. This included information on the occupations of the respondents, the mailing list from which they had been selected, and the geographic region from which they came. The Likert items were coded also for missing data or "no opinion" ratings. The second section of the survey, the responses to the priority ratings, were also assembled and totalled.

Data Analysis

The six item clusters were checked for internal consistency using Cronbach's alpha test to ensure that the items within each cluster were measuring the same topic area. As a result of this analysis, some adjustments were made in the grouping of items and a final list of six topics were identified. These six topics formed the basis for the final analysis.

Table 1 indicates the Cronbach alpha's for the item clusters generated by the survey. These values were judged to be sufficient to be treated as a cluster in the results, with the exception of the ability grouping cluster. We have reported the ability grouping cluster in the survey results as individual items.

A Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was calculated to compare the cooperative learning and gifted education groups on the responses to the item clusters and to check for any interaction effects of occupation (teachers, administrators, others) and region (four major regions of the country -- Northeast, South, North Central, and West).

With such a large sample, statistically significant difference between groups becomes relatively easy to obtain. Such differences, however, may not reflect the intensity of actual differences. Accordingly, we decided to use effect sizes (the mean difference divided by the combined standard deviation) to more accurately describe the differences between groups (Cohen, 1988). Generally, an effect size of .8 (representing a mean group difference of .8 standard deviations) is considered to be quite large; .5 is considered a moderate difference; .2 is considered a small influence.

Table 1

COOPERATIVE LEARNING SURVEY CLUSTER ITEMS WITH CRONBACH'S ALPHA

Clusters	Summary Statements	Alphas
Teacher Preparation	Teachers need more preparation in the appropriate uses of CL with gifted students	.51
Gifted Students as Teacher	Gifted students often resent being the "junior teacher"	.68
Curriculum	The curriculum used in CL is often NOT challenging enough for gifted students	.82
Social Skills Development	Gifted students develop critical social and leadership skills in CL	.80
Emotional	Gifted students develop higher self-esteem by being team leaders in CL	.68
Evaluation	Little evaluation of CL has been done on what works for gifted students	.58
Ability Grouping *	CL may be a solution to the issue of ability grouping	.12

* This cluster was presented as individual items due to this low alpha

Results

Figure 1 indicates the comparative findings of the two groups of subjects by cluster and item reaction. The most striking difference between the groups on item clusters was found in response to curriculum items as reflected by the concept that the curriculum used in CL is not challenging enough for gifted students. The impressive effect size of 1.68 is an indicator of a major gap between the two groups. The gifted and taiented (GT) respondents agreed strongly with this sentiment, but the idea is thoroughly rejected by the CL group. This would be a central issue to be dealt with in looking at the appropriate uses of cooperative learning with gifted students.

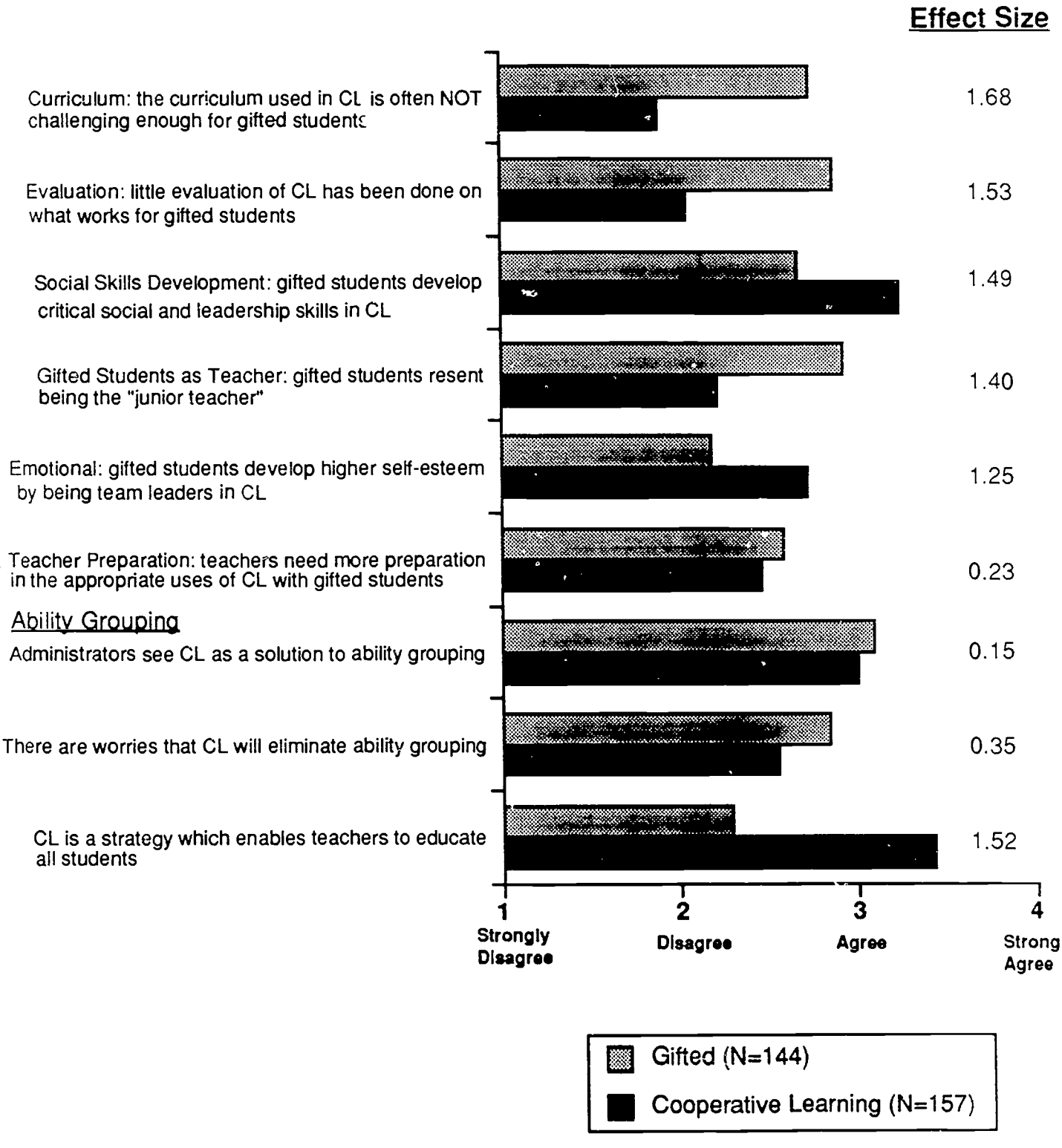
The second largest effect size, 1.53, was obtained on items dealing with Evaluation. The basic sentiment being responded to was that "there has been little evaluation of what CL techniques work best with gifted students." Again, the GT group agreed with this idea, apparently feeling that the cooperative learning research has not focused on issues related to gifted students. In contrast, the CL respondents believed strongly that such attention has been paid. Because both groups predominantly represented practitioners who could not be expected to be keeping close watch on the literature of this topic, it is likely that these responses reflect more an emotional tone than a response based on current information. This indicates a strong difference in general attitude between the two groups.

The topic of social skills development yielded similar differences between the two groups, with an effect size of 1.49. The CL group agreed with the sentiment that gifted students develop critical social and leadership skills through cooperative learning whereas the GT respondents expressed disagreement or mixed feelings. As noted above, this may be another instance of a general positive or negative attitude being reflected, rather than specific knowledge.

The next highest effect size, 1.40, was found in the item cluster represented by the theme that gifted students resent being the "junior teacher" in these heterogeneous

Figure 1

Response to Item Clusters from Cooperative Learning and Gifted Educators



cooperative groups. Once again, the GT respondents agreed with that statement. The GT respondents seem concerned that gifted students are being placed in a role for which the students have not been prepared and that they do not relish. This idea is rejected by the CL answerers who are, as a group, in disagreement with this sentiment.

We found similar results in item clusters exploring the attitudes of the two groups on the socio-emotional side of the issue. To the suggestion that gifted students develop critical social and leadership skills through cooperative learning experiences and that they gain higher self-esteem by being team leaders, the CL group responded in agreement, whereas the GT group disagreed. The effect size for this comparison was 1.25.

As noted earlier, the ability grouping cluster did not receive sufficient Cronbach alpha scores to justify its being treated as a cluster. Therefore, those responses are presented here as individual items. There were no essential differences between the groups on items suggesting that educational administrators might seize upon the CL strategies as an excuse to eliminate ability grouping, and possibly gifted programming. Both the CL and GT groups agreed that this was a possibility. The effect sizes were .15 and .35 for the two items that dealt with this possibility.

The one item related to ability grouping that does show a striking difference describes CL as a strategy that enables teachers to educate all students in a heterogeneous structure. The CL group enthusiastically agrees with that sentiment, whereas the GT respondents disagreed. The effect size of 1.52 indicates a strong difference between the groups.

The item cluster that yielded little or no difference was the one focusing upon teacher preparation. There was general agreement that teachers need more preparation in the appropriate uses of cooperative learning with gifted students. This concern about appropriate teacher preparation in the use of these complex strategies

was also reflected in the spontaneous comments provided by the respondents. Table 2 shows a representative sample of spontaneous comments and reflects the serious attitudes of the respondents with regard to this issue.

As many of the individual comments made clear, some of the GT population had favorable things to say about CL when used in clusters of gifted students, but not under the heterogeneous model being supported by many CL leaders. These statements further indicate the different orientation of the two groups, but also shows some shading of the "hard line" taken by some advocates of both positions. The CL respondents do see the special needs of gifted students in a number of their responses, and the GT respondents reflect some of their positive attitude to the approach itself under certain circumstances, in particular its use with all gifted groups.

The overall survey results are suggestive of an overriding attitude about CL held by the two groups. Responses from the CL group reflect general agreement by that group with the positive virtues of cooperative learning, whether the items referred to the development of good social skills or to the cooperative learning curriculum being worthwhile for gifted students.

In contrast, the GT group, when given the opportunity to present negative feelings or concerns about the limitations of cooperative learning for gifted students, strongly expressed reservations. Whether it was perceiving the gifted students as being turned into junior teachers or facing a non-challenging curriculum, these educators saw substantial problems with cooperative learning.

Figure 2 reveals the priority statements of the two groups as reflected in their identifications of the most important and second most important issues. Some striking group differences can be noted. For the CL educators, the prime issue was teacher preparation, with over 50% of the sample choosing this issue as the most important. This fits in well with the comments of the teachers that effective preparation in the

Table 2

Sample Quotes from Cooperative Learning / Middle School Survey

CL Educators		Educators of Gifted
I have a problem with it .. . . I don't want to overburden the gifted student with the responsibility of teaching, yet I know there is much to be gained by such CL activities. How to find the appropriate balance? CL is best used when the goal of instruction is the development of conceptual understanding and critical thinking--and all students need that and can achieve that.	**CL in mixed ability groups**	CL must be used with care for the gifted, or we are putting an artificial ceiling on their learning. In heterogeneous classes, the gifted kids are not challenged intellectually by CL, but may be hard put socially to keep their "image" as just one of the guys intact when the others look to them to come up with the answers. A main concern of these students now is that the regular classroom holds them back. This [CL] indicates a further impediment.
While many teachers have received training in CL, they do not receive the coaching and assistance for successful implementation. . . . Principals need to monitor CL's use with the gifted. They, too, should be trained. I personally would like to see more evidence from research of what strategies I should be encouraging all teachers to use to meet both the top and the bottom students. CL is a deceptively simple strategy that requires more training and forethought than many teachers mis-using CL have.	**Need for more staff development**	. . . teachers are not skilled in CL much less dealing with gifted learners. Preparing all teachers in the use of a variety of techniques for students of differing ability levels. . . . preservice level as well as inservice.

Table 2 (Cont.)

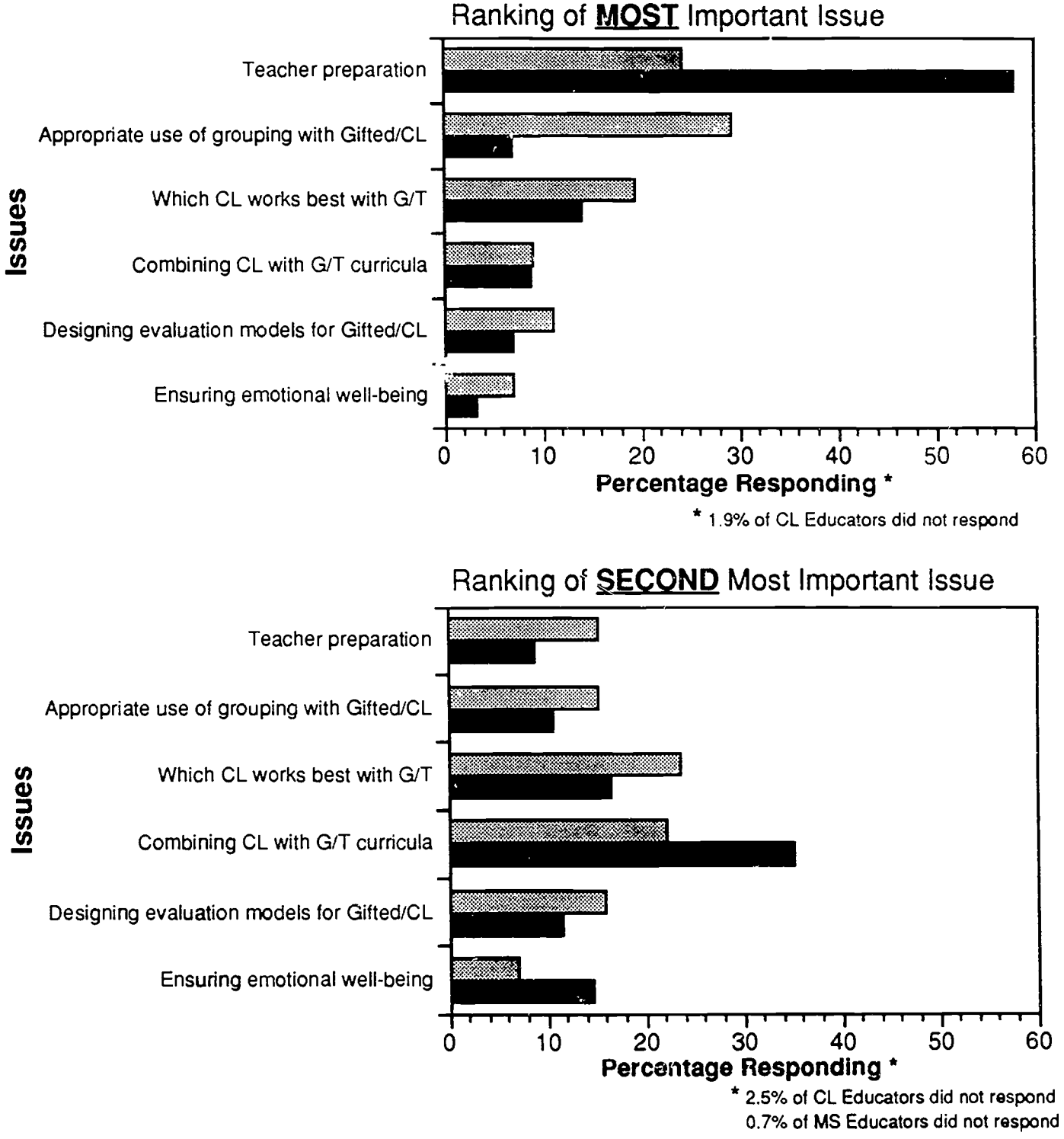
CL Educators		Educators of Gifted
CL is one of many tools which should be done correctly with all students. I'm concerned that some teachers use group work and call it CL without building in the appropriate skills. I don't feel that I can use one strategy to teach. My teaching changes as my students' needs change. . . . Some days are great, some aren't. We view CL as one instructional strategy available to teachers--not as a panacea for ability grouping, social skills development, etc.	**CL as a tool and not a model**	Why the emphasis on CL with gifted? It should be but one of many tools. . . . CL needs evaluation now that it has been in practice for a while--lack of individual initiative has developed. Will a group be with you throughout life to help you learn? I think CL is another viable setting for learning but, as with most issues in education, we grab the "ring" for the wrong reasons and "ride" the merry-go-round without boarding properly. Clarification is needed to distinguish CL as an instructional strategy rather than an administrative or program design for children.
I do not believe that CL can or should replace the grouping of gifted students--there is a place for both Our district has full time classes for the gifted. . . . CL has been highly successful in these situations. "X" High is presently experimenting with CL in honors and college level classes. . . . The teacher and I were amazed at the creativity and depth of the work produced by the students.	**Use of CL in same ability groups**	I feel grouping could work well if gifted students are frequently in the same group. Gifted children find working in a group of equal ability peers to be a positive experience when problem solving and participating in higher level thinking skills. Used within a gifted program, I believe CL is a wonderful process.

Table 2 (Cont.)

CL Educators		Educators of Gifted
Gifted students most definitely need CL, but teachers are ill-prepared to facilitate them to teach them the required social skills. Gifted students need socialization skills as they tend to be intolerant, competitive, creative, independent, and individualistic	**CL's value in self-esteem, social skills, and leadership**	If it is true that the gifted student is most likely to assume leadership activities in CL, then we should arm them with these skills first before engaging them in CL. They [teachers] should be made aware that some people do not necessarily achieve peak performance in a group. . . . before we presume that they make good group leaders, I think, it is time we help them learn to lead and manage themselves. CL techniques have been great for social skills and conflict management among gifted students.
If structured appropriately, CL would not set gifted students up to be "junior teachers" nor allow them to become responsible for the entire group. As long as some trainers reinforce to teachers to group H-M-L and use a group grade, we will continue to have problems. Parents, administrators, and teachers need to understand the appropriate and inappropriate uses of CL. As a trainer and support person for CL, I see some abuses with gifted students, but usually not intentionally.	**Inappropriate uses of CL**	The idea of CL and the reality are often very different. The appropriate utilization of CL is hampered due to the lack of sufficient CL training, just as gifted education is often not part of regular ed. training. . . . it is very wasteful to think that the best academic and intellectual ideas emerge from groups. They don't and learning has got to have the major emphasis on personal effort. Gifted students are often assigned responsibilities as TAs to regular classroom teachers. Such practices deny gifted students equitable opportunities for education and harm peer relationships. It appears that the major objective of group practices is to reduce differences rather than to adapt to differences.

Figure 2

Important Issues when using Cooperative Learning with Gifted Students



processes of cooperative learning were considered essential to its effective operation and that many of the teachers did not feel particularly well-trained at the present time.

In contrast, the GT educators split their concerns among several issues. The most important, named about 26% of the time, was the appropriate use of grouping with gifted students and cooperative learning. Also of concern were teacher preparation and which cooperative learning methods work best with gifted students.

The second most important issue, from the standpoint of the CL educators, was how to combine CL with the GT curriculum. Over 30% of the group listed that as the second most important issue. These responses once again seem to represent a concern as to how to blend these two strategies and programs together. None of the other issues received as much as 20% of the vote.

The second most important issue, from the standpoint of GT educators, was again divided among several issues. They agreed with the CL educators that combining CL with the GT curriculum was an important issue, and were also concerned with which cooperative learning strategies work best with gifted and talented students.

The heavy emphasis on teacher preparation by both groups is one indicator of some perceived unfinished business in terms of the need to provide additional assistance to teachers to help them cope with GT students within the CL framework.

Discussion

It is clear from these findings that this survey has revealed strongly opposing views from the two groups of educators -- those supporting cooperative learning and those supporting gifted education. Such findings would seem to reflect the debate noted earlier in the literature review. Those who identify themselves with CL see these methods as profiting gifted students and reject the objections of parents and educators of gifted students that the methods might trivialize the curriculum and cause the gifted

students even more difficulties in interacting with their peer group. As a matter of fact, these CL respondents believe that such methods bring substantial and necessary benefits to the socio-emotional development of gifted students.

Those who identify with gifted students and gifted education see a series of potential problems with CL and are not convinced that it will bring benefits for the students to whom they are committed. As noted earlier in this report, many supporters of cooperative learning spell out a variety of ways in which these methods can address the special needs of gifted students (see Joyce, 1991; Slavin, 1990a): by stressing the stimulation of thinking processes, by encouraging a thoughtful review of the group's work, and by giving differential tasks to the members of the group to fit various levels of sophistication. It seems clear that the educators of gifted students who responded to this survey are not convinced that such methods are actually being implemented at the local level.

A major complication to the resolution of these differences involves the potential use of CL in the policy domain. If it is true that CL can be applied in a heterogeneous setting to meet the essential needs of gifted students, then why do we need special programs for gifted students? It is not hard to imagine an educational administrator under diverse local pressures -- from one side about the possible nonrepresentative character of the students in the gifted program and on another side by assertive parents wishing the best education for their talented youngsters -- to see CL as a solution that would place all students in the same setting, thus silencing both sets of critics and, incidentally, saving some money in the bargain.

While some of the unrelieved positive feelings of the CL group could be attributed to the enthusiasm for this relatively new movement and its potential, the consistently negative attitudes of many of the GT group could be representing some real fears that their programs may be disbanded by administrators and educational policy makers using CL as a rationale.

How can we avoid a decade of nonproductive wrangling over this issue? Both groups have their feet set solidly in these positions, if we can believe the results of this survey. But there does seem to be some basis for discussion, if such discussion were held between the groups. No one seems to doubt that CL, as a general approach, is a positive set of instructional strategies. CL makes students more active learners, encourages interaction and cooperation between students, and appears to improve morale. What is in dispute is whether this strategy can be adapted to the cognitive development and interests of gifted students within the heterogeneous setting.

Educators of gifted students need to learn more about some of the specific adaptations of this method for above-average students and to see how they, as specialists in the field, can contribute to group planning, perhaps modelled after the middle school team planning groups, to make sure there is sufficient challenge for gifted students.

Educators employing CL need to understand the special needs of gifted students for intellectual challenge and to realize that, even as the strongest proponents of CL clearly state, CL is not designed to take over the entire educational agenda. CL educators can recognize that there is a bonafide place for special programming for gifted students. In this way, their enthusiasm will not be used by others to cut necessary programming for gifted students.

Conclusions

The purpose of this survey was to determine the attitudes currently held about the use of cooperative learning with gifted students. In doing this, we hoped to identify those areas which required more discussion between educators with expertise in CL and those knowledgeable in GT education. We also hoped to identify areas of agreement on the appropriate uses of CL with gifted students. The survey results

indicate that the groups' attitudes are more polarized than one might wish, but the issues do seem clear. This is a first step to effective collaboration.

The recognition that many of the attitudes expressed in the survey responses may reflect opinions based on emotions, rather than knowledge, must be taken seriously. There seems to be a need for communication and shared information. This would involved the experts in CL assisting GT educators with understanding the various options which CL offers to gifted students, and the educators of gifted students would share their knowledge of student needs and appropriate curriculum differentiation strategies to enhance the use of CL with gifted students.

This communication can be obtained by cross-invitations for presentations at professional conventions, with programs for gifted students inviting the proponents of CL to their state and national groups and for the CL organizations inviting representatives of the gifted field to their states. Some invitations for leaders in CL to publish articles in GT journals and newsletters, and vice versa, would also help to defuse the general emotional tone of the issue and at least focus on points of legitimate disagreement. With both groups agreeing that teacher preparation is an essential need, it would seem reasonable that this area would benefit from collaborative planning.

The areas which remain as concerns (i.e., the use of CL with heterogeneous grouping in the classroom to eliminate other services for gifted students, the role of gifted students as junior teachers, and the need to ensure that CL provides enough challenge for gifted students) might all be addressed through this collaboration in teacher preparation and planning.

The use of CL with gifted students clearly offers an opportunity to work together in order to ensure that student needs are appropriately met. Such interchanges can even lead to stronger programs on both sides of these issues. Adaptations to take into

account the issues raised here can only strengthen programs for gifted education while, at the same time, extending and broadening cooperative learning efforts.

Recommendations

The following recommendations seem warranted based on the survey results:

1. Collaborative planning of personnel preparation opportunities should be initiated where expertise in both CL and GT education can be shared. These opportunities should address the needs of both pre-service and inservice educators.

2. Continued research should be supported, and discussions should be held, on the most appropriate ways to address the needs of gifted students through CL, including both heterogeneous and homogeneous grouping formats.

3. Opportunities should be created for leaders in CL to share information with GT educators and for GT leaders to share with CL groups (this should include cross-fertilization through conferences and publications).

References

Allan, S. (1991). Ability-grouping research reviews: What do they say about grouping and the gifted. Educational Leadership, 48(5), 60-65.

Callahan, C. & Caldwell, M. (1986). Defensible evaluations of programs for the gifted and talented. In C. Maker (Ed), Critical Issues in Gifted Education, Vol. 1: Defensible Programs for the Gifted. Rockville, MD: Aspen.

Cohen, J. (1988). Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences (2nd Edition). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Feldhusen, J. (1991). Susan Allan sets the record straight. Educational Leadership, 48(5), 66.

Gallagher, J. & Gallagher, S. (1993, in press). Teaching the Gifted Child (4th Edition). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Johnson, D., & Johnson, R. (1989). What to say to parents of gifted children. The Cooperative Link, 5(2), 1-3.

Johnson, D., & Johnson, R. (1990). Cooperation and Competition: Theory and Research. Edina, MN: Interaction Book Company.

Johnson, D. & Johnson, R. (1991). What cooperative learning has to offer the gifted. Cooperative Learning, 11(3), 24-27.

Jones, G. (1991). Creating a cooperative middle school through cooperative learning. the League Journal, 12(1), 21-23.

Joyce, B. (1991). Common misconceptions about cooperative learning and gifted students. Educational Leadership, 48(5), 72-74.

Kagan, S. (1990a). Cooperative Learning Resources for Teachers. San Juan Capistrano: Resources for Teachers.

Kagan, S. (1990b). The structural approach to cooperative learning. Educational Leadership, 47, 12-15.

Kohn, A. (1991). Don't spoil the promise of cooperative learning. Educational Leadership, 48(5), 93-94.

Kulik, J. (1991). Findings on grouping are often distorted. Educational Leadership, 48(5), 67.

Kulik, J. & Kulik, C. (1987). Effects of ability grouping on student achievement. Equity and Excellence, 23(1-2), 22-30.

Nelson, S., Gallagher, J., & Coleman, M. (In press), Cooperative Learning From Two Different Perspectives. Chapel Hill, NC: Gifted Education Policy Studies Program, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Robinson, A. (1990). Cooperation or exploitation? The argument against cooperative learning for talented students. Journal for the Education of the Gifted, 14(1), 9-27.

Slavin, R. (1984). Team assisted individualization: Cooperative learning and individualized instruction in the mainstreamed classroom. Remedial and Special Education, 5, 33-41.

Slavin, R. (1988). Cooperative Learning: Theory, Research, and Practice. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

Slavin, R. (1990a). Ability grouping, cooperative learning and the gifted. Journal for the Education of the Gifted, 14(1), 3-8.

Slavin, R. (1990b). Achievement effects of ability grouping in secondary schools: A best-evidence synthesis. Review of Educational Research, 60(3), 471-499.

Slavin, R. (1991a). Are cooperative learning and "untracking" harmful to the gifted? Educational Leadership, 48(5), 68-71.

Slavin, R. (1991b). Synthesis of research on cooperative learning. Educational Leadership, 48(5), 71-82.

Slavin, R. (1991c). What cooperative learning has to offer the gifted. Cooperative Learning, 11(3), 22-23.

Appendix A

Cooperative Learning Survey

Cooperative Learning Survey

Carolina Institute for Child and Family Policy
Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
137 East Franklin Street
NCNB Plaza, Suite 301
Chapel Hill, NC 27514
919/962-7373

James J. Gallagher, Director

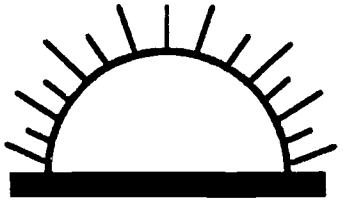
Mary Ruth Coleman, Associate Director

Name: _____ Title: _____

Address: _____ Phone: _____

_____ Fax #: _____

_____



Gifted Education Policy Studies Program

Part I: Areas of Concern

The following issues have been raised as areas of concern in using cooperative learning with gifted students. THESE ISSUES REPRESENT A VARIETY OF OPINIONS, AND YOU MAY OR MAY NOT AGREE WITH ANY GIVEN CONCERN. Please think about each concern and mark your level of concordance for each item along the following scale:.

Rating Scale

Strongly Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Agree 3	Strongly Agree 4	No Opinion N

Please circle the choice which best reflects your feelings on each issue.	SD	D	A	SA	
1. Cooperative Learning (CL) teaches students important social skills which will enable them to work more cooperatively with others in the adult world.	1	2	3	4	N
2. Administrators often view CL as one solution to the ability grouping debate.	1	2	3	4	N
3. Many teachers are skilled in the use of CL techniques which can be most appropriate for gifted students.	1	2	3	4	N
4. Many gifted students develop higher self-esteem as a result of participation in CL groups.	1	2	3	4	N
5. Many teachers of gifted students have tried CL methods.	1	2	3	4	N
6. Most current concerns about the use of CL with gifted students center around the assumption that this will lead to the elimination of ability grouping.	1	2	3	4	N
7. Many gifted students are able to develop leadership abilities through participation in CL groups.	1	2	3	4	N
8. The pace of learning in CL groups is often slower than the pace which is appropriate for gifted students.	1	2	3	4	N
9. Many gifted students learn important group interaction skills through participation in CL groups.	1	2	3	4	N
10. Little research has been conducted on the appropriate uses of CL with gifted students.	1	2	3	4	N
11. Many gifted students gain a sense of self-worth from helping other students in their CL groups.	1	2	3	4	N
12. The curriculum taught in CL groups is often focused on basic skills and lacks the sophistication and complexity that gifted students need.	1	2	3	4	N

		SD	D	A	SA	
13.	Gifted students in CL groups often become the "junior" teacher and feel responsible to instruct the other students.	1	2	3	4	N
14.	The use of CL groups can enhance problem solving and thinking abilities because it encourages explanation and justification of ideas.	1	2	3	4	N
15.	Many gifted students learn more and deepen their understanding of materials presented when they engage in the teaching role in CL groups.	1	2	3	4	N
16.	CL and programs for gifted students can work well together.	1	2	3	4	N
17.	Many gifted students tend to become annoyed with nongifted peers who will not complete work in CL groups.	1	2	3	4	N
18.	When a single grade is given for CL group work, gifted students may feel resentment if their grade has been lowered or others' grades have been unjustly raised.	1	2	3	4	N
19.	Many gifted students tend to take over CL groups preventing other students from making meaningful contributions.	1	2	3	4	N
20.	When too much time is spent in CL groups, gifted students do not have opportunities to pursue topics of interest and importance to them.	1	2	3	4	N
21.	CL is a strategy which enables teachers to educate <u>all</u> students effectively within a heterogeneous classroom.	1	2	3	4	N
22.	Many gifted students tend to hide their "gifts" in order to fit into the CL group.	1	2	3	4	N
23.	CL groups provide an avenue for social interaction for gifted students.	1	2	3	4	N
24.	Many gifted students resent being responsible for their CL group's mastery of materials.	1	2	3	4	N
25.	CL helps all students, including gifted, learn and retain information.	1	2	3	4	N
26.	Many teachers of gifted students believe their students can benefit from CL.	1	2	3	4	N
27.	Many gifted students learn important mediation and conflict resolution skills within the framework of CL groups.	1	2	3	4	N

Please continue to the back page.

Part II: Most Important Issues

The concerns listed in Part I of this survey are summarized in the following six statements. **Please identify the three topics which you feel need to be addressed as educators plan to meet the needs of gifted students using CL techniques.** Please list your three choices in priority order, by letter.

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

A. Preparing teachers in the use of a variety of CL techniques

B. Discovering which forms of CL work best with gifted students

C. Examining how CL can be effectively combined with programs for gifted students

D. Ensuring that the social and emotional needs of gifted students are considered within CL lessons

E. Determining appropriate evaluation strategies to assess the effectiveness of CL programs with gifted students

F. Clarifying the appropriate uses of ability grouping and CL with gifted students

Part III: Additional Concerns

Feel free to write additional comments which you feel would help us better understand your attitudes and positions on any of these issues. If we have left out any concerns of yours, please indicate them. Also, please include your ideas on how these issues might be most appropriately addressed. Use additional paper as needed.

Thank you for taking the time to help us with this effort. We are grateful for your assistance.

Frank Porter Graham
Child Development Center
CB No. 8040, 300 NationsBank Plaza
Chapel Hill, NC 27599