

3E: Gifted, Black and Having Special Academic and Behavioral Needs

As a member of an oppressed ethnic group, Black gifted students are very often the least recognized and supported in our nation's schools. Not only are they rarely recommended and found eligible for services, but when they are, schools sometimes don't understand how best to meet their needs. We are a nation of educators who are predominately white and middle class, teaching a majority of students who are ethnically diverse and living in poverty. This obvious 'cultural mismatch' presents many complex issues for schools and school leaders daily.

Oftentimes, gifted learners also present with specific learning needs categorized as 'exceptional' or demonstrate traits that can easily be misdiagnosed as a special learning need condition. Students with specific learning needs (disabilities) are generally served through the mandate of the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The challenge for educators of gifted students who have a labeled condition is to develop a plan of instructional and support services for them that addresses their learning needs as well as challenge and enrich their instructional experience in their area of giftedness. These twice exceptional (2E) learners are not always adequately served in schools that don't recognize the need to provide appropriate services.

Many 2E students, however, do have school district personnel who are trained and willing to provide appropriate services to meet their needs. In most cases, the 2E students who are served will be from the majority culture and male. As an overlooked, underserved group, ethnically diverse 2E students are less likely to be identified and able to access appropriate services that meet both their need for challenge as well as their need for support services. More recently, several researchers have begun to expand the 2E definition to include cultural minorities and a new label has developed that addresses their uniqueness.

3E or Gifted Cubed

There is a more appropriate label (see Gifted Home Schooler's Forum brochure) that includes the special designation of a cultural minority group gifted learner with disabling conditions (Davis & Robinson, in press). A major challenge of addressing needs of gifted students with disabilities is that giftedness and disability often end up canceling each other out, presenting an "average-looking" individual. Teachers who are close to their students and sensitive to learning needs and differences are usually more capable of seeing the difference and the 'sparks' that students demonstrate when they are engaged in content activities of high interest. Highly motivated gifted students with disabilities will seek

out opportunities for enrichment, engagement, and participation in academic competitions.

Teachers and other school personnel must believe and accept that it is possible for a student to be gifted and also have a disabling condition. For example, a student who has very high scores and grades in mathematics, but may not do well in reading. Oftentimes, these students will be placed in low reading groups or be served for a disability (such as dyslexia) but not receive the acceleration or enrichment needed to keep him motivated and learning in his area of giftedness—mathematics.

Ethnically diverse students as a group are also more likely to be victimized by harsh school discipline practices. As a result, many students who have high potential could end up suspended or worse, expelled, due to discipline policies when teachers are not culturally competent and don't have a clear understanding of how students express themselves and lack the capacity to build trusting relationships. When trust and high expectations are established in classrooms, teachers are more likely to see the strengths that students demonstrate in response to engaging instruction.

Supporting 3E learners

The following tips and strategies may be useful for teachers working with diverse gifted students with exceptional conditions:

- Help them embrace their own giftedness, their areas of strength may need more emphasis than those of other students
- Accept opportunities to take cultural competency training
- Help 3E students feel a sense of belonging in advanced learner classrooms by including them in the conversation, pairing them with sensitive students or students who have something in common with them
- Invite culturally diverse guest speakers who can talk about their own experience with education and how they became successful over time
- Engage mentors to work regularly with your students
- Ensure that students have the resources they need for in-school and out-of-school enrichment
- Engage parents and help them understand the full evaluation and placement process, the laws, and their role as advocates
- Provide a resource library for family and community use
- Use family members to assist as 'cultural agents' by providing resources within the community and information about community leaders who may be able to provide

continued on page 19

taking the creative leap

continued from page 3

able to brainstorm responses that ask them to look at things from different perspectives, they develop the empathy needed to consider and combine multiple viewpoints. If they are able to offer their thoughts freely, they engage in the risk-taking that is needed to share new and different ideas. **THP**

Reference

Rogers, C. (1962). Toward a theory of creativity. In C. Rogers (Ed.), *A source book for creative thinking* (pp.63-72). New York, NY: Scribner's.

socially scientific

continued from page 10

ogy (and its closely related kin, Augmented Reality) is a viable career path for innovators in the STEM disciplines. So, enthusiastically embrace, use, and rejuvenate your science class in 360 VR. **THP**

References

- Family Zone. (2017, January 19). Kids under 8yo spend 65% of their time on YouTube [Blog post]. Retrieved from www.familyzone.com/blog/what-kids-did-online-2016
- Merel, T. (2017, January 11). The reality of VR/AR Growth [Blog post]. Retrieved from <https://techcrunch.com/2017/01/11/the-reality-of-vr-ar-growth/>
- Roettgers, J. (2017, May 22). Study predicts fewer than 10 million monthly U.S. VR headset users this year, 17 million by 2019. [Blog post]. Retrieved from <http://variety.com/2017/digital/news/vr-headset-data-mau-2017-2019-1202440211/>

curriculum corner

continued from page 11

Choosing sophisticated curricular resources as a critical consumer of educational materials is essential. Consider the following elements of a curriculum unit and if these question components are present:

1. Additional Extension/Enrichment questions that provide more complexity,
2. Varied questions touching on all cognitive levels of learning and understanding,
3. Guidance and suggestions for how questions within the curriculum can be modified and adapted to be more complex as needed.

Enhancing opportunities for students to develop high-level questions is an important element in advanced curriculum design and delivery. Critically contemplating the use of questioning in the curriculum has the potential to enhance the critical thinking opportunities presented to students

through advanced questioning. Educators should review the questioning sets in classroom curriculum for sufficiently advanced cognitive levels and increase the challenge level by evaluating and revising questions. **THP**

Additional Reading

Shaunessy-Dedrick, E. (2005). *Questioning strategies for teaching the gifted (The practical strategies series in gifted education)*. Waco, TX: Prufrock Press.

special populations

continued from page 12

- support and share the message about specialized services
- Provide opportunities to allow students to demonstrate their giftedness in front of their peers (school programs, bulletin boards, class presentations, competitions, etc.) to increase their self-esteem
- Empower students with self-advocacy skills so that they can play an active role in determining what kind of instruction and activities are most effective for them

As our school districts improve efforts to identify and provide services for diverse gifted learners, the identification of ethnically diverse students with disabling conditions should also improve. To help with these talent search efforts, educators are encouraged to look more deeply at students who have been labeled with special or disabling conditions to determine if there are students within these groups who may also have high potential in a particular content area. These 3E students deserve attention for their gifts as well as the support needed to address their special needs. **THP**

References

- Davis, J.L. & Robinson, S.A. (in press). Being 3e, a new look at culturally diverse gifted learners with exceptional conditions: An examination of the issues and solutions for educators and families. In S.B. Kaufmann (Ed.) *Twice Exceptional: Supporting and Educating Bright and Creative Students with Learning Difficulties*. (pp. 280-291)UK: Oxford University Press
- Gifted Homeschoolers Forum (nd). Gifted Cube: a downloadable brochure <https://giftedhomeschoolers.org/ghf-press/gifted-cubed/>

Resources

- Mayer, R. D., & Moore, J. L. III. (2016). The intersection of race, disability, and giftedness: Understanding the education needs of twice-exceptional, African American students. *Gifted Child Today*, 39, 98–104.
- Robinson, S. A. (2016b). Triple Identity Theory: A theoretical framework for understanding gifted Black males with dyslexia. *Urban Education Research and Policy Annuals*, 4, 147–158.
- Rivera, J. (Sept 2016). This bias may be hurting your gifted or 2e kid. www.jadeannrivera.com/implicit-racial-bias/
- U.S. Department of Education (2016) www.dyslexicadvantage.org/dyslexia-and-accommodations-new-ada-guidelines-2016-for-school-and-work/