

Two Wrongs Do Not Make a Right: Sacrificing the Needs of Gifted Students Does Not Solve Society's Unsolved Problems

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Gifted students in our nation's schools are being denied needed services because enrollment of underserved minorities in special classes is typically disproportionate. This disproportionality is a direct result of long-standing social inequities and the consequences of poverty. We are punishing the innocent for the sins of a society that has been unable to conquer these problems. A number of well-intentioned remedies have been attempted, but we need to take care that we do not, in the name of fairness, detract from the availability or effectiveness of the programs we have. An action agenda is proposed that may improve matters; but, in the meantime, the author urges that we not abandon rigorous efforts to serve academically advanced children, whatever their backgrounds.

Introduction

This article constitutes a considered statement about innocent victims. I believe that we are burdening our progeny (and prodigies) with the sins of their parents and the rest of their American ancestors. Because of our failure to solve the inequalities of our society—the first wrong—we are allowing too many gifted students to be denied an appropriate education—the second wrong. It is not the fault of those students that the pace and level of their learning and understanding outstrip ordinary classroom fare. It is not their fault that many of them, certainly not all, have the support of committed and resourceful parents. It is not their fault that, although they come from families in all walks of life, higher proportions of them are Caucasian and Asian than is true for the general population. And, yet, it is they who suffer the consequences—a situation decreed by Benbow and Stanley (1996) as “inequity in equity.”

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Across the country, programs that are hard pressed as it is to meet the needs of gifted students are being undermined by the fact that they do not fully mirror the racial/ethnic school populations in the districts they serve (Donovan & Cross, 2002; Ford, Harris, Tyson, & Trotman, 2002). Paradoxically, they are seldom chastised for a failure to mirror the socioeconomic distribution of the population, although poverty and the parental characteristics and practices associated with it play a greater role than race or ethnicity in determining students' school achievement (Bradley, Corwyn, McAdoo, & Coll, 2001; Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 1997; Mayer, 1997).

American society prides itself—justifiably—on the high value it places on fairness and evenhandedness. Is it fair to deprive many highly capable children of an appropriate education, the sustenance and challenge they need to flourish, because others have not been so lucky? Is this not analogous to depriving tall children of fundamental vitamins or making them sit in smaller chairs because there are other children who are short? Or, to borrow Australian vernacular, should one cut off the heads of the poppies that have the temerity to grow taller than their peers (Gross, 1999)?

The Need

By definition (Ross, 1993), academically gifted children are those who *need* educational services not usually (or easily, even feasibly) provided in regular classrooms. These students are not just learning machines, rapidly acquiring knowledge and skills (although they do that). Their reasoning and insight are like those of older students; they are capable of making distant connections and corralling multiple resources in their problem solving; most are passionately curious; many are highly creative when given permission to “think outside the box.” At the same time, while gifted students are probably at least as robust emotionally as other students, if not more robust, they are socially, emotionally, and academically vulnerable to chronically underchallenging educational settings (Gross, in press; Neihart, Reis, Robinson, & Moon, 2002). They are especially vulnerable in the everyday company of age peers from whom they experience pressure to conform, but among whom they find few to none with whom they can communicate their thoughts and insights (Gross, in press; Rimm, 2002). Underachievement and withdrawal are too often the outcomes of such situations, to say nothing of lost opportunities to progress at a rate commensurate with their abilities (Rogers, 2001). Their loss is a loss not only to them, but a loss of

their future leadership of the very society that has been so blatantly unable to solve its social problems.

Social Inequality

Paramount among the unsolved problems plaguing our society are those associated with poverty: underemployment; undereducation; single parenting; inadequate medical care; reduced access to first-rate child care; drug and alcohol addictions; unsafe neighborhoods; and, for many families, alienation, discouragement, time pressures, and high levels of stress incurred by simply coping with everyday existence. A great many families living in poverty meet additional barriers of language, cultural norms, or racism that further exacerbate the difficulties they face. We all understand the burden this places on citizens, especially parents and children, who endure some or all of these conditions. Most of our governmental and private assistance programs are directed, appropriately, to such families and, especially, to children growing up in situations that put them at risk for continuing this pattern.

It is, however, an uphill battle. In many ways, children of poverty are behind the eight ball from the moment of conception onward, as their parents struggle with difficulties of living on the fringes of an affluent and technologically sophisticated society. In terms of the children's education, perhaps the most significant burden is the heritage of their parents' own alienation from and devaluation of schooling, in addition to their consequently limited academic skills and the more limited learning stimulation they are able to give their children (Bradley, Corwyn, Burchinal, McAdoo, & Coll, 2001; Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 1997; Mayer, 1997). Of course these families represent a broad range of competencies, and some of the children will achieve in school very well indeed in families who, despite their low income, provide support for the children's development (Robinson, Lanzi, Weinberg, Ramey, & Ramey, 2002).

It should not be a surprise that the mean lifetime attainments of children who grow up in unstable and burdened homes are shifted downward when compared with other children who grow up in families that have greater fiscal and educational resources to devote to parenting and fewer stresses with which to deal (Campbell, Pungello, & Miller-Johnson, 2001; Phillips et al., 1998). Thus is inequality created and perpetuated. Fewer of the marginalized children will develop to the full measure of their potential or acquire advanced intellectual competencies and academic skills that are

clearly ahead of the norm for their age. In the ordinary course of events, they will be underrepresented among academically gifted children.

It is particularly interesting that racial/ethnic inequalities are the major political targets, although socioeconomic inequalities and the family characteristics and practices associated with them are more closely related to student achievement (Abbott & Joireman, 2001; Patterson, Kupersmidt, & Vaden, 1990; Peng & Wright, 1994; Phillips, Brooks-Gunn, Duncan, Klebanov, & Crane, 1998). We are rightly concerned with racial inequalities, racial prejudice, and social barriers because they are unacceptable in a free society. We should recognize, however, that families of color are even more burdened by the indirect than the direct effects of racism through unemployment, troubled schools, inadequate housing and health care, unsafe neighborhoods, and other aspects of poverty.

Even in poverty, of course, some children succeed because their families are able to meet their needs. In a recent study of third-grade children who had once been in Project Head Start (Robinson et al., 2002), the strong relationship between academic attainment and parental resources was once again substantiated. The highest achieving 3% of the children ($n = 162$) from the total group of 5,400 came, on average, from homes with somewhat more monetary and educational resources and fewer children. Their caretakers reported more positive parenting attitudes and were seen by the teachers as more supportive of school attainment than was true for the group as a whole. For those children who had been top achievers every year since first grade, the differences from the rest of the group were even more accentuated. Not surprisingly, since race and resources are inextricably confounded within this population, more of the high achievers were Caucasian.

National Research Council Report on Minority Students in Special and Gifted Education

A committee on minority representation in gifted education was convened by the National Research Council to examine the causes of overrepresentation of minorities in programs for children with developmental disabilities and the underrepresentation of minorities in programs for gifted students (National Research Council, 2002). After examining the extensive evidence about the effects of experience on ability and achievement, that is, whether the *need* for differential educational experiences was different across ethnic and

racial groups, the committee concluded that the disproportions were real, rather than primarily the result of biases of identification and perception. Lower percentages of African American and Hispanic students than non-Hispanic or Asian American students scored in the proficient or advanced levels on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) achievement tests, for example. It was not difficult to identify causative factors in the more negative health factors and less propitious family experience of the lower achieving groups. Efforts to reduce poverty and the associated health and family effects on children are a high priority.

While the evidence was not entirely clear, the committee concluded that biases in referral and assessment processes did not seem to play a major role in the disproportionality seen in programs except, perhaps, for Hispanic students. Indeed, among minority children referred for special education because of developmental disabilities, the needs seemed to be greater than those of referred majority children. The major question then became whether the special classes for gifted students were likely to meet demonstrated needs (the committee concluded that they were). The committee also recognized that a major value of gifted programs is the role they play in preparing students for advanced courses and channeling them in that direction. At the same time, they concluded that excellence in education is requisite for all children, and those who emerge from this experience with advanced abilities and achievement deserve educational services appropriate to their needs.

Attempts to Resolve the Issues

A number of approaches have been developed over the years to address the issues caused by social inequality as they impinge on the education of gifted students. Their number and variety attest to the degree of concern communities have shown about this issue.

Magnet programs, schools-within-schools, and self-contained classes. Ironically, a good many of the most effective programs for gifted children were originally established primarily as an attempt to balance the racial distribution of students enrolled in schools located in low-income neighborhoods. Special targeted "magnet" programs, among them programs for gifted students, were set up to attract students from throughout a school district. It was hoped that no one would notice the racial/ethnic imbalances from class to class. Furthermore, it was expected that, in the lunchroom, on the

playground, and in joint nonacademic classes, cross-racial friendships would develop. As a matter of practice, however, such goals were seldom realized to the degree that had been hoped. On the contrary, the "solutions" eventually came to be seen as exacerbating the problems they had been designed to diminish. This disappointment, coupled with anti-intellectualism and the accusation of elitism leveled at classes for gifted students, has undermined efforts to provide appropriate education for students whose academic skills are advanced, including students from underserved economic and ethnic groups. It is unfortunate that these self-contained provisions, which are singularly inexpensive and, yet, probably constitute the easiest and most effective way to meet the needs of many (certainly not all) gifted children (Shore, Cornell, Robinson, & Ward, 1991), have been abandoned in such great numbers.

Modifying admissions procedures. Another major effort to resolve the problem of racial/ethnic imbalances has been to increase admissions of children of underrepresented groups to classes for academically highly capable students, whether or not all of them have demonstrated a need for advanced academic instruction. Tests of cognitive ability, especially verbal ability, as well as tests of achievement, have become suspect, despite their strong relationship with academic performance. Because of ethnic/racial mean group differences on measures that effectively predict academic achievement (e.g., the major individual and group intelligence tests), it has been concluded that these tests must be biased against the lower-scoring groups.

There is a serious misunderstanding at work here. *Bias*, in admissions procedures, refers to differences between groups in the implications or predictive validity of scores; it does *not* refer to group differences in mean scores (Jencks, 1998; Jensen, 1979; Sherman & Robinson, 1982). Assumptions of bias based on mean group differences mistakenly fail to recognize that valid tests cannot help but reflect the outcomes of barriers to healthy development that our society has imposed. There are no credible data to suggest that well-standardized contemporary aptitude and achievement tests underpredict subsequent academic achievement for underserved minority populations when compared with the achievement of other students who earn the same score, that is, a given score *means* something different for one group than another. (If that were true, the test would, indeed, be biased.) In fact, there is some evidence that SAT scores used in college admissions *overpredict* subsequent college grades (i.e., the scores are biased in favor of African American applicants;

Kane, 1998). There is, fortunately, also evidence that, on the whole, the Black-White test score gap is decreasing (Jencks & Phillips, 1998).

It is argued that children who have had a less facilitative upbringing or come from poorer educational backgrounds should not be penalized for their history (Ford, 1994). But this argument ignores the fact that it is those very experiences, in addition to whatever genetic elements may be at work, that determine academic outcomes. That some children have been deprived of needed cognitive and academic sustenance all their lives is a monumental tragedy, but we cannot correct the situation by placing them in ill-fitting programs nor denying program access to children who need them. There may well be steps we can take to try to nurture their abilities and skills (as we will mention later) in the hope that they will "get up to speed," but admission to programs that require more advanced academic understandings and skills than they possess is inappropriate.

Because visual-spatial measures tend to yield smaller racial differences than do verbal measures (Naglieri, 2001; Wasserman & Becker, 2000), some school districts have chosen to use such identification and admissions measures as the nonverbal subtest of the Cognitive Abilities Test, the WISC-III Performance Scale, or a paper-and-pencil test of creativity. The Ravens Matrices is thought by some to be an acceptable nonverbal measure of general intelligence, but the standardization is questionable, as is its usefulness (Matthews, 1988; Mills, Ablard, & Brody, 1993). Academic achievement measures tend to show greater racial/ethnic group differences than do ability measures (Naglieri, 2001) and are, therefore, regarded by some people as problematic, even though it is the high academic achievement of gifted children that creates their need for more advanced education.

Many educators believe that measures like those above, portfolios, or behavioral ratings by parents and teachers that yield smaller group differences are simply *alternate* ways to identify students with high academic potential. Such measures assess *different* abilities and constructs than do more traditional verbal measures, and no one has shown them to be equivalent in predictive power to the others with regard to academic outcomes (Sackett, Schmitt, Ellingson, & Kabin, 2001). Sometimes the argument is advanced that children not otherwise eligible who are admitted on the basis of the latter kinds of tests "succeed" in gifted programs (i.e., they remain enrolled). Since students are seldom dropped from these programs and dedicated teachers do their best to support all their students, one cannot use these facts as evidence that the alternative measures were more effective.

As a matter of fact, the few studies that have followed students who have qualified for special programs on the basis of nonverbal, or visual-spatial, tests are not at all encouraging. Bittker (1991), for example, looking at the academic progress and class ranking of students chosen earlier for gifted programs on verbal, quantitative, or nonverbal measures, found that those qualifying on a nonverbal measure had significantly lower achievement than the others, with the highest attainment by those qualifying on verbal measures. Working with the Project Talent Data Bank, Gohm, Humphreys, and Yao (1998) found that those gifted in spatial reasoning (top 1%), compared with those gifted in mathematics (top 1%) made less effective use of their academic capabilities, had interests that were less compatible with traditional coursework, received less college guidance, showed lower levels of motivation and aspiration, and attained lower levels of academic and occupational success.

Redefining giftedness. Over the past few decades, motivated largely by the goal of appreciating human diversity more meaningfully, conceptions of intelligence and giftedness have been broadened. Most theories of the nature of intelligence now include, in addition to verbal reasoning, such factors as mathematical and/or visual-spatial reasoning, which—although they were always present—played a minor role in our original concepts and in such measures as the Stanford-Binet as published in 1972 and before (Terman & Merrill, 1972). (The Wechsler scales had, of course, since 1939, included both verbal and visual-spatial reasoning subtests.) In addition, notions of “multiple intelligences” (Gardner, 1983) have added other factors, such as aptitude for inter- and intrapersonal skills and musical aptitude, that had not been considered central to intelligence. Sternberg, who has developed multiple theories of intelligence, distinguishes among knowledge acquisition, performance, and executive functioning (Sternberg, 1981). He and his colleagues (Sternberg, Grigorenko, Ferrari, & Clinkenbeard, 1999) also differentiate among analytic, applied, and creative intellectual abilities. In still another view, Renzulli and Reis (2000) see a distinction between *test-taking giftedness* (academic giftedness) and *creative productivity*, a distinction that is problematic in its limited view of what *test-taking ability* actually encompasses.

I believe that we need to make a distinction between broad-based definitions of giftedness that include most of the respected and valued areas of human endeavor and a definition of giftedness *relevant to the school experience*. No one has ever denied the value of encouraging gifted artists, dancers, musicians, and leaders. We have not,

however, focused on such abilities in most school situations. Except for specialized magnet schools for the arts, the focus of the usual 6-hour school day is designed primarily to foster students' academic competence. Such goals include, among others, nurturing mature reasoning and problem solving in verbal and mathematical/scientific domains; the ability to comprehend, connect, modify, and create complex ideas; acuity in expressing ideas in multiple media; and going beyond the *givens*. Because of this, it is those students gifted in verbal and math/science domains for whom the ordinary classroom is most inappropriate, and it is those domains that constitute the core of most programs for academically gifted students.

If, however, we adopt broadened views of the kinds of giftedness to be identified and served in our schools beyond those domains on which schools have usually focused, we need to examine whether the programs so modified continue to meet the needs of the students who enter with highly advanced intellectual abilities and skills. There is the serious likelihood that the core programs will need to take a step back in verbal and math/science subjects if many students are chosen on the basis of talent in visual-spatial domains or artistic performance, but not verbal or math/science competence. Under such conditions, programs must be tailored accordingly. If we modify selection criteria and programs, the needs of highly advanced academically talented youth—who are least well served in regular academic classes and, consequently, the most miserable there—may not be met in traditional academic areas.

Inclusion: Teaching gifted children in the regular classroom. In response to the inclusion movement, initiated to accommodate children who lag behind the norm in cognitive abilities and skills, there has been considerable pressure to drop special programs for gifted children in favor of meeting their needs through curricular modifications in the regular classroom. If the inclusion movement has attained success—and the evidence for and against this conclusion is controversial (Hocutt, 1996; Styfco, 1999)—it has been because integrating low-achieving children into the regular classroom raises expectations for them and provides them peers who are competent role models. Just the opposite situation holds for gifted children in the regular classroom, where expectations for their attainment are very likely to be lower and their peers have attained less academic competence than they have (Robinson, Zigler, & Gallagher, 2000).

Despite considerable efforts to provide teachers with the skills and means to differentiate instruction within regular classrooms

(e.g., Tomlinson, 1999; Tomlinson, Kaplan, Renzulli, Purcell, Leppien, & Burns, 2002; Winebrenner, 2000), most conscientious and committed teachers are able to provide differentiated instruction for gifted children only a small fraction of the school day (Archambault et al., 1993). While theoretically possible, in practice it just doesn't happen often enough or consistently enough to be effective. Furthermore, to a large extent, when differentiation does take place, it frequently consists of assigning gifted children independent work that takes them away from teacher guidance and support. While this may constitute a better solution than none, we expect gifted children to become autodidacts at a very early age!

Cluster grouping. One compromise solution that has had some success (Gentry, 1999) has been the practice of cluster grouping within regular classrooms. This practice consists of assigning to a single classroom those three to six children informally identified as most advanced within a grade so that they have an opportunity to work together. Because there are several of them, their teacher has some time to devote to their differentiated instruction. This solution has proved popular with teachers assigned the clusters, as well as the remaining teachers in whose classrooms children subsequently arise as leaders who were formerly suppressed by the presence of the brightest children. We have yet to collect evidence as to whether this situation adequately challenges children who are highly advanced. For these children, more deliberately accelerative options may be needed (Rogers, 1992).

All-school enrichment programs. As noted above, Renzulli and Reis (2000), describing their Schoolwide Enrichment Model (SEM), distinguished between "test-taking giftedness," which they see as limited, and "creative productivity," the potential of a broader group of students to produce meaningful work at an advanced level. Adopting *part* of the comprehensive Schoolwide Enrichment Model, a number of school systems have moved toward providing special-interest groups (Level I of SEM) for many or all students in the school. During periodic sessions within or after the school day, these special-interest groups provide motivation-enhancing activities for children who have no demonstrable needs for special instruction. By themselves, these efforts constitute misguided models of an intent to provide for gifted children. Planning and executing these groups is labor intensive for teachers (and for the parents and other community participants who are often recruited), and it does nothing to affect the everyday curriculum, which remains at an

inappropriate level and pace for the gifted students unless daily classroom adaptation occurs.

To put an effective SEM in place for gifted students, such interest-based activities are only a beginning. A comprehensive model includes not only Level I activities, which were meant to be addressed to roughly the top 20% of the students, but a coherent effort to assess gifted students' academic mastery and avoid reteaching that material, a process known as *compacting*. In the time thus saved, gifted children can be taught relevant specialized research and performance skills in small groups (Level II) and mentored to produce intensive, individual projects (Level III). One of the values of the SEM approach, it should be said, is that, occasionally, children's hidden abilities do emerge in these high-interest activities, leading to their identification and nurturance.

Exclusive reliance on accelerative methods. The reduction of special programming for gifted students has—albeit, typically, with reluctance on the part of school administrators—led, for some gifted students, to using acceleration as the major means of achieving a better fit with their level and pace of instruction. Sometimes this works very well, although acceleration of a year or two is insufficient to match the advancement of most gifted students. A considerable number of accelerative options are available (Robinson, 1999; Rogers, 1992, 2001). Unfortunately, such acceleration is often limited to the secondary level and, specifically, to the study of mathematics even though it would be effective for many students at earlier stages and in other domains, as well. Moving bright students into more advanced classes does not affect the ethnic/economic mix of students in regular classes except at the highest level, where enrollment in such classes as Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), advanced math, and fourth-year foreign languages again tend to exhibit disproportionality.

What Can and Should We Do?

In the face of life's inequities, are there any better ways than these to meet effectively the needs of students who are academically advanced, whatever their family backgrounds? I believe that there are a variety of things we can do. What I have to propose is a series of rather long-range efforts to attack underlying problems, while maintaining and enhancing the best of what we can offer to academically gifted students. None of these suggestions is novel.

Encourage school diversity primarily in socioeconomic status, secondarily in ethnicity. Although, of course, there are issues of culture to be faced by all children who are not “mainstream” (and even by many who are), the operational variable determining positive child outcomes appears to be socioeconomic status more than ethnicity. It is difficult to unravel the two. Attitudes toward education tend to vary from one ethnic group to another (Ford & Harris, 1999). But poverty and near poverty can grind down the best efforts of well-meaning parents. Of course there are exceptions—warmly engaged parents and other adults who have little money, but who are able to provide the enhancing everyday interchanges and introduction to literacy, maintain high expectations for themselves and their children, make effective plans, and follow through—but poverty is a vicious killer of potentially fine minds. We must stop using ethnicity as a proxy for poverty. This does an injustice to many children of color who are not living in poverty and also does an injustice to Caucasian and Asian children who are.

Insist on providing challenging, high-level academic classes for gifted students. In school districts large enough to do so, we need to offer rigorous special classes for the academically most gifted students. Admission should be limited to students with demonstrated academic needs who are the most difficult to challenge in the regular classroom. Admissions and performance standards in these classes should not be sacrificed for political purposes. Exceptions should be made for some cognitively gifted students with specific learning disabilities who can profit from coaching and compensatory assistance, such as technologically enhanced input-output schemes, but the level and pace of class instruction should not be compromised.

Self-contained classes with demanding curricula are the easiest, least expensive, and most effective way to meet the needs of the brightest students while, at the same time, enabling them to profit from the stimulation and support of other bright students. Large districts may choose to offer a double tier of self-contained classes: a central program for the most highly gifted students (perhaps 1% of total enrollment) and another that is dispersed more widely throughout the district for students not quite so academically advanced or skilled. Additionally, to keep the doors of such classes wide open to students who enter school with extra burdens of poverty and ethnicity, such classes should do the following:

- Utilize admissions testing of the traditional sort we have at present, supplemented by a broad search for demonstrable academic talent in portfolios, classroom observations,

and extracurricular performance, as well as nominations by parents, peers, teachers, and the student him- or herself. Occasionally, a bright student will come to attention because of unusual skills in everyday affairs. Any students who are admitted should, however, have the skills necessary to keep up with and be engaged by academically demanding classes.

- Consider affirmative action for fully qualified children from low-income families. Few school districts are able to admit all qualified applicants to their programs, and waiting lists are typical. Under such circumstances, many districts do give priority to children from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Include multiple entry points so there is room for increasing enrollment throughout the grades. Students who do not arrive at school with developed academic skills, but who pick up speed as they go along, should be welcomed at any grade level. Fluidity of enrollment would also make it possible to counsel some initially admitted, but subsequently underachieving students to drop out of the program with the possibility of reentering later on.
- Provide a multicultural environment (Baldwin & Vialle, 1999; Ford & Harris, 1999) in which all academically advanced students can feel comfortable, whatever their differences. Multicultural material should be an integral part of the curriculum, not an add-on at symbolic holiday seasons, and teachers should be trained in "cultural competence" (Harmon, 2002). It is also important to expose students to teachers from diverse cultural groups. Team teaching and other cross-classroom approaches can introduce teachers of color to as many students as possible.

Insist on expanding efforts within regular classrooms to meet the needs of gifted students who do not meet the criteria for self-contained classes. There are a variety of ways that gifted students' experiences can be enhanced in the regular classroom. Most of these students will be moderately, but not exceptionally, bright (except in small districts unable to create self-contained classes); some will be distinctly uneven in their academic skills (e.g., highly math talented, but not verbally talented or vice versa); some will not possess the motivation or organizational habits to thrive in a more demanding climate. A special coordinator or master teacher can assist regular-classroom teachers by identifying cluster groups, helping with

the planning process, securing special curricular materials, checking on student progress, and teaching occasional targeted pull-out groups.

Expand teacher training in and support for differentiated instruction in both special and regular classrooms. To encourage optimal development of *all* students, continue training and assisting teachers in efforts to provide appropriate challenges through effectively differentiated instruction matched to students' maturity and pace of learning and both the skills and knowledge they have already acquired. A number of effective models are available (Heacox, 2002; Tomlinson, 1999; Tomlinson et al., 2002; Winebrenner, 2000), but each requires a teaching approach quite different from the "one-size-fits-all" of the conventional classroom. Those students who are potentially gifted (i.e., potentially capable of advanced conceptual reasoning, but lacking the tools to do so) are especially likely to rise to such challenges, and the adoption of differentiated practices within special classrooms can make possible the modest expansion of admissions practices.

Provide a broad range of supportive and preparatory efforts. For students who show special potential, but do not initially prove eligible for the self-contained classes, a variety of enhancement approaches should be offered. These children can be identified by formal or informal means; there is nothing to lose by overidentification. This is our best chance to reach children "of promise," to support their development deliberately and with focus. Such efforts might include, for example,

- Special in-class assignments and high-performance expectations by classroom teachers.
- In schools with cluster grouping, inclusion of these students as either core or peripheral members so they may participate in advanced activities as they are able to do so.
- Coaching students (especially those from schools in which test scores are usually low) in test-taking skills so they are familiar with such situations and strongly motivated to do well (Sackett et al., 2001).
- After-school tutoring in academic topics and small-group opportunities for critical thinking (e.g., Junior Great Books seminars), in addition to the regular curriculum. Such efforts can be augmented by written assignments to enhance writing skills.

- Challenging, tuition-free summer programs that explore limited subject matter in depth in order to “hook” students of promise on the potential joys of school and of peers who have similar abilities. Moreover, students who are not encouraged to use their skills often lose ground over the summer when they might, instead, be moving ahead.
- Enlisting volunteer parents and high school students who will work with students individually to enhance academic skills and introduce students to cultural resources and events they would otherwise miss. These efforts should also continue over the summer.
- Including “up-and-coming” students in supplementary activities in which the students from self-contained classes participate (e.g., Destination Imagination and other contests and in-school classes in the arts) so that, when they do enter the self-contained class, they already have friends there.
- Encouraging such students to prepare for and to select rigorous and complete course sequences, such as 4 or 5 years of high school math in order to keep postsecondary options open.
- Counseling promising students about everyone’s belonging simultaneously to a variety of subcultures. “Bicultural” African American students, for example, may feel as comfortable within the gifted classroom as they do with African American peers who are not identified as gifted (Rowley & Moore, 2002). It is not clear that even a majority of African American students are burdened by fears of being accused of “acting White” (Cook & Ludwig, 1998), although many authors believe this to be the case (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Morris, 2002). It is essential that students see themselves as worthy of their own investment, avoid stereotyping themselves by ethnicity or socioeconomic status, and recognize that their fate is primarily in their own hands, not that of others. Unfortunately, as long as students of color, of poverty, or both are reluctant to join challenging classes because there are too few students they see as similar to themselves, the barriers will remain very difficult to overcome (Morris, 2002).

Reach out to parents of promising students. The most powerful influences on child outcomes occur at home. Among these are not

only the ability of parents to value and support children's academic development, but their own warm engagement with and high expectations for their children (Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde, & Whalen, 1993; Olszewski-Kubilius, 2002). Parents of high achievers spend extra hours with their children and also value their independence in accomplishing goals. We can help families with programs that enhance parenting skills and, indeed, help them to reach personal goals of their own as powerful role models and incentives to their children.

Value many talents. In addition to the academic talents to which this paper is addressed, there, of course, exist many others currently undervalued and undertaught by our school systems. We need to develop, for children talented in domains not well represented at an advanced level in the regular curriculum, coherent means of identifying and nurturing their abilities and provide scholarships for those who need them. As we all recognize, we do quite a good job of this in athletics, and taxpayers are more than willing to pay for such programs.

Start very early. Cognitively enriched preschool programs for children of promise can be one of our most powerful tools. An exemplar of such a program was carried out in Newark, New Jersey (Louis, Lewis, & Ukeje, in preparation), with encouraging results when the children entered school, but such programs are few and far between. In larger communities, special Head Start classes could be provided for children who are quick to learn. Head Start staff will need training in spotting such students and in providing problems and activities in which unexpected talents can be observed.

It would, of course, be better to begin before age 4, the typical entry age for Head Start, because there is reason to believe that the earlier the start and the more sustained, the better (Lazar, Darlington, Murray, Royce, & Snipper, 1982). Colleagues and I have found it easy to locate children with diverse cognitive and academic talents (Robinson & Robinson, 1992), as well as highly verbal toddlers (Robinson, Dale, & Landesman, 1990) and mathematically precocious preschoolers (Robinson et al., 1997), but such efforts have resulted in a decided bias toward socioeconomically favored families who not only hear about such opportunities, but seize them. We need to find similar ways to discover promising very young children from less-favored families.

It is especially important to provide abundant exposure for toddlers and young preschoolers in the joys of reading and the structure

of words. Children with limited exposure to literacy experience and limited skills arrive at school unready to begin to read and can fall farther and farther behind, despite underlying abilities and talents. Education of parents and day care providers about reading to children and playing sound/word games and the abundant provision of books attractive to adults, as well as to children, is perhaps the best approach to promoting talent that we have available at the moment.

Eradicate anti-intellectualism. Contemporary American society is decidedly biased against academic giftedness in children. Maintaining academically rigorous classes for this group is not overly popular with school boards or their constituents. We must recognize that anti-intellectualism is a powerful deterrent to national development and itself constitutes a form of bigotry just as unacceptable as bigotry toward groups constituted by ethnicity, race, gender, sexual preference, age, or any other characteristic. Calling a student a "geek" or "brain" should be considered a form of misbehavior no more acceptable than calling a student of color by any of the familiar repugnant epithets. The subtler forms of anti-intellectual prejudice will be harder to deal with, as our citizens of color can well attest.

Continue the war against poverty. Back in the 1960s, we thought we had a handle on reforming our society to minimize socioeconomic differences and to open all doors to children of all families. It did not prove to be so simple. We are still stymied. But we must not let our failures become the special burden of gifted students. It is a burden for all of us to share, and we must not require this group of children to make such a costly sacrifice. Their sacrifice will not begin to address the basic problem anyway; and, by depriving society of their developed talents, the situation will only be exacerbated. Inequality of attainment is a symptom of social inequality. We cannot deny it away. Let us find other means to continue the battle and not rest our efforts on the shoulders of our most promising young people.

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