

Assessing Gifted and Talented Programs for Equity

The questions below can be used to help school personnel assess the quality of gifted programs and the extent to which these programs embody principles of diversity and equity.

- 1. What is the school district's philosophy of gifted education and its definition of giftedness?**
 - In what ways are the philosophy and definition inclusive? Exclusive? To what extent are the strengths of racially and culturally diverse students represented in the definition?
 - Does the gifted education program accommodate the community's needs? Are students "retrofitted" to the program, or does the program accommodate the needs of the students?
 - Are contemporary definitions of giftedness, which may be broader in scope, adopted and/or applied?
- 2. Are the students in the gifted program representative of the community's demographics?**
 - Are students of diverse backgrounds equitably represented according to criteria such as race, ethnicity, language, gender, and socio-economic status?
 - Are there any disparities between the gifted program's demographics and the demographics of the school and the community? If so, what are they?
 - Is there evidence of increasing diversity among professionals and students in the gifted program?
- 3. Are there opportunities or continuing professional development in gifted and multicultural education?**
 - Are faculty and other school personnel encouraged and given opportunities by administrators to participate in workshops, conferences, university courses, and so forth? Do administrators attend such professional development training? Do personnel seek or willingly take advantage of these opportunities?
 - Is there a commitment to multicultural education? If so, what are the indications? For instance, does a library exist for teachers and students that contain up-to-date multicultural resources (e.g., newsletters, journals, books)?
- 4. Are assessment practices equitable?**
 - Are the measures used valid and reliable for the student population?
 - Are there racial, cultural, or gender biases in the selection process? If so, what are they?
 - How are instruments administered (individually or in a group)?
 - Which instruments appear to be most effective at identifying the strengths of minority students?
 - Is a combination of qualitative and quantitative assessment practices used? If so, is one type given preference or higher weight than the other?
 - What are the primary purposes of assessment?
 - Are personnel trained to administer and interpret test results?

- Are the instructions on the tests and the manner in which the tests are administered accommodated to the students' learning styles?
 - To what extent are students' home language, culture, and background represented or not represented in the test questions?
- 5. What, if any, mechanisms are in place to assess and address affective or noncognitive needs among students (i.e. social and emotional needs, environmental and risk factors)?**
- To what extent are support personnel and test administrator strained in gifted education?
 - To what extent are support personnel and test administrators trained in multicultural education?
 - How diverse is the professional staff (teachers, counselors, administrators) relative to race, ethnicity, language, gender, and socio-economic status?
- 6. To what extent are families involved in the formal learning process?**
- In what ways are parents and families encouraged to become and remain involved?
 - How diverse are the parents and families involved?
 - Are extended family members encouraged to participate?
- 7. Is the curriculum multicultural?**
- Is multicultural content infused throughout the curriculum?
 - Is the content pluralistic (i.e., does it reflect diversity relative to race, ethnicity, language, gender, and other socio-demographic variables)?
 - To what extent are learning style preferences and differences accommodated?
 - Are all students exposed to multicultural content, regardless of school or program demographics?
 - Does the curriculum provide genuine options for all students to understand pluralism?
 - Are students encouraged to seek greater understanding of multiculturalism and pluralism through reading, writing, additional courses, and so on?
- 8. What policies are in place to support multiculturalism and diversity?**
- Are there published policies regarding multiculturalism? What are their content?
 - If specific policies exist, to what degree are they observed in the school?
 - In what ways do policies and procedures about grouping, scheduling, and student assignments promote or inhibit interaction among white and minority students?

Adapted from Donna Y. Ford's *Reversing Underachievement Among Gifted Black Students: Promising Practices and Programs*. New York: Teacher's College Press, 1996.

Evaluating the Success of a Gift Program That Includes Special Populations

When evaluating a gifted program that has a goal of identifying and serving more students who represent special populations, data related to program effectiveness may be related to the involvement and success of specific subpopulations. These subpopulations may include all those that have been studied and discussed in these modules.

Data:

- Number of students who qualified for the gifted program
- Number of students who participated in the gifted program
- Number of participants who completed the entire school year
- Number of students who entered the gifted program representing diverse populations
- Number of students who withdraw from the program from the program representing diverse populations
- Reasons for withdrawal
- Attendance
- Grades
- Participation in special projects and programs
- Student recognition for achievement
- Articulation with advanced studies, special schools, or magnet programs
- Number of books read
- Performance on standardized tests
- Parent participation
- Community volunteer participation

Data may be collected for sources such as:

- Attendance records
- Educational plans
- Course grades
- Course selection and enrollment
- Teacher grade books
- Lesson plans
- Test scores for schools and the district
- Work samples
- Applications to special programs
- Honor rolls
- Achievement awards

PARENT SURVEY

1. Are you satisfied with the education your child has received in the gifted program? Why or why not?
2. How long has your child been participating in gifted programs? How were you informed about this gifted program?
3. Do you believe that the curriculum was sufficiently challenging?
4. Were you kept informed of assignments and special events?
5. Did you participate in any of the program activities, such as serving as a chaperone or assisting in classroom projects?
6. Were there any problems with the teachers or classmates? If so, what type of problems? How were these resolved?
7. Do you believe that this program will help your child reach a particular career goal or access competitive programs?
8. How do you think that this program might be improved?

STUDENT SURVEY

1. Did you feel that you benefited from the gifted program? If so, how? Would you recommend that gifted program to your friends?
2. How is what you do in the gifted program different from what you do in other classes?
3. Have you developed new interests through participating in the gifted program? In what?
4. Has the gifted program helped you clarify your career goals? What are your current career plans?
5. Do you think that this program will help you reach your career goal?
6. Has participating in the gifted program ever been a problem? If so, in what way? How did you solve this problem?
7. What was the best part of the gifted program?
8. Do you feel that the assignments and workload were challenging? Were they fair and reasonable?
9. Did you make friends with other students in the gifted program? How many?

10. How could the gifted program be improved?

SUPPORTING TEACHER SURVEY

1. Have you notice any improvements in students who participate in the gifted program? In behavior? In academics? In attitude? In attendance? In willingness to participate in school activities? In any other way?
2. Have you been kept information of progress students are making in their gifted classes?
3. What do you believe is the strongest aspect of the gifted program?
4. How is the gifted program coordinated with the curriculum in the basic education?
5. Do you feel that the gifted program is equally accessible for students who are members of special populations, including the handicapped, culturally diverse, highly gifted, young gifted, limited English proficient (LEP), and underachieving students? Are any accommodations made for these students?
6. Would you recommend for the gifted program a student who had academic or behavioral problems? Why or why not?
7. Can you think of ways to improve the participation and success rate of special populations of gifted students?
8. How are students evaluated in the gifted program? Do you believe that this is fair and consistent with what is done in basic education?
9. Are there any problems with the gifted program? If so, what are they? What solutions would you suggest?
10. Would you personally consider teaching in the gifted program? Why?

ADMINISTRATOR'S SURVEY

1. Do you believe that the gifted program has improved the academic achievement of participants?
2. Are you receiving reports that behavior and attitude of participant improve in the gifted program?
3. What do you feel is the greatest benefit of the gifted program?
4. Do you feel that the gifted program is equally accessible to members of all cultural, ethnic, and religious groups? Why or why not? If not, how might this situation be improved?

5. Are gifted students who have behavioral or academic problems encouraged to participate in the gifted program?
6. How are families informed about the gifted program? Do you feel that this information could be improved? If so, in what ways?
7. Are you aware of a drop-out problem with the program? Has any age, gender, or ethnic group been disproportionately represented by those who leave the gifted program?
8. Have any accommodations or specific instructional strategies been used for special populations of gifted, including the handicapped, culturally diverse, limited English proficient, highly gifted, young gifted, or gifted females?
9. Are you receiving any parent complaints about the gifted program? If so, regarding what problems? What part of the gifted program seems to be most satisfactory to parents?
10. Are you satisfied with the quality of instruction in the gifted classes? How might the quality of instruction be improved?
11. Do applicants for positions as gifted teachers represent all ethnic, cultural, language, and gender groups from the community? Is any effort being made to recruit a more balanced faculty for gifted programs? Has this been effective?

SELF-EVALUATION FOR TEACHER OF THE GIFTED

1. Have more representatives of special populations inquired about or visited the gifted program?
2. Are strategies to increase the referral of special populations in gifted programs effective? Why or why not? How might these strategies be improved?
3. Are there any of the special populations who are referred for gifted evaluation but who consistently fail to qualify? If so, with whom could I discuss this problem?
4. Have the numbers of special populations increased in the gifted program?
5. Have those students representing special populations remained in the program?
6. What reasons have been given for the withdrawal of students representing special populations? How can these responses be addressed?
7. Are parents and family member of students representing special populations actively participating in the gifted program? Why or why not?
8. What strategies and accommodations have been used for students representing special populations? Have they been effective?

9. What is the achievement level of students representing special populations? Has the behavior or academic performance of these students improved?
10. What changes can be made in the gifted program to make it more appealing to students and the families representing special populations?