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Identification of Gifted Students with Learning Disabilities: Case Study of a New Jersey Urban/Suburban School District

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Abstract

The purpose of this case study is to explore the extent to which gifted students with learning disabilities are being identified and supported by examining educators' experience and practice. A district categorized as urban/suburban in a multi-cultural context was chosen for this single case study. Purposive sampling was used which yielded data related to the identification process and how it is implemented by administrators, teachers, and other service providers in the sample district. The results of this study reveal that the sample district has a program that follows state regulations for gifted and talented (GT) identification in elementary grades. However, the district's gifted program does not incorporate various subject areas that meet students' multiple intelligences; rather, they emphasize English language arts and mathematics at the expense of the creative arts, applied science, technology, and engineering courses. The results of this study lead to a recommendation that students' strengths and weaknesses be addressed concurrently by a collaborative team of special education, 504 plan, and gifted and talented (GT) departments. In effect, all students should be exposed to all subject areas from an early age to avoid marginalization.

To my Lord and personal Savior,

Jesus Christ.

To my amazing husband,

Martin.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Introduction to the Problem

Albert Einstein, known best for the theory of relativity and major revolutionary discoveries in physics and other sciences, did not start as an outstanding student. According to the *Encyclopedia of World Biographies* (2015), Einstein was initially thought to be a low-performing student whose teachers feared he could be mentally retarded because he did not speak fluently until he was 9 years old, yet he started playing the violin at age 6. By the time he was 12, he began the study of points, lines, and surfaces, later known as geometry. Despite these achievements, he still had challenges in formal learning and did not like school. He was later expelled from school due to his negative attitude, which was said to be adversely affecting his peers. However, by the age of 26, he had conquered several personal problems to complete his doctoral research in Bern, Switzerland. Einstein was awarded the Nobel Prize for Physics in 1921 as the founder of the law of the photoelectric effect (Gale Research Inc., 1998-2014).

Students manifesting similar traits as Einstein draw attention to uncommon combinations of exceptionalities in certain individuals. For example, Sousa (2003) known for his study of how the brain learns, wondered why many potentially gifted children were never identified, and as such, did not succeed in education. He listed several exceptionally successful persons in history who started off struggling through school but at some point received the support that helped them to use their ingenuity to excel and transform their fields of endeavor. These include: Sir Isaac Newton, the poet Percy Shelley, James Whistler and Edgar Alan Poe, Charles Darwin, British historian Edward Gibbon, Gregor Mendel, Thomas Edison, Winston Churchill, and Albert Einstein, thus

questioning the suitability of traditional educational programs for exceptionally gifted individuals.

Although giftedness and learning disability appear paradoxical in practice, recent research indicates that both phenomena sometimes manifest together in certain members of the learning community. The coexistence of both exceptionalities continues to challenge effective teaching for all students within today's heterogeneous classrooms. Hughes and Rollins (2009) addressed the difficulty in identifying students with gifts and talents (GT) only through the customary method of intelligence tests, instead of using a variety of measures (Davis, Rim, & Siegele, 2010). They called for clear understanding of steps necessary in the identification and placement of exceptional students in gifted programs.

Alfred Binet, in 1905, had invented a scale to evaluate individual cognitive ability through the following measures: fluid reasoning, knowledge, quantitative reasoning, visual-spatial processing, and working memory. Binet placed Intelligence Quotient (IQ) as a ratio of mental age to chronological age, with 100 being the average (Public Broadcasting Service, 1998).

Terman's (1925) approach focused on intelligence alone, and was aimed at identifying human intelligence in a study of the psychology of genius conducted in the early 1900s. His ambitious study of intellectual abilities of individuals with above-average intelligence, based on the Binet criteria, was aimed at determining different levels of human intelligence.

Terman's (1926) experiment included 1,000 students who had Intelligence Quotient (IQ) scores of 135 and above. The researcher concluded that gifted individuals

came mostly from families with likewise high intelligence, were slightly superior to most other children in overall well-being, and were generally more adapted to learning than other students (Terman, 1926). Following this groundbreaking study which continued for a life time, Terman used IQ to explain why some children fail academically, and as a measure for selecting gifted children for distinguished educational settings (Goleman, 1995). The IQ curve became the determinant for students slated for greatness and those destined for failure (Hegarty, 2007).

From the late 20th century, Terman's (1926) theory had been challenged by researchers who argued that a gifted student may also have disabilities, and questioned the emphasis on IQ as the predominant method of determining giftedness or overall academic proficiency; researchers also argued that many gifted students may remain unidentified when applying Terman's method of identification. Al-Hroub (2010), a visiting scholar at the University of Cambridge, conducted research that highlighted broader definitions of giftedness and learning disabilities; he stated that Sidney Marland, a onetime U.S. commissioner for education, enlarged the demographic coverage of the gifted category by defining gifted and talented (GT) pupils as those identified by specialists as possessing exceptional aptitudes who are capable of high academic achievement. In turn, Al-Hroub recommended that these students should be provided with differentiated educational programs and/or services, beyond those generally delivered in regular school programs, to be able to contribute adequately to self and society (Marland, 1972, as cited in Russell, Hayes, & Dockery, 1988).

Employing IQ tests as the only basis for students' placement into gifted and talented programs negates more recent studies of intelligence. The Multiple Intelligence

(MI) theory of Gardner (1993), deflated the common notion that IQ testing is the broad measure of intelligence and identification of giftedness. Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, as demonstrated by people in every community, comprised eight different forms of intelligence, not all based on the IQ assessment scale, including: linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, musical, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic intelligences. The MI theory supports teachers' daily experience with students who study and understand concepts in various ways, enabling teachers to have a conceptual basis for pedagogy and diversification of assessment (Smith, 2002, 2008). As a result, there are modern approaches for meeting the needs of learners in today's classrooms.

Moreover, Al-Hroub (2010) traced three decades of focus on the important issues affecting dual exceptional children, lamenting that many of these children go unrecognized due to attendant disabilities, so they end up sitting in classrooms not considered for services for either gifts and talents or Learning Disabilities (LD) programs and related services. Despite being gifted, these students are regarded as having average potentials. In effect, these students' abilities are "masked" by their disabilities, thereby making identification difficult and time consuming for educators and service providers (Yssel, Adam-Clarke & Jones, 2014).

Furthermore, Yssel, Prater, and Smith (2010) studied appropriate programming and typical characteristics of students identified as gifted with learning disabilities (GLD) and affirmed the use of the Response to Intervention (RTI) model for identifying students for GLD services. They asserted this method served to observe all students and provided an avenue for scientific-based intervention through a tiered method of identification. As

such, individual strengths are harnessed and weaknesses are addressed in a continuum of prescribed services. Therefore, identifying students and providing them with services as early as possible are essential steps to academic achievement. In effect, there should be a district-wide pattern for teachers and school administrators to follow in identifying gifted students with learning disabilities (GLD), also referred to as twice exceptional (2e) students (Yssel, Prater, & Smith, 2010).

Background of the Study

In 1975, the U.S. Congress passed the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA). Before then, many children with disabilities were not identified in public education but were left to struggle unsupported in the general classroom. The passage of EAHCA (1975) offered financial assistance to states to help state educators to develop and improve educational programs for students eligible for special education and related services. The EAHCA was revised as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1997 and improved as Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) in 2004 (Office of Special Education Programs, n.d.). These acts gave the mandate for Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) for students with special needs in district schools across the nation.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 safeguarded the rights of individuals with disabilities in programs that get federal financial funding, requiring school districts to provide a free education to every qualified child with a disability in the school district's jurisdiction. An appropriate education is determined on individual basis and is provided at public expense alongside special education and related services under the supervision and direction of qualified professionals without charge to the student.

FAPE has to meet state educational standards and includes a standard preschool, elementary, or secondary education for each child in conformity with an IEP (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

The requirements of FAPE under IDEA are more rigorous and detailed than those under section 504. IEP requirements apply to states receiving financial assistance under IDEA, while a 504 plan is personalized for students receiving services within the federal rehabilitation program. The cost of FAPE includes tuition, room and board, psychological and medical services necessary for diagnostic and evaluative purposes, and adequate transportation in both public and private schools as found necessary. Students may be placed in a private school that meets their program need at district expense if the district cannot provide the stipulated program (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

Within a school district, the director of special services streamlines an easy-to-follow program for children with special needs from pre-K to age 21 through programs mandated by state and federal laws for individuals with disabilities. The Department of Special Education provides services to students with disabilities who are found eligible through special education programs located in all schools within the district. The director collaborates with designated staff to provide related/supportive services through IEP's (Gilchrist, 2014). Districts run inclusive classrooms for the interaction of students with disabilities with their regular education peers in order to support and strengthen the accomplishments of all students and prepare them for living in the wider society. Compliance is a major requirement of IDEA, so the director of special services must ensure that the district adheres to all legal requirements of IDEA (2004).

In the state of New Jersey, where this study is based, the Daniel Two-Part Test is

utilized for inclusion placement, and it answers the following questions: "(1) Can education in the general education classroom with supplementary aids and services be achieved satisfactorily? (2) If a student is placed in a more restrictive setting, is the student integrated to the maximum extent appropriate?" (Yell, 2012, p. 278). So, the Child Study Team (CST) is to adhere to this rule while determining student placement or when teacher or parents request a change in a student's class setting. The director and service providers are to work together to guide parents, and teachers on the legal mandates. Also, students have to be provided with what is needed and considered appropriate for academic progress, not only parental desires. Efforts should always be made to avoid litigation by following the legal procedure. The use of current guidelines for IEP drafting will also enable districts to be legally safeguarded.

Students with disabilities who are gifted and talented stand on a different platform as they require two sets of services. This is not a simple phenomenon as they require interdisciplinary collaboration of professionals within the district. For the purpose of this study, elementary school general education teachers and administrators will be among those to be interviewed to determine how teachers identify gifted students for placement in the LRE.

Statement of the Problem

The importance of complying with federal and state regulations regarding a student's placement in the LRE and providing an appropriate education in an individualized format has continued to warrant review in diverse school settings. Essex (2016) explained IDEA, 2004 provisions that students with disabilities should be granted free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment based on their IEP,

so schools are to meet the needs of all students. Therefore, in spite of how new teachers are in the system, it is their professional responsibility to collaborate with other educators to ensure compliance with this mandate.

Shellenbarger (2014) asserted that inadequate teacher preparation programs, training, and experience have created a major gap in gifted and talented education. This deficiency has affected a distinct group of students who are gifted and talented but also restricted by specific learning disabilities. In his view, teachers and service providers lack adequate awareness and experience, so they do not understand the phenomenon of dual exceptionalities as perceived in GLD. The researcher identified a need to inquire whether educators of the gifted become aware of the peculiarities of these groups of students through on-the-job experience, or if they are prepared by their college education to identify and teach "twice exceptional" students (Shellenbarger, 2014, p.118).

Through exploring the point of view of teachers and service providers in a New Jersey urban/suburban school district, this study intends to learn the means of identification of students with learning disabilities who are gifted and talented. This researcher sought to understand the process of identifying gifted students in grades 3-6 with learning disabilities in that district. This study focused on two elementary schools and one middle school with emphasis on the practical classroom experience of various educators.

Purpose of the Study

Shellenbarger (2014), in a study of how gifted and talented students were served in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, identified inadequate teacher preparation programs and limited training and experience in what best met the needs of gifted

students as a gap in gifted and talented education. She pinpointed lack of additional certification for educators of gifted and talented students as one reason for deficiency in identification and inadequate service of gifted students in the State of Pennsylvania. With such a gap in identification of gifted students, the purpose of this case study is to explore the extent to which gifted students whose exceptionalities were complicated by learning disabilities are being identified and supported in school districts in the neighboring state of New Jersey. Therefore this study examined the district's socio-political context in relation to GLD, determined how GLD students were identified, and recommended a method for appropriate placement of GLD students.

Research Question

The general research question in this study was as follows: What is the process for identifying gifted students with learning disabilities in a New Jersey urban/suburban school district? The criteria for identifying gifted students, students with disabilities, and gifted students with learning disabilities were examined. Semi-structured interview and group interviews were the primary methods of gathering information. Field research were based on open-ended questions to participants.

Rationale

School district administrators have the responsibility of determining multiple measures for identifying gifted and talented children for educational placement and services. The current rules are not statewide in New Jersey and there were no specific criterion for measuring giftedness and no statewide mandated assessments (NJDOE, 2004). By the middle school level, many students begin to show clear signs of academic struggle as they advance in grade levels. Therefore Bisland (2004) stated that with

increasing difficulty in academic rigor and demand, gifted students with special needs begin to struggle in school, so they need support to prevent failure.

The GLD subgroup was chosen for this research because they form the largest category of gifted and disabled students and were often left undiscovered because "their gifts mask their difficulties, making it impossible to know who they are" (Bisland, 2004, p. 52). As such, they are viewed as neglected in the classroom due to lack of specific identification, screening, and servicing procedures in school districts for that population (Brody & Mills, 1997, Petzer, 2000, Bisland, 2004). Therefore, a study of the district method for identification of GLD will be beneficial to the children, their families, and the school district as a whole.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it is important to understand the process for identifying GLD in a New Jersey school district as a means of supporting a unique set of students. This research focused on how the district had been identifying gifted students with learning disabilities based on the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) 2004 of the federal government. Also, state and district policies were basic in the understanding of this process.

After six years of working with twice exceptional students, Jeweler, Barnes-Robinson, Shevitz, and Weinfeld (2008), observed that many GLD students are not adequately challenged in class, stating that they were "those students that may not be able to read a science textbook, but may show their knowledge of physics by constructing an elaborate model of a roller coaster that demonstrates the concept of friction and centrifugal force" (p. 41). Since school districts should ascertain that students receive

rigorous instruction based on state standards, it became necessary for exceptional students to be identified and placed in the appropriate settings where they could be supported with research-based strategies.

Jeweler, Barnes-Robinson, Shevitz, and Weinfeld (2008) also reasoned that if GLD students have ability to work at their proper cognitive levels with peers, they will apply their learning styles to develop intellectual skills and potentially become high-achieving students. Therefore, educators are faced with the responsibility of identifying students for program placements based on understanding of the gifted and talented combined with learning disabilities. So, it is essential to be aware of the signs of both exceptionalities in a child in order to fulfill the Child Find program directive of the federal government through the IDEA (2004) (Küpper, 2011).

Therefore, this study would enable teachers, school leaders, guidance counselors, special education service providers, school social workers, and parents to be aware of the indicators of GLD, and be able to recommend students for the right educational placement. Also, teachers will be prepared to focus their services based on the IEP and research-based strategies. This will reduce low achievement and help students work to their fullest potential.

Assumptions and Limitations

Assumptions. It was assumed in this research that elementary schools had most of the students that are yet to be identified for both giftedness and learning disabilities. Also, these children would likely be discovered by the time they completed fifth grade, as their exceptionalities should have manifested at that point. Another assumption is that teachers were trained to be able to discover the discrepancies in student performance by

knowing the abilities and achievement differences. It was also assumed that IQ or cognitive tests played a major role in the way students were identified for gifted programs. Also, the school district of study was classified as both urban and suburban, so it was assumed that it had characteristics that were widespread across the state of New Jersey.

Limitations. A major limitation of this study was that the participants were a heterogeneous group of professionals who had varied levels of exposure but served in the same district, so they were likely to express diverse views on the prevailing topics. This study was limited to the process of identification of students with learning disabilities for gifted and talented programs and services. The setting was limited to two elementary schools and one middle school, all in an urban/suburban school district in New Jersey. The schools were chosen for in-depth study. As was previously stated, these grades were chosen because most students are identified for specialized programs during those grade levels. Also, time for interviews was limited since busy professionals were not always available for continuous reviews. Therefore, some topics were not be fully explored, due to the extent of the availability of data among the sample group.

Delimitation. The delimitation of this case study was the sample size of six teachers and four administrators who were selected for the research, because they work directly with students in grades three to six of a New Jersey urban/suburban school district. It was possible that some had bias based on previous experiences in either gifted and talent programs or learning disabilities services. To delimit the study, professionals of both gender, multi-ethnicities, and with different length of years of teaching experience were interviewed.

Nature of the Study

A case study is a process of learning about a phenomenon or form of knowledge. This research utilized the intrinsic case study method, which helped to understand a specific situation as an entity. Here, the case (district) did not have to be representative of other cases but had a unique population that was of professional interest to the researcher (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Creswell (2014) declared that a case study is a form of phenomenological research in which the researcher provides in-depth enquiry of a particular case. In this study, an educational program was explored by interviewing professionals in the field.

This research was not based on tests or test scores. It is a qualitative case study that utilized in-depth interview of key educators in a small urban/suburban school district. This involved historical review of exceptional students through theories that demonstrate concurrent manifestation of giftedness and learning disabilities. The interview data was analyzed and compared with theories and state policies to learn from the pros and cons of the practice within the district.

Definition of Key Terms

Identification. This is the evaluation of needs with the aim of assigning students to educational settings that will enable them to grow academically, emotionally, and socially (Richert, 2003). The process of identification develops from selection to placement in the appropriate educational setting (Matthews & Shaunessy, 2010) through utilizing various measures that test level of skill, ability, attainment, as well as diverse concepts and ways of learning (Johnsen, 2008).

Discrepancy model. The IQ-achievement discrepancy model is a means of

ascertaining if there is a substantial variance between student performance on a general intelligence test (e.g., an IQ test such as the WISC-IV) and how they perform on an achievement test (e.g., the Woodcock Johnson Achievement Test). The IQ achievement discrepancy model is generally utilized in identifying children with learning disabilities. If a student's score on the IQ test is at least two standard deviations (30 points) higher than the scores on an achievement test, the student is said to have a significant discrepancy between IQ and achievement, and thus has a learning disability (Office of Special Education, U.S. Department of Education, 2007).

Specific Learning Disabilities/Learning Disabilities (SLD/LD). "Specific learning disability" is defined as "perceptually impaired" and is a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. A specific learning disability is determined by utilizing a response to scientifically based interventions methodology as described in N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.4(h) 6. (New Jersey Special Education Code, 2015).

Giftedness. This term refers to the demonstration of outstanding levels of aptitude, or exceptional ability to reason and learn, or competence which shows in documented performance or achievement in the top 10% in one or more domains of math, music, language, painting, dance, sports, etc. The development of this ability or talent is a lifelong process, and there may be hindrances to attainment of giftedness for certain persons due to physical or learning disabilities (National Association for Gifted

Children, March 2010).

Students with gifts and talents. This is the term currently favored instead of *gifted and talented students* because it emphasizes the person rather than the exceptionality and is consistent with usage in the field of special education. It includes students with both hidden or evident talents and abilities (National Association for Gifted Children, March 2010).

Twice Exceptional (2e). This term refers to a learner who demonstrates outstanding performance or prospect in particular areas and has one or more disabilities that may hinder achievement (e.g., learning disability, attention deficit hyperactive disorder, Asperger's syndrome, or a physical or sensory disability) (National Association for Gifted Children, March 2010).

Gifted Students with Learning Disabilities (GLD). This term describes students who are highly gifted and talented and also have a specific learning disability (National Association for Gifted Children, March 2010).

Response to Intervention (RTI). This term references a multi-tier approach to the early identification and support of students with learning and behavior needs. The RTI process begins with high-quality instruction and universal screening of all children in the general education classroom. Struggling learners are provided with interventions at increasing levels of intensity to accelerate their rate of learning. These services may be provided by a variety of personnel, including general education teachers, special educators, and other specialists (RTI Action Network, National Center for Learning Disabilities, n.d.).

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). The IDEA's Least Restrictive

Environment or mainstreaming policy is a rule that school districts are required to educate students with disabilities in regular classrooms with their nondisabled peers in the school they would attend if not disabled, to the maximum extent appropriate. (Wright & Wright, 2006)

Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). This is a mandate of the U.S. Department of Education. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 maintains the rights of individuals with disabilities in programs that get federal financial funding, requiring school districts to provide a free education to every qualified child with disability in the school district's jurisdiction. An appropriate education is determined on individual basis and is provided at public expense alongside special education and related services under the supervision and direction of qualified professionals without charge to the student. It also has to meet state educational standards for each child and includes a standard preschool, elementary, or secondary education. This should be in conformity with an IEP (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

Child Study Team. The child study team (CST) is group of professionals of different field who are engaged by the Board of Education to offer teachers and parents the expertise needed to serve their children with different forms if academic needs. These they do through consulting, evaluating, and prescribing research-based strategies to enable each child receive appropriate education (Special Ed. News, 2009).

Phenomenological research. This derives from the philosophy and psychology that focus on experiences of individuals on the theme as the product for analysis and conclusion of a study. It usually involves interviews and observations on the field of interest (Creswell, 2014).

Organization of the Remainder of the Study

Chapter II of this study is a review of current research in gifted and talented education and learning disabilities programs, especially when they manifest together in some members of the school population. Chapter III is the qualitative methodology and procedure of data collection and analysis, while chapter IV discusses the implications of the results, thereby providing recommendations for practice and replication of this research in other settings. Chapter V is a general conclusion of the study.

Chapter Conclusion

This chapter introduced the need for school districts to constantly update educators on current research and best practices in educating today's children. This study attempts to understand the importance of identifying students as GLD or 2e. Therefore, this chapter has established the need to:

1. Learn about teachers' knowledge and experiences in the process of identifying students for evaluation and placement in special programs;
2. Study schools and district-wide methods for identifying students for placement in gifted/learning disabilities programs;
3. Contribute recent research findings for providing adequate programs and services for twice-exceptional children within the district.

Chapter II: Literature Review

The review of literature includes exploration of important topics spanning definitions, history, and research on the identification of exceptional students for gifted and learning disabilities programs in elementary schools. This section focuses on theoretical and research reports of available literature based on origins of Gifted and Talented (GT), history of Learning Disabilities (LD), theories of exceptionalities, Response to Intervention (RTI), and data-driven decision making for identifying students for GLD services. The goal of this chapter is to synthesize diverse research views in order to establish the need areas for both teachers and students who are confronted with the complexities of dual exceptionalities in classroom settings. Therefore, this in-depth review will result in providing background for the rest of the research.

Origin of Gifted and Talented Program (GT)

Terman (1926) studied the genetics of genius and acknowledged Galton's (1869) writings on genius as an inherited trait. This was the starting point for the study of individual differences with regard to giftedness and human intelligence. These critical studies were to ascertain methods of evaluating human aptitude. Terman equated giftedness with character and morals as supported in Woodworth's Test of Psychotic Tendencies, which is a test for abnormal behavior in people (Pîrlog, Rada, Prejbeanu, & Cara, 2014). Through years of longitudinal study of geniuses, Terman concluded that gifted children were exceptional in practically every aspect of life. However, he noted that there are still exceptions to the rule.

The purpose of Terman's (1926) research was to determine the level of intelligence of one child in comparison to his peers. Based on gaining insight into the root

and totality of giftedness Terman's study was meant to provide all students the necessary tools for educational advancement. The participants for this mixed method research study were one to five children chosen from each class of 30-50 students selected based on teacher recommendation. This formed an experimental group of 643 subjects, which was 6-8% of the students in grades three through eight who were tested with the Stanford Binet assessment to find students whose IQ ranged within 134–200. These students were considered of exceptional giftedness. Terman's earliest conclusion was that giftedness is linked with heredity and that gifted families get to a point where their tracts are no longer being upheld.

In addition, Terman (1926) asserted that children with over 140 IQ are generally higher performing in personality and character trait than the general population and are average or above average in social intelligence and play activities. Also, he observed that gifted girls had greater masculinity than other girls. They were more creative, advanced in learning, and 90% of boys and more than 80% of gifted girls go to college and often would graduate with honors. However, Terman's study provided data averaged in races, which showed the entire African-American race grouped as one race without subgroup or explanation of what was meant by the term used in 1926: *Negro*. There were nine different Jewish groups and several Caucasian groups. There was no clear definition of what constitutes the general population, so the study is limited and racially restricted and is difficult to generalize in a multi-ethnic setting.

Among numerous critics of Terman's (1926) longitudinal study, Borland (2004) disputed, "The sample was far from representative either socio-economically or racially and ethnically is quite clear…racially and ethnically, the sample was also atypical of the

general school-age population" (p. 12). Borland further contended that 4-5% of the adult general population at the time of that study were working as professionals, yet 50% of the fathers of the sample group were identified. Also there were almost no African-Americans in the sample group. This brings to question whether this was a true test of giftedness or a demonstration of Caucasian middle class attributes. Nevertheless, Terman's (2016) research is important as it was the only study that helped to understand students' response to aptitude tests on a large scale and revealed superstitions about gifted children in the early 20th century, thereby providing data for early federal educational reforms.

In a recent study, Seedorf (2014) traced the origin of identification of students for gifted programs to Terman (1925) who provided a score point for eligibility. From that study, an Intelligence Quotient (IQ) score of more than 140 from the Stanford–Binet Intelligence Test qualified a student as gifted and talented (Dale, Finch, Mcintosh, Roethlisberger, & Finch, 2014). By 1972, more measures were added to the IQ score. For over 20 years, researchers have agreed that twice exceptional students should have the opportunity to participate in gifted instruction (Baum, Owen, & Dixon, 1991; Silverman, 1989; Van Tassel-Baska, 1991). With the expanded definitions of GT, such as Marland's (1972) report, and Renzulli's (1984) Three-Ring definition, a new awareness was created as researchers continued to discover the need to evaluate students' varied abilities and not just IQ scores. Therefore, current identification processes ought to correspond with these broader definitions of giftedness.

History of Learning Disabilities

According to Lerner and Kline (2006), the term learning disability (LD) was first introduced in 1963 as the result of a meeting of a small group of concerned parents in Chicago who sought to unite a series of disabilities they found difficult to categorize. That was the beginning of the organization known today as Learning Disabilities Association of America (LDAA). Since then, defining learning disabilities has been an onerous task. Learning disability was first defined by the U.S. Office of Education: "

> The term specific learning disabilities means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculation". (U.S. Office of Education, 1968)

In 1977 there was an additional criterion for LD, the presence of "a severe discrepancy between achievement and intellectual ability in one or more of these areas (USDOE, 1977, P. G1082).

IDEA 2004 (effective July 1, 2005) and IDEA-2004 federal regulations (effective October 13, 2006) defined Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) as "a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language" (United States Code, 2006, p. 30). SLD manifests in speaking, reading, listening, writing, calculating, and even thinking (Yell, Shriner, & Katsiyannis, 2006). This definition emphasizes psychological processes in understanding or using language, or doing mathematical calculations. It also lists some conditions that may be present in a person with learning disabilities (LD), and warns that environmental, cultural, and

economic circumstances do not warrant classification for services. Similarly, the New Jersey definition based on IDEA 2004 referred to LD as,

> Any disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations. (NJAC, 2010)

They explain conditions that are included such as "perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia" and those not included, which are "primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, of mental retardation, of emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage" (NJAC, 2010).

The National Joint Committee of Learning Disabilities' definition further explores the physiological basis of LD, while reiterating that there could be a combination of conditions and disabilities with LD. The committee also emphasized significance of the difficulties faced by individuals with LD, because it is an internal problem within an individual (NJCLD, 1990). IDEA 2004 identified mathematics calculations and mathematical reasoning as two mathematics problem areas for students with LD (IDEA 2004, PL.108 – 446). Difficulties in either of these areas can interfere with student achievement in school and with success in later life. Bos and Vaughan (2012), whose research center on co-teaching, working with paraprofessionals, response to intervention, assessment, and technology, reported that students with learning and behavior problems manifest these learning difficulties. However, there are criteria for identifying students with specific learning disabilities and the process for their placement in intervention and

special education services. The process of reviewing cases is directed by scientific methods of assessment and laws that define the persistence and severity of individual special needs and the extent of a student's response to instructional modifications within the instructional setting (Bos & Vaughan, 2012).

A closer look at these definitions reveals that students with talents are solely dependent on linguistic and mathematical skills and may demonstrate strength and special talents according to their multiple intelligences. The strengths provided by the NJCLD definition affirm that there could be a combination of conditions in exceptional children. Hence, it is possible for a student to have strengths and weaknesses concurrently. In addition, Pereles, Omdal, and Baldwin (2009) disapproved of the old system of identification and service delivery for special services, known as "wait to fail," in which interventions and services are not provided for students until they fail and qualify for special services. Similarly, IDEA (2004) states:

> When determining whether a child has a specific learning disability . . . local educational agency shall not be required to take into consideration whether a child has a severe discrepancy between achievement and intellectual ability [a school] may use a process that determines if the child responds to scientific, research-based intervention as part of the evaluation procedures.
>
> (Wrightslaw, 2004, p. 97).

Pereles, Omdal, and Baldwin (2009) revealed that during their field observation, it was evident that due to difficulty in serving a diversity of learners, educators sometimes take the shortcut of categorizing some learners as students with special needs in order to provide them with modifications and accommodations necessary for academic progress.

Nevertheless, this does not serve twice exceptional students because they do not fit into all regular programs of the school system. Rather, they demonstrated needs that challenge conventional strategies while navigating a range of exceptionalities. Thus, there is need for constant attention to help bridge the gap in education.

In a study to discover variations in the rate of identification of pupils with learning disabilities from 1990-91 and 2008-09, Mcleskey, Landers, Hoopey and Williamson (2011) analyzed data from the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) displaying identification rate and annual placement of students with learning disabilities. The result of their study demonstrated significant differences between the states in their methods of placement between the two time periods. Data showed that most states moved towards placing students with LD in the least restrictive environment from 2008 onward. However, this research was only based on statistics and did not have uniform information from all states to determine the effect of placement in different settings. Data disclosed that there was no significant influence on facts, trends, or in the percentage of students with LD in different settings. For instance, Vermont did not provide 2007-2009 data for the USDOE placement or identification rates for students with LD; as such, the information provided was incomplete. For instance, only 0.16% of Vermont students were identified. This lack of information from Vermont in 2007-2009 resulted in a slight reduction in national data for identification rate with LD, slightly lower general education (GE) placement, and slightly higher placement in more restrictive settings during those years.

Mcleskey et al. (2011) were able to identify changes in identification rates through major federal and state initiatives such as mainstreaming, integration, regular

education initiatives (such as inclusion), and were focused on the use of highly effective instructional practices. Therefore, they exposed the need for further research to ascertain the quality of instruction being provided to students with LD in separate settings and how they determine academic growth. As such, they inferred that unprecedented changes have taken place in the identification and placement of students with LD since 1990, and that more states have moved towards educating students with LD in less restrictive environments. Thus, there is a need to continue to work on improving quality of instruction to make for effective learning for students with LD.

The Concept of Giftedness

The concept of giftedness has no precise definition. Every attempt to define it falls on a continuum based on diverse beliefs and philosophies. Studies in psychology, history, politics, and economics have developed certain features that are known as evidence of giftedness, following measures of aptitudes discovered in the 20th century (Callahan & Davis, 2013). One of the foremost tests of giftedness is the Alfred Binet Intelligence Quotient (IQ) test, which was utilized by Terman (1925) in his famous research that spanned decades. That was only the beginning of the work on giftedness (Callahan & Davis, 2013). With so many different views on the definition of giftedness, Callahan and Davis (2013) concluded that there is no complete definition; therefore multiple criteria should guide in the consideration of a student for gifted education. These criteria will be according to standards that are based on evidence and not opinion; therefore a procedure for identification on the field must be based on tried and tested strategies that will improve student achievement.

Callahan and Davis (2013) related their study to Howard Gardner's' Multiple Intelligence theory, arguing that it is unwholesome to rely on a single measure for identifying intelligence or giftedness; as such, IQ is not a sole parameter for identifying giftedness. Also, Renzulli and Delcourt's 2013 study (as cited in Callahan & Hertberg-Davis, ed. 2013) observed that Terman was opposed to relying totally on a test. In effect, test scores are not the only factors for judging intellectual achievement. These researchers cautioned that test scores should not be used to deter children from specialized instruction or gifted education (Callahan & Hertberg-Davis, 2013).

The Three-Ring Conception of Giftedness. Renzulli's (1978) Three-Ring conception of giftedness is a theory that demonstrated the interaction between three notions that result in creative-productive accomplishment, affirming that above-average ability, creativity, and task commitment merge and result in gifted behaviors. Renzulli (1978) developed the Three-Ring Conception of Giftedness based on a study of the dynamics of outstanding human abilities. He noted that creative and resourceful individuals, who are outstanding and ingenious, demonstrate three "well-defined sets of interlocking clusters of traits," (p. 182), which he termed "above average ability, Task Commitment, and Creativity" (p. 182).

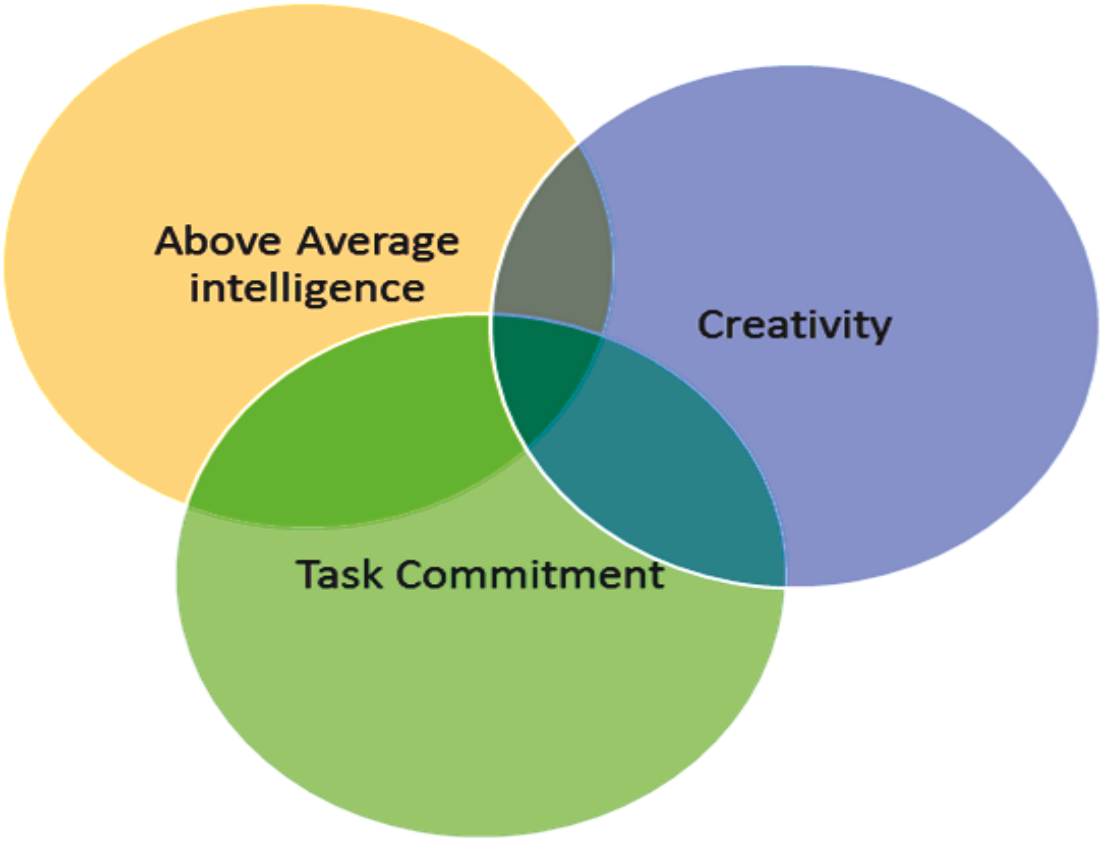

Figure 1. Renzulli's Three-Ring Conception of Giftedness. This figure illustrates how different clusters interact to create giftedness. Adapted from *The Revolving Door Identification Model* (p. 19), by J. S. Renzulli, S. M. Reis, and L.H. Smith, 1981, Mansfiled Center, CT: Creative Learning Press, Inc. Adapted with permission.

Renzulli (1984) proffered the following essential questions as the context for understanding gifted education: "(1) What makes giftedness? (2) How can we develop giftedness in young people and adults?" (p. 1). These questions challenge teachers to provide conditions to help students utilize their potentials for academic enrichment. Based on inquiry, Renzulli (1984) developed a plan for the concept of giftedness termed *The Enrichment Triad Model*, through which he explained the essence of giftedness and identifying students for gifted education. He proposed that gifted education should expose students to a wide range of disciplines, topics, and thinking processes, in order to

grow the creative thinking, problem solving, and critical thinking skills of students. This is bound to stimulate independence in studies so students can learn advance content and be able to solve real problems independently. Thus, he established that the interaction between relevant skills, creativity, and task motivation make for giftedness (Renzulli, 1984). Accordingly, each level of the enrichment triad supports the Three-Ring Conception to improve creativity and giftedness (see Figure 2).

Renzulli (1984) was of the view that the basis for identification should not be a unilateral or subjective measure, instead multiple criteria should be applied in assessing students for gifted placement. Speccifically, he proposed two kinds of giftedness: “schoolhouse giftedness” (p. 8) and “creative-productive giftedness” (p. 8). However, he emphasized that both types are essential in school and community and should be equally developed in a student who can succeed in future. Thus, Renzulli (2001), in a practical, research-based guide to enriching curriculum for every student, was concerned for individuals who are disadvantaged due to the traditional measures of assessment that are limited to IQ testing and other norm-refernced assessmets. Therefore, he proposed that since each student has potential strengths, a portfolio of those “abilities, interests, and learning styles “ (p. 49) should be devloped and added to the student’scognitive abilities levels in order to properly make decisions on individual student placement.

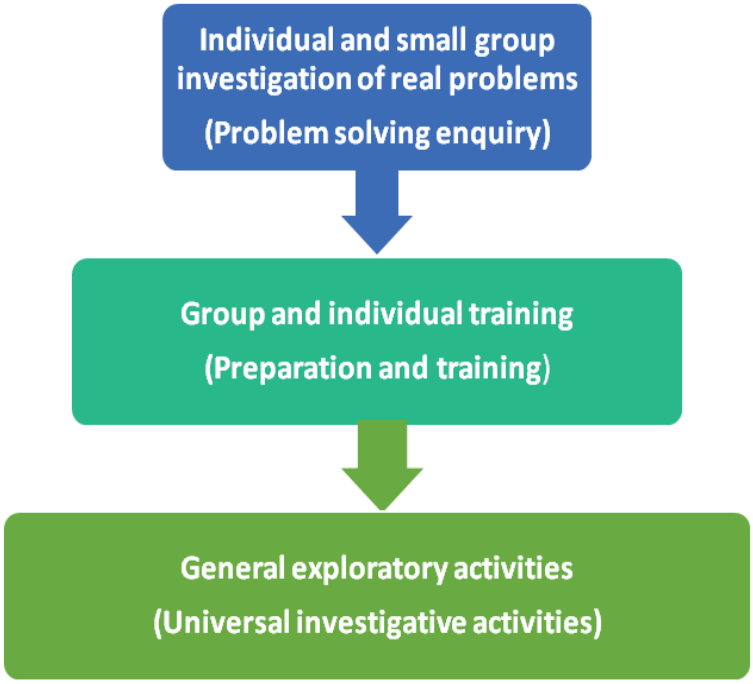

Figure 2. Renzulli's Enrichment Triad Model(ETM). This figure illustrates how the ETM supports the Three-Ring conception to improve creativity and giftedness. Adapted from *Enriching Curriculum for All Students* (p. 96), by J. S. Renzulli, 2001, Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press. Copyright 2001 by Sage Publications. Adapted with permission.

Revolving Door Identification Model (RDIM). Renzulli (1981) described the traditional approach of selecting students for GT programs as faulty, explaining there is no flexibility. Students are either selected or not, and if selected, they remain in the program for the entire year. Also, typically 5% of the general population is placed in the program, which is aligned to financial considerations, not on an educational basis. Renzulli (1981) termed this as a "you-have-it" or "you-don't-have-it" (i.e., all-or-nothing) approach (p. 3). Moreover, this method has been supported by most state regulations, which aligned GT identification to standardized test scores. Conversely, Renzulli (1981) recommended an identification system that utilizes the concept of

"differentiated giftedness that is derived from the best available research studies" (p. 5) on the phenomenon of gifted and talented education, termed the "Revolving Door Identification Model" RDIM (p. 5). This is a practical method of identification that uses data from test scores, products, presentation, anecdotal records, observations, teacher/peer/ self-ratings, and class performance. In which case, both regular and special curriculum are used for student placement in the LRE.

In view of the complexity of identifying diverse students for gifted education, Renzulli (1981) recommended that staff professional development programs will be necessary to keep educators abreast with changes in the field of gifted education. And to take care of the theory of research of GT learning process, as outlined in Figure 2, the Enrichment Triad Model (Renzulli, 1977). This model does not require specific numbers but utilizes continued management of data through analysis and creative application to keep the right students in GT at every point in time. As such, Renzulli (1979) recommended the development of Individual Education Plan for GT students, which is in line with the Gifted Individual Education Plan (GIEP) in the State of Pennsylvania, which is developed for every child identified as gifted and talented. Pennsylvania has a clearly stated guideline for dual exceptional students, which includes GLD. Each student's GIEP includes the Modifications and Accommodations needed to meet their special needs (PA Code, n.d.)

Reiterating Renzulli's (1978) view of giftedness, Sousa (2003) recalled the 1950s notion that high IQ was the same as giftedness or creativity and motivation. The IQ test was then the primary screening vehicle for special program selections. With time, it was discovered that IQ tests had their limitations, because they only tested "analytical and

verbal skills" and not real-world applications and creativity, which are important in problem-solving and success in life. Also, "they do not predict long term outcomes in the presence of change caused by stress or cultural diversities" (Sousa, 2003, p. 32). Current studies of IQ find that it is not an adequate instrument for measuring giftedness, arguing that individuals could be gifted in various disciplines, ranging from academics, sports, performing arts, to business, etc. Indeed, a few scholars agree that very few individuals are gifted all round, noting that some individuals may even possess a combination of giftedness and one or more aspects of specific learning disabilities (Gardner, 1983; Renzulli, 1978; Sousa, 2003).

Sousa (2003) concluded that depending on a quantifiable criterion, the IQ scores and testing categories are not enough to identify the various facets of gifted and talented individuals. In effect, Renzulli (1984) challenged the position that giftedness means excellence in most areas of intellectual and artistic pursuits, declaring that not everyone has the schoolhouse giftedness, and creative productive giftedness, which develops the world through ingenious ideas that should be identified and developed in school. Consequently, Renzulli's (2001, 1991, 1984) motivated school districts to provide avenues for creativity in identification and programming for gifted children (Sousa, 2003).

Multiple Intelligences (MI)

Renzulli's (1978, 1984, 1991, 2001) concepts gave credence to Gardners' (1983, 2010) theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI), which widened the scope for aptitude by discovering eight forms of intelligence, which he termed multiple intelligences. Gardner's celebrated MI theory implied that intelligence is not a unitary concept, rather

each person emerges with one or more types of intelligences at different levels of competence.

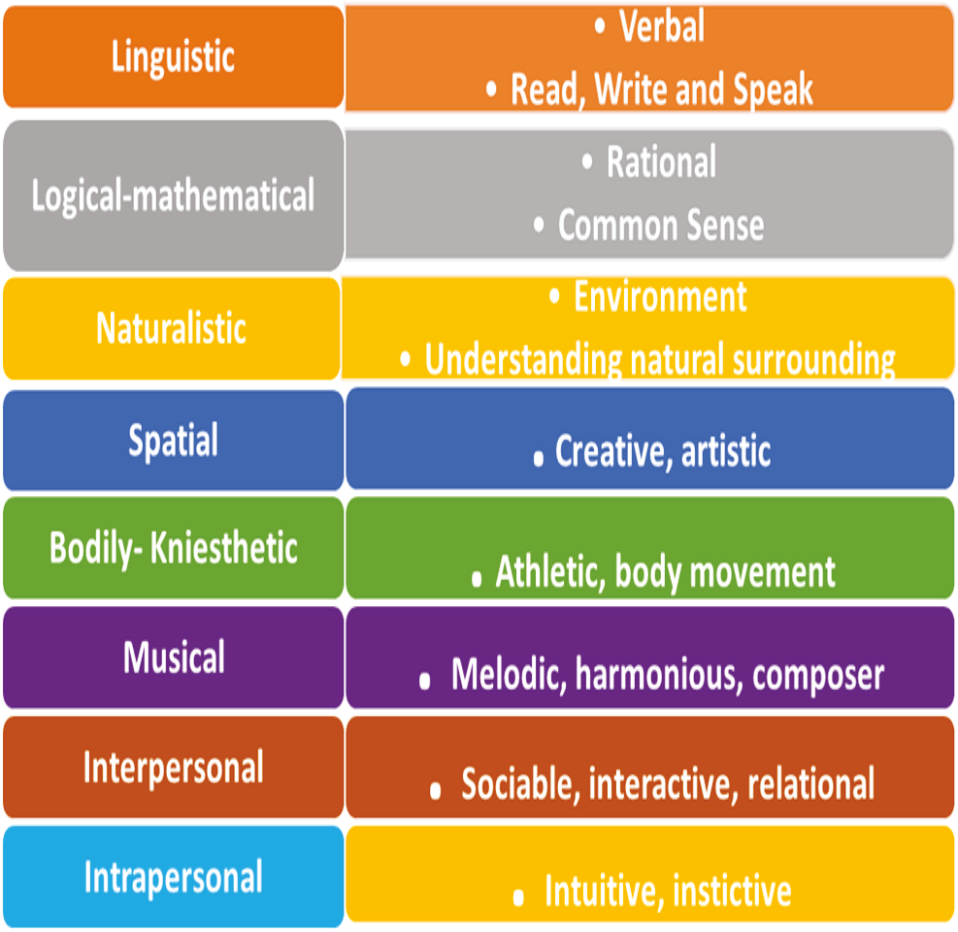

Figure 3: Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligences. This figure describes each of the 8 Multiple Intelligences with supporting adjectives. Adapted from *Frames of mind: the theory of Multiple Intelligences* (p. 70) by H. Gardner, 1993, New York, NY: Basic books. Copyright 1993, Basic Books. Adapted with permission.

Also, MI theory has continued to develop as Gardner (1999) added naturalist as the ninth form of intelligence. After deliberating on including spiritual, moral, existential, and naturalist intelligences, Gardner added naturalistic intelligence, which deals with recognizing and classifying natural life and ecological connections. Meanwhile,

existential, spiritual, and moral intelligences were not included due to inability to scientifically associate them as forms of intelligence.

Gardner (1983) described intelligence as representative of methods of processing information and thinking that imparts human development. As such, intelligence is a result of the interaction between genetics, physical, and social environment, noting that intelligence is not the same as thinking style. Intelligence should be utilized in problem-solving, generating new problems, or creating products and services of value. Gardner (1983) was of the notion that traditional measures of identifying gifted students was based too much on IQ tests, which focused mostly on linguistic and logical/mathematical skills and could not fully decipher a child's potential for GT.

MI measures have been criticized as presenting a problem of reliability and validity. Meanwhile, Delisle (1996) viewed the use of MI for identification of gifted students as simplistic, convenient, and egalitarian, arguing that it does not show exceptional giftedness, which is the essence of gifted education. In addition, White and Brien (1998) questioned whether MI are talents or abilities rather than intelligences. He argued that individual aptitudes do not remain constant all through life, therefore could not be termed intelligence. In addition, Aiken (1997), criticized Gardner's MI theory, declaring that it is not an outcome of empirical studies. Sousa (2003) also warned that despite the theoretical usefulness of MI in identifying gifted children, teachers should be careful in using it as a panacea for gifted education until more in-depth research has been done to prove its effectiveness.

Johnsen (2008) reiterated the need to identify children who are gifted, arguing that as each one is unique, so are their gifts. She recommended early identification,

especially for those whose gifts are tempered by specific learning disabilities for whom an intervention will be critical. As such, Johnsen (2013) advocated that teachers should be trained on how to use multiple measures to assess students' abilities. She also noted that the customary methods of gifted identification do not abide by the more modern definitions of giftedness, which utilize multiple data. There is an underrepresentation of individuals with disabilities in the gifted program, because standardized tests deter students of diverse language or learning styles. Also, some norm-reference tests do not take into reference individual peculiarity and uniqueness (Johnsen, 2013).

Nonetheless, Sousa (2003) concluded that "the notion that a gifted child can have learning disabilities seems inexplicable. As a result, many children who are gifted in some way and deficient in others go undetected and unserved by our schools" (p. 208). Therefore, he lamented that although in recent years educators have agreed that giftedness and learning disabilities can coexist in some students, many school districts have not set in place processes for detecting children with double exceptionalities whose strengths and weaknesses manifest in different areas of learning, thus causing discrepancies in their academic achievement.

Gagne (2000) updated his proposed model of giftedness termed, the differentiated model of giftedness and talent (DMGT), which distinguished between the two rudimentary principles of giftedness and talent in the field of gifted education. DMGT described giftedness as,

> The possession and use of untrained and spontaneously expresses superior natural abilities (called aptitudes or gifts), in at least one ability domain, to a degree that places an individual at least among the top 10% of his or her age peers. (p. 2)

While talent is,

> The superior mastery of systematically developed abilities (or skills) and knowledge in at least one field of human activity to a degree that places an individual at least among the top 10% of age peers who are or have been active in the field or fields. (p. 2)

Gagne acknowledged the consequence of "developmental process (LP), interpersonal catalyst (IC), environmental catalyst (EC), and chance (CH)" (p. 4) on an individual's gifts and talents. Consequently, Gagne's DMGT distinguishes between giftedness and talents unlike other models that lump them together.

DMGT is a "theory of talent development" (Page, 2006, p. 13), which Gagne introduced in a different dimension by asserting that in the process of growth one could move from one level of giftedness to another, as changes in aptitudes and abilities occur over the years. That was Gagne's explanation of why gifted students may not always perform at the same advanced level over many years. In addition, DMGT portrayed four domains of giftedness as follows: "intellectual (IG), creative (CG), socioaffective (SG), and sensorimotor (MG)" (Gagne, 2000, p. 2) as displayed in all school activities. Likewise, "talents are developed through academics, arts, business, leisure, social action, sports, technology" (p. 4).

Although gifts and talents are varied, they are interrelated and need to be identified in students. Accordingly, Gagne (2000) and Johnsen (2008) advocated early identification of children for GT education as they agree that it is more likely to observe

skills and outstanding aptitudes in youngsters, since children are not yet influenced by the environment, so it is easier to identify their innate abilities (Gagne, 2000).

Munich's longitudinal study of giftedness took place from 1985 to 1989 and is reputed to be the most extensive research on giftedness and talent in Germany and was conducted at the University of Munich. It was sponsored by the nation's Federal Ministry of Education and Science. Munich's study established that giftedness is portrayed in personalities in terms of how they respond to learning and educational achievements. This study investigated giftedness and how it produces academic and non-academic results in terms of "Intellect, creativity, social competence, artistic (musical) ability, and psychomotor ability" (Perleth, Christopher, Sierwald, Wolfgang, Heller, & Kurt, 1993, p. 173).

Munich's study pinpoints different types of giftedness as related to individual conduct and attainment, which resonates with Gardner's (1984) MI theory and Gagne's (2000) differentiated model of giftedness and talent. As Gardner and Moran (2006) noted, "the interaction among these intelligences is important for understanding how people's minds work" (p. 228); therefore, these three conceptions of giftedness could be compared as color coded below.

Gardner	Gagne	Munich
Linguistic	Intellectual	Intellect
Logical-mathematical	Creative	Creativity
Musical	Socioaffective	Social competence
Spatial	Sensorimotor	Artistic (musical) ability
Bodily kinesthetic		Psychomotor ability
Naturalistic		
Interpersonal		
Intrapersonal		

Figure 4. Comparison of concepts of giftedness. This figure illustrates the interrelationship between different forms of intelligences as perceived by three researchers. Related intelligences are in same colors. Gardner's Naturalistic and intrapersonal intelligences are not clearly recognized by Gagne and Munich's studies.

Perleth, Christopher, Sierwald, Wolfgang, Heller, and Kurt's (1993) research demonstrated that Munich's study provided a multidimensional approach which was found to be more useful for predicting achievement in students than the typological method. So the multidimensional model was proposed as a viable method for identifying and developing the potentials of gifted secondary school students. Meanwhile, the typological method was purported to discover the variations of conduct between gifted and average students through quantitative data, but was unsuccessful in practice. Therefore, as in MI and DMGT, the multidimensional approach continues to supersede other single-track methods.

Giftedness with Learning Disabilities (GLD)

Boland (2007) contended that giftedness is not a trait for certain children but a man-made divisive ideology, arguing that giftedness is not reserved or inherent in only a few people based on their background. He disputed the notion of giftedness as a trait, which caused many traditional practitioners to ignore the placement of deserving minority and lower socio-economic students in select programs. Boland blamed this

mindset for the widening gap between different populations of students, and insisted that gifts, when identified, could be nurtured to close achievement gaps. Pereles, Omdal, and Baldwin (2009) challenged this notion, observing that students were assigned to programs based on identified educational needs. Since twice exceptional students do not fit into traditional programs, the system hinders academic progress.

Lovett (2013) also reported that lack of standardized guidelines for the identification of gifted students with disabilities provided the leverage for subjective judgment by diagnosticians and child study teams, and thus they applied discretion and beliefs to establish whether or not a child should be placed as GLD. The study viewed non-existence of a typical criterion for identification as challenging. In essence, districts should have standards for identification based on federal, state, and local government regulations. These are supported by multi-sensory methods of identification that consider several essential developmental strengths and needs of students, such as exceptional ability or skill, as an indication of the discrepancy between aptitude and performance in specific subject areas, verbal aptitude, and IQ scores (Al-Hroub, 2010, 2005).

In addition, Lovett (2013) advocated more recognition of GLD students, stressing the need to make gifted education more diverse and inclusive. He referred to the work of Borland (1997, 2003, 2005, 2007) who argued that giftedness is not a trait that only certain groups of children possess and is a social concept which should not be limited to a particular social class, ethnicity, or economic status. The concern with this population of students that needs to be addressed is the lack of appropriate educational placement that leads to vulnerability and/or failure, and widening achievement gap within the learning community. Lovett (2013) pointed out that although gifted children with learning

disabilities have been grouped with other underserved populations, there is little similarity between them, because the intelligence of these students is not adequately harnessed. Therefore, lack of identification remains a problem in the field.

Likewise, Wellish and Brown (2012) reviewed past and current practices for identifying students for gifted education, and argued that schools complicate their problems by delaying the identification of students for both learning and emotional disabilities, so these problems get more complex as students grow older. The researchers warned that early intervention is the most effective avenue for academic support, and reiterated that gifted students with learning disabilities are misjudged because they manifest lack of clarity of their abilities. As such, due to the demanding nature of identification processes, there is need for continued study to provide a current model for teachers and service providers in order to support these important members of the school population, to thereby improve diversity in gifted education, and direct the curriculum and practice of instruction for gifted children with disabilities.

Yssel, Prater, and Smith (2010) were involved in six years of in-depth research of students at an enrichment program. They were able to trace over a period of 20 years of various studies of academic, social and emotional needs of twice-exceptional students. These resulted in creating some brilliant programs for this unique population of students. These researchers claim that there are numerous children in this category who receive only remediation and no enrichment services and many others whose needs are never addressed. Through studies of student campers, they report that differentiating instruction and providing various strategies to approach content, process, and product, GLD students can demonstrate what they have learned through personalized projects, Art, Music and

other forms of creative expression. Therefore, a close interaction reveals individual outstanding gifts, which would aid their identification for specialized placements.

McFarland, Williams, and Miciak (2013) observed that the study of identification of Learning Disabilities (LD) by Samuel Kirk in 1962 raised arguments and brought disagreements on the classification of children with such exceptionalities. After the passage of the Education for all Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA) in 1975, LD was added as a category for federal funding. Public education continued the debate nationally from 1975 to 2000, a turbulent period that almost permanently divided the field of Special Education. The major emphasis of the dispute was the "validity and desirability of an IQ-achievement discrepancy as the primary criterion for LD identification" (p. 60, 61). Researchers and practitioners criticized the rationale behind utilizing the IQ discrepancy identification model.

Since 2002, the federal government had set up accountability methods, giving rise to changes in identification methods as mandated by the IDEA (2004). The focus shifted to further research due to the need to identify the effect of learning disabilities in overall student performance. That is the premise for identifying each child and placing them in appropriate settings to meet individual educational goals for gifted and talented students with coexisting learning disabilities (McFarland, Williams & Miciak, 2013).

As such, the New Jersey Commission on Programs for Gifted Students made the following recommendations to address the gap in the educational program of GLD students:

> 3.1. e – Amend regulations to require an identification process that uses multiple measures; 3.1.f – Amend special education regulations to require

> accommodations and gifted services for twice exceptional students, requiring that gifted services be included in their individualized education plan (IEP) or 504 plan. (NJDOE, 2014, p. 1)

With recent amendments, New Jersey schools are required to utilize multiple measures for identifying students and the result should be Individualized Educational Plans (IEP) to provide strategies to address both ends of a student's exceptionalities. This practice still needs to be prescribed in the entire state in acknowledgement of children's diverse needs and abilities (National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities, 2010). By utilizing Multiple Measures of Identification, which sustain Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences (MI) and address the need for identification of GLD students utilizing multiple measures.

Accordingly, Hughes and Rollins (2009) urged teachers to ensure the fidelity of intervention, in order to follow the procedure for identification of students based on data. Their study revealed the potential bias in identification of gifted students and argued that partiality is widespread in identification of students for gifted education in school districts. Therefore, using multiple measures of data and diverse pedagogical strategies related to students' multiple intelligences will help to place deserving students in gifted programs.

The Response to Intervention (RTI) Model

Recent studies confirmed that researchers have divergent ideas about the co-existence of giftedness and learning disabilities. Meanwhile, Crepean-Hobson and Bianco (2011) claimed that twice-exceptional students are less likely to be identified for either special education or gifted and talented services because their disabilities often disguise

their giftedness. In the same vein, Rollins, Mursky, Shah-Coltrane, and Johnsento, (2009) suggested the integration of directed assessments using the Respond to Intervention (RTI) model, which is now federally recognized as a science-based three tiers of interventions that help identify and serve students at different levels of learning. Although RTI could go a long way in the identification of students for services, it is a special education initiative and is not practiced widely for general education purposes. RTI is one model of the multi-step process that has been adopted in schools to determine if a child has specific learning disabilities (NCLD, 2015).

Yssel, Adams, Clarke, and Jones (2014), in exploring why certain students get lost in the school system, discovered that some students have a combination of high abilities and disability/other learning needs. Therefore, they suggested utilizing the RTI method for identifying and programming for students who are both gifted and have disabilities since the RTI model is capable of addressing each individual's needs and strengths. Yssel, et al suggested that school districts should have a system through which teachers can provide data to help recommend students for early evaluation and appropriate placement for those who are gifted with special needs. RTI was considered as creating the avenue for GLD to grow because it focuses on "early intervention, high quality instruction for all student, screening and progress monitoring, and differentiation" (p. 51). These researchers understand the challenges of identifying this important group of learners and explained that identification is difficult due to a combination of dynamics that cause highly gifted student to appear to cover for their disabilities so managing to perform on the average level

Musgrave (2011) criticized the RTI method for its lengthy timeline that could delay services for a child who has specific learning disabilities, which led to the U.S. Department of Education ruling that a timely process should be implemented while using RTI. In addition, the RTI Action Network position (2016) declared that there is no unanimity on the degree of intellectual assessment that should be included in a comprehensive evaluation, so there is no balance between IDEA Child Find timeline and the RTI new policies. Also, in Sparks' (2015) study of schools' practice of RTI for learning among pupils' reading levels, it was discovered that teachers were generally unprepared to provide the support needed for identification. In practice, even the schools "fully implementing RTI didn't always have a bright line between core instruction and interventions" (p. 2).

Furthermore, Hughes and Rollins (2009) contended that ensuring the fidelity of intervention, and having a single procedure utilized for all students ensures that interventions are grounded on data-based decisions and related to identifiable, measurable gifted characteristics; educators are responsible for teaching in a way that ensures learning for all students. This study reviewed the potential bias in identification of gifted students viewing partiality as widespread in the identification of students for gifted education in school districts; as such, the inclusion of data, and the fidelity of instruction is a way to include many deserving students.

Hughes and Rollins (2009) suggested that a "remedial-focused" (p. 36) Response to Intervention (RTI) plan will ensure that student needs are met to increase student achievement and to receive instruction in the general education classroom; while in a strengths-based RTI, the goal is to improve achievement above the general education

curriculum, so that students will maintain achievement growth. Therefore, monitoring progress is crucial in determining student achievement levels over time, which can expose school districts to the core knowledge and skills for professional development guidelines utilized in selecting and training teachers of gifted students.

The New Jersey special education code (n.d.) mandates that student with learning difficulties in general education should be given stages of extra support before they are referred to the child study team (CST) for evaluation and possible classification for special services. This resonates with the tiered-learning RTI method used for early intervention for pupils with learning and behavior issues. Robinson and Latwis (2016) called on New Jersey educators to begin to implement RTI as multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) stressing that although it is faced with difficulty in its implementation, MTSS is necessary for avoiding over-classification of students with LD. So they suggested teacher training focused on understanding the multi-tiers of screening, intervention, and at least three levels of research-based support, which will be followed up and monitored until a student improves or has to be- identified for special education or related services (Robinson & Latwis, 2016).

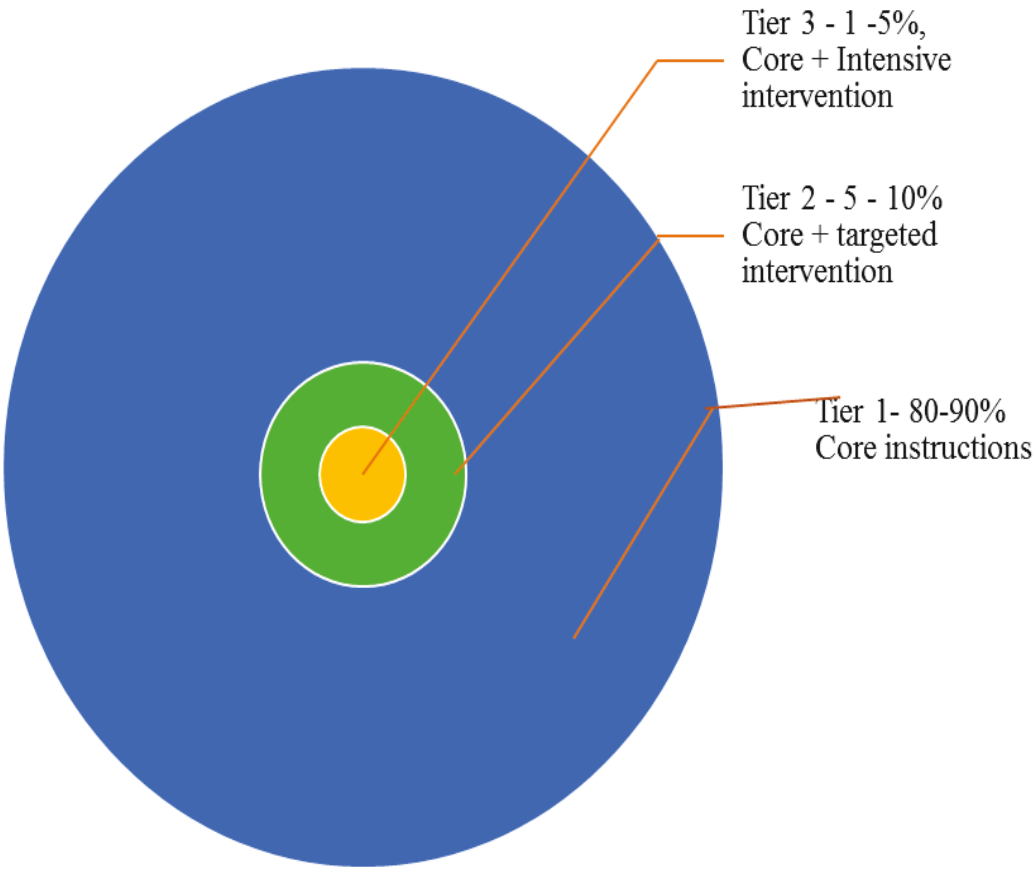

Figure 5. Multi-tiered system of support (MTSS), an RTI method. This figure illustrates the 3-tier approach to improve the process of identification of students for special education utilizing data and research-based strategies. (*Multi-tiered systems of supports (MTSS): Implementation of RTI in NJ* by Robinson, C., & Latwis, B. (2016, June 29). Montclair State University, Montclair, NJ. Used with permission).

Data-Driven Decision Making

According to Bernhardt (2013), a data-driven improvement plan is a system for teachers to analyze student test data in order to determine red flags in academic achievement, thereby enabling teachers to plan intervention strategies early enough. Bernhardt's (2013) steps for creating an early intervention warning system are directly related to the method of this data analysis; the first stage begins with questions that

determine what needs to be predicted as early signs of possible failure in particular subject areas. The next stage is "to review the historical data, including last year's state test scores, and deduce if these patterns are present in the classes so that students in the pipeline are discovered" (p. 110), in order to discover students who are at the risk of failure. As Bernhardt (2013) also stated, "the power of the Early Warning Systems and predictive analysis does not come from the numbers but from what staff do to prevent the undesirable results" (p. 11). Therefore, data is very important in determining the strengths and the needs of individual students and could be paramount in identifying gifted students with learning disabilities.

District GT Policy

The New Jersey school district being studied has a policy for gifted and talented education that is in conformity with the New Jersey Department of Education and the U.S education laws. The state department of education does not have a specific teacher license for teachers of the gifted and talented. The Board of Education policy gives district educators the responsibility for identifying and providing appropriate pedagogy and needed programs for every student to succeed. They defined gifted and talented pupils as:

> those exceptionally able students who possess or demonstrate high levels of abilities, in one or more content areas, as compared with their chronological peers in the district and require modification of educational program, if they are to achieve in accordance to their capabilities. (District GT Policy, 2014, p. 1)

In addition, the board is to provide needed strategic learning curriculum for the GT program. The superintendent has the responsibility of monitoring a multiple measure

process for identification of students with gifts and talents for all grade levels. This district procedure has to be developmentally suitable, impartial, and equivalent to other programs in the district schools, so they must be adapted to the regular student schedules. GT programs in the district are to undergo regular review and be constantly restructured to ensure growth. Parents of identified students have to be involved in their program needs (New Jersey Department of Education, n.d.). This New Jersey district's policy provided no specifics about GLD and did not indicate a program plan for gifted students. Also, the subject areas that were included in GT programming were not indicated in their policy and would give credence to Gagne (2015) claim that several gifted programs of today, especially specialized programs and enrichment courses, do not help students to improve academically, following a brief analysis of some Academic Talent Development (ATD) programs which had obvious application complications.

Chapter Conclusion

The theories of giftedness discussed in this chapter have multiple dimensions and are inclusive in approach. Students with LD are not excluded from giftedness as there is emphasis on personalization of learning in gifted education in order to build on each pupil's special strength. The IDEA, 2004 mandate of providing every child with free appropriate education in the least restrict environment aligns with multidimensional identification of gifted children to ensure the inclusion of diverse students in the subject areas of their exceptional abilities or giftedness. The implementation of the Gifted Individualized Education Plan (GIEP) will ensure that students with LD are not overlooked in GT education.

Finally, the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) (2014) stated that most teacher licensure programs are not preparing teachers to meet the needs of high-ability students. Most schools and colleges of education do not offer separate coursework in the area of gifted education. New teachers only receive basic special education and exceptionality coursework and have almost no knowledge of how to identify and respond to students who are ready for instruction above grade level (NAGC, 2014). In Loveless, Farkas, and Duffet's (2008) survey of classroom teachers, 65% reported that they did not get training on working with gifted students. NAGC calls on preservice teacher preparation programs to be included as part of teacher coursework. This should help all teachers to understand the nature and needs of GT students to enable teachers to identify the academic and socio-emotional needs of all students assigned to them.

Shiller (2011) opposed school reform as a neoliberal system that had failed to recognize different needs of students in their diverse socio-economic paradigms. This author decried neoliberalism, a 1930s movement in Europe through which a group of liberals led by Friedrich von Hayek sought to provide a new approach to solve the problems they faced during the Great Depression, which has affected all aspects of life including education (Bockman, 2013). Shiller (2011) opposed applying this system to education because it regards schools as commodity as in the New Century Schools Initiative (NCSI) where standardized test scores became more important than teaching the whole curriculum. And school improvement became a function of data and numbers.

This market-driven system has not succeeded in transforming schools. Therefore, Shiller (2011) affirmed that new teachers should receive mentoring support by veteran teachers and be provided with need-based professional development in order to improve

student achievement. This is very important in low-income school districts where family and community involvements are at a low ebb. The original intent of education as epitomized in the Pietist approach is against discrimination but focuses on education for total transformation of all people (Gehrz, 2015), thus including every child, despite extremes of individual exceptionalities.

Chapter III: Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to determine how gifted students with learning disabilities (GLD) are being identified for educational services in grades three to six of a New Jersey school district. Various studies were conducted on the issue of GLD at different grade levels, and resulted in ample strategies for instructing students who are categorized as GLD. This study considers how these theories are being practiced in a specific school district by learning from and examining the unique experiences of a group of educators.

Research Method and Design

The methodology used in this case study is qualitative, which aimed to understand the process of identification of gifted students with learning disabilities in an urban/suburban school district. This study followed a transformative world view, which sought to address issues faced by marginalized groups of people in a social construct (Creswell, 2014). This study advocates for individuals with exceptionalities who could be marginalized by the system used in identifying them for educational services. In effect, this study would call for action to enable the district to equip more professionals to serve individuals with disabilities, a demographic group in need of attention. Following the example of Creswell (2014), this "transformative research uses a program theory of beliefs about how a program works and why the problems of oppression, domination, and power relationships exist" (p. 10).

Through case study interviews, this researcher determined district identification processes for gifted and talented programs and learning disabilities services in grades

three through six, to minimize non-identification and misplacement of students and avoid low academic achievement and eventual loss of interest in formal education. This study will help educators to understand whether the schools are following the federal mandate of Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE) for gifted students with learning disabilities.

This researcher addressed how the actions of teachers and administrators affect the placement of students with GLD. The approach is "emerging methods, open-ended questions, interview data, text and image analysis, themes, patterns and interpretation" (Creswell, 2014, p. 17). The choice to use a case study resulted from the need to inquire into the special education services that might benefit gifted children or vice versa. Moreover, Fischman and Tefera (2014) suggested incorporating explicit strategies for Knowledge Mobilization (KM), which is a term referring to making knowledge available where it is needed for use and is crucial for providing more rigorous theoretical and functional answers to educational challenges. A rationale for the choice of qualitative inquiry in identifying of GLD within the school district is the need for in-depth study of the social environment that cannot be achieved in a rigid quantitative study. The researcher will learn the procedure for identification in the school district of this study through semi-structured interviews. One such study was conducted in Fairfax County Public School and resulted in a program for a core group of students known as the Young Scholars' Program, an alternative for gifted education within that district based on previous research in the county (Horn, 2015).

Nguyen and Coryell (2015), in their work on learner motivation to study abroad at a large Hispanic-serving southwestern university, used semi-structured interviews with

undergraduate students and a graduate student registered in an Italian study-abroad program to assess formative and effective phenomena that motivate students to choose to study abroad. This type of interview helped to reveal the understanding of entities within the community that was being studied. Nguyen and Coryell (2015) delivered a distinctive qualitative research study different from most previous measures of study abroad, which utilized quantitative methods. This study included new interdisciplinary literature, educational theories, and learner-centered approaches as are needed for educational reforms in studies of gifted students with learning disabilities.

Special educators understand the need to investigate the common experience of the highly intelligent students who come to school every day with the fear of a particular subject. These children excel in some courses, but dread others. They are not given support to help them to be successful overall because they are viewed as intelligent but lazy. Parents and educators do not understand the reason for the inconsistency in their academic performance. It is clear that their performance levels contradict their potential ability. There is no intention to oppress this population of students, however if their needs are not understood and continue to go unaddressed by service providers, they will likely function below potential and will fall by the wayside and end up being marginalized.

Therefore, this study determined the model in use for the identification of students with GLD in the district, and the level of preparedness of elementary educators for the identification process. The data collected are useful in the improvement of learning outcomes for GLD by establishing the district protocol/model for the identification of gifted students with learning difficulties.

Research Question

The general research question in this study was as follows: What is the process for identifying gifted students with learning disabilities in a New Jersey urban/suburban school district? The criteria for identifying gifted students, students with disabilities, and gifted students with learning disabilities were examined.

Theoretical Framework

It has been established that a population of students fall into the unique category of gifted with learning disabilities. Therefore, this study increased the understanding of how pupils are being identified and moved from general education to gifted/talented and learning disabilities services. This will help to avoid marginalization of twice-exceptional learners. The following concept map is an illustration of this researcher's goal of identifying students for placement in GLD programs (Figure 6). This is an attempt to explore the interaction between the different educational environments and examine how every child with gifts and talents could be identified for placement in the appropriate educational setting from the earliest stages of schooling.

The idea of having two forms of exceptionalities could be viewed as fetters deterring a student from progressing mostly due to a lack of understanding on the part of families and educators. This study strives to break those fetters or barriers that hinder children from getting free appropriate education in the least restrictive environment (IDEA, 2004). Therefore, this project is captioned, "Breaking Fetters, 2016" and asks relevant questions about why and how students could be identified for appropriate services. These enquiries were addressed through semi-structured interviews.

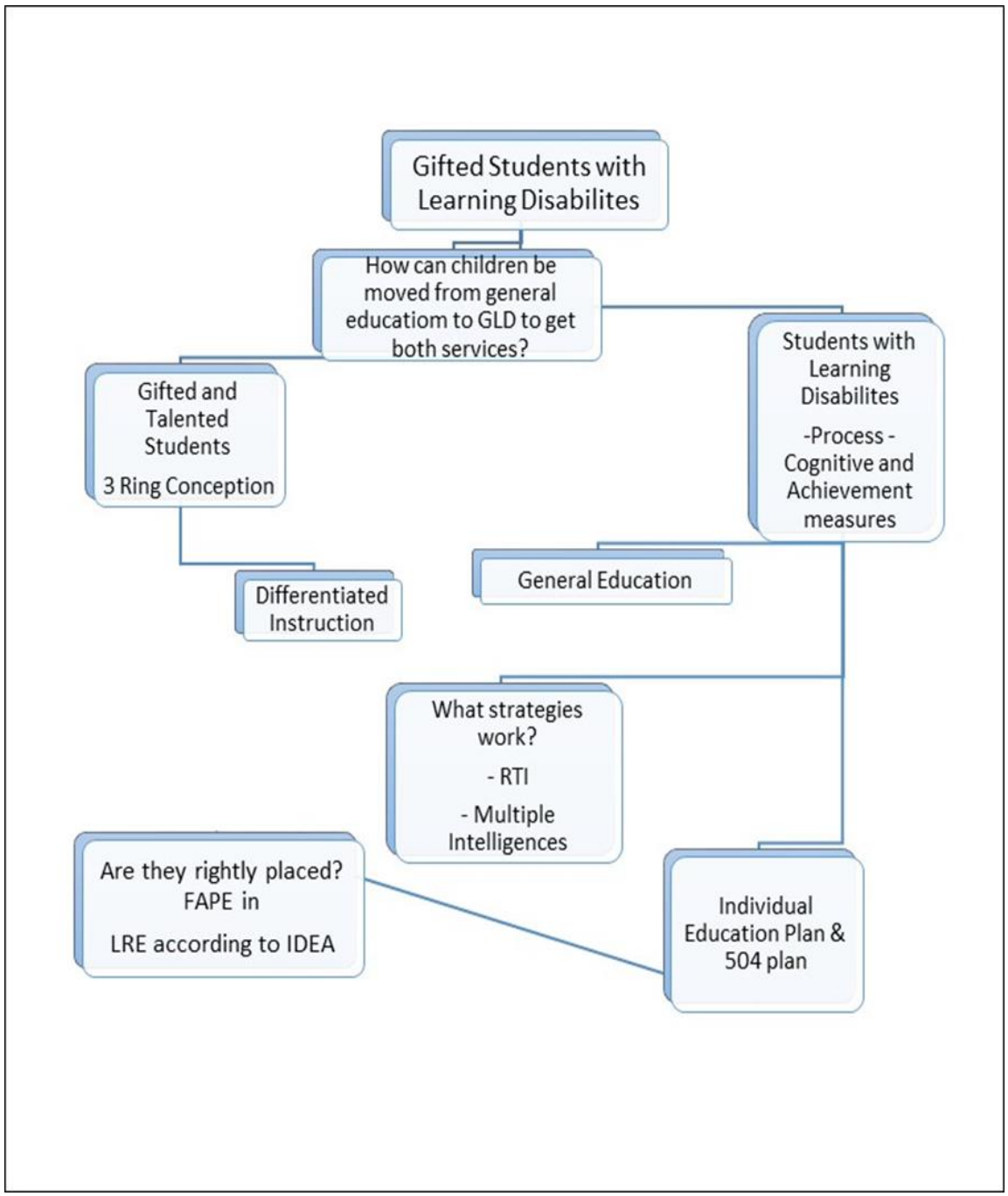

Figure 6. Breaking Fetters. This figure illustrates the themes surrounding the movement of student from general education to GLD services.

Sample or Population of Interest

A purposive sample of teachers and other service providers was selected from three New Jersey schools. Merriam (2009) defined purposive or purposeful sampling as criterion-based selection, which involves creating a list of attributes that are needed to study a case. These are based on the purpose of the study and help to discover why it is important to answer the research question. In this study, 10 single participants and one focus group were interviewed including: two general education elementary school teachers, one teacher of art, one teacher of music, one science teacher, one social studies teacher, two elementary school principals, one middle school principal, one guidance counselor, and a child-study team focus group, which is a committee of professionals made up of a social worker, psychologist, a learning disabilities teacher consultant, a special education consultative teacher, and speech therapist. The participants attended to the questions and satisfactorily addressed these and other topics. They also referred to related sources that are useful for further studies. However, additional participants were not added as there was no need for that.

The sample group members were chosen from professionals with experience in serving heterogeneous groups of students in schools within the district. The principals as administrators helped to choose members of staff who they believe have acquired knowledge and experience to provide facts about their schools and the district services. Information received assisted in understanding district policies and practices for the identification of students for GLD services.

Grades three through six students were of particular interest because they fell within the age group where identification and interventions are mostly served (NASET,

2006/07). This is in line with Johnsen's (2008) declaration that early identification and intervention is critical to effectively supporting children who are educationally disadvantaged. As such, beyond the elementary grades, if a student has not been fully identified and placed, remediation is bound to be more difficult.

So far, the researcher provided details of the project to the following district/school administrators: superintendent of schools, supervisor of gifted and talented programs, and three principals. She also explained the necessity of understanding grassroots implementation of programs and services for GLD in the district. They helped to identify a suitable sample group to participate in the study. Because of the diversity of the district, an interracial group of professionals have been selected to be interviewed. The three principals are one white (male), one Hispanic (female) and one Black (female) respectively, one black (male) guidance counselor. This helped the researcher to understand how culture could affect educators' views about GLD.

Setting

The settings of this research are two elementary schools and one middle/elementary school in an urban/suburban school district in New Jersey. The middle school houses Grades 5 and 6, which places it as elementary/middle school. The district is classified as urban/suburban because it has schools that are on either standings. The urban-suburban program began with the mission to reduce racial seclusion and segregation of educational resources in schools (Webster Central School District, 2016). A 2014/15 National Report Card data from the three schools of interest were averaged as follows:

Table 1 Race and Ethnicity Average in schools

	Race/Ethnicity	Average from schools
1.	White	2.23%
2.	Pacific Islander	0.37%
3.	Asian	1.03%
4.	Hispanic	37.9%
5.	Black	58.33%
6.	Two or more races	0.1%

Table 1

Language Diversity. Home languages of the students are English 53%, Spanish 31% with the rest of the languages as Portuguese and different forms of Creole making up the balance of 16%. As such, the district is predominantly Black and Hispanic and does not fit into the general argument of overrepresentation of minorities in special education and their underrepresentation in gifted and talented programs because it is one of the predominantly immigrant districts.. Also, 15% of students are classified as having different forms of disabilities according to IDEA classifications. This is less than New Jersey average of 16.5% and higher than the national average of 12.9% (National Report Card, 2014; IDEA Data Center, n.d.).

Instrumentation and Measures

Qualitative research focuses on examining and understanding what individuals are doing in the interpretation of social situations by searching for patterns and themes stemming from data. The main source of data in this research was semi-structured interviews of educators. Through interviews, data were collected in answer to the research question. There were nine initial interview questions based on five themes that helped to answer the research question.

These questions were modified in the course of the semi-structured interviews in order to obtain in-depth information to enhance the result and ensure the credibility and

transferability of the study, aimed at discovering the match between the participant's reality and the assumptions of the researcher (Shaw, 2015). Credibility was ensured through member checking, which entails returning to participants with findings to ascertain that the information collected is reflective of the participants' thoughts. All data were reviewed to guarantee consistency and dependability in the information. In the course of the research, all memos were dated and filed chronologically for proper tracking. Transferability of lessons were also established by providing in-depth, factual results about identification of gifted students with learning disabilities, thus providing readers with applicable lessons for similar situations (Creswell, 2014).

The following table was provided for organizing the background of interviewees.

Table 2
Participants' Qualification

Participant's #	Educational Function	Position in the District/ School	Length of Educational Service	Highest degree earned	Field of Study	Date and Time of Interview	Educational licenses held
A.							
B.							
C.							
D.							

Table 2

Data Collection

Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews of professionals, and through interviews of teachers from general education, special education, and gifted/talented classes. Also, there were interviews of administrators and service providers: principals of two elementary schools and one middle school, and a supervisor

of guidance counseling. Interviews were audio-recorded after obtaining signed permission of the participants. Prior to the date of scheduled interviews, consent forms and interview questions were emailed to the interviewees. In order to maintain anonymity, pseudonyms were used to identify subjects throughout the process. Participants are identified by letters in alphabetical order. Table 2 has been utilized for organizing responses of individual interviews.

Interview Protocol

The interview protocol is a fusion of the Stanford Institute for High Education Research (2003) with class notes from Whitman (2015). The initial questions were field tested in a neighboring school, which did not participate in this research project. There are six survey sections included as follows: background of participant, participant's educational function, district improvement plan, and core interview questions, gifted students with learning disabilities, and interview comments and observations. A protocol was created to stay organized during the process and began with a letter seeking permission to audio tape the interview and assuring the interviewee that records of the interview will be kept confidential. The participants were required to sign a release form before the actual interview. Also included were expressions of appreciation for the subject's willingness and availability to participate in the research, and an explanation that the duration of the interview would be no longer than 45 minutes for the individual interviews. (See Appendix A for a copy of the interview protocol).

The interview protocol began with an introduction and the reason for choosing the participants. In addition, the purpose of the research study was clarified, assuring responders that the research is not meant to evaluate their performances or proficiencies,

rather that it is an avenue to understand the process of identifying gifted students with learning disabilities in the district. The finished protocol is included as Appendix A of this dissertation. In the course of semi-structured interviews, questions were modified and the focus of the study continued to be narrowed down. At the completion of each interview, records of patterns that answered the research question were noted in memos, tabulated and organized under the headings.

Table 3

Potential Interview Questions

Research Objective	Subcategory or Theme	Question
Explore instrument in the identification process.	Instruments and Measures	1. What tools do you use to identify students at risk of disabilities in mainstream classes? 2. What tools are used for identifying students for gifted and talented education?
Exploring step by step strategies in identification of students	Identification of Cognitive strengths and Challenges	3. What is the procedure for identifying gifted students with disabilities in your school? • Achievement • Cognitive • Behavior
Exploring behavior of students that may point to learning disabilities. **Exploring behavior demonstrated by students that indicate giftedness and exceptional talents.**	Markers of Learning Disabilities/gifted and talented needs	4. What are some of the indicators you may look for in identifying and recommending a student for learning disabilities services? 5. What are some of the indicators you may look for in identifying and recommending a student for gifted services
Exploring teacher observation skills and readiness to serve students with dual exceptionalities.	Professional readiness for identifying students for G/LD services	6. Are you aware of any students in your classroom who are gifted with learning disabilities (GLD)? 7. Are you able to follow protocol to recommend students for GLD services? 8. What do you consider factors that may prevent a student from being identified as both gifted and with learning disabilities?
Closing		9. What do you know about students' exceptionalities that you wish you knew when you first started teaching? Explain.

Table 3

Additional questions for administrators, guidance counselors and the focus group:

1. How often do you find parents advocating for the inclusion of their children with LD in gifted programs? Have parents' involvement helped to improve the quality of education for GLD in the district?
2. Are there other support individuals or groups that are interested in improving GLD programs in the district? Comment on what they are doing.
3. Does funding affect the identification and placement of students in gifted or GLD programs? (Are there any limiting factors with regards to budget?)

Field Test

In an interview with the supervisor of gifted and talented programs in the school district of study, she explained that the test used to identify gifted and talented students is the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT). The CogAT is published by Riverside Publishing Company and is held in high esteem nationally, especially for minority populations. It gives a verbal, quantitative and non-verbal score. The CogAT is just one part of the multi-criteria screening process. Also, the district has been using the New Jersey state test score (NJASK score), teacher recommendation and report card grades, along with the CogAT. When collected, the scores are placed on a matrix and weighted. This year the state test has changed to the Common Core state standards aligned online test offered by the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Career (PARCC) and the district is not yet sure what to use in place of state test sores.

In general, special education teachers are expected to identify students with disabilities who need to be tested. If a Special Education teacher wants students tested, the students are given the same test, with any modifications according to their IEPs. This

is followed by interviewing of the parent, teacher, and case worker of each student to obtain information about the students before the final decision is made. At the point of this discussion, the district does not test every student because previous testing of students with disabilities and English Language Learners (ELLs) proved to be cumbersome, as many of them could not handle the stress (District GT Supervisor, personal communication, March 25, 2015).

Current Program Models. The district's GT screening procedure varies because the program is different at each grade level.

- Kindergarten to Grade 4 has a pull out program based on combined language arts and math scores. This is not separated into math and language arts components as in middle schools. Students are pulled from the classroom and meet with the GT teacher once a week.
- Grade 5 is an honors class program, where participation is based on combined language arts and math scores. Students travel together for both math and Language Arts Literacy as one class. There are three levels of placement according to abilities.
- Grades 6 has an honors class program, where participation is based on individual Math and Language Arts Literacy data. Students can qualify for one or both subjects.

As such, students in Grade 6 with learning disabilities can qualify for either or both of these programs. The district did not demonstrate evidence of having gifted programs for students who are gifted in Arts, Music, Science, Technology, etc., as stated in the NAGC definition of giftedness (NAGC, 2010).

Pilot Test

After completing the interview protocol, a mock interview of two teachers and a middle school principal was conducted to test the instrument and ascertain the suitability of the questions for probing into the case. Seven initial questions were asked and audio-recorded using iPhone Voice Memo. These were replayed and one was transcribed and saved for practice. As a result, interview sessions were gauged to have a duration of 30 - 45 minutes, depending on the interest and knowledge of each participant on the topic. An additional question was added in the process of the initial interview, so there are eight questions. These interviews followed the semi-structured format, which meant that although specific pieces of information were required from the interviewees, exact words or order of questions were not adhered to. As a result, the researcher explored deeply into the emerging viewpoints as the discussions proceeded, thereby building on new subjects and concepts to further develop the theme of the study (Merriam, 2009).

Data Analysis

Creswell (2013) suggested aggregating all collected data into five to seven themes; therefore, the research began with the following themes: district policies of GLD, process of identification, professional readiness for GLD, student behavioral indicators of GLD, school protocols for identification, and teacher/school/district improvement plans for GLD. These were expanded as new information emerged in the course of the semi-structured interview process. The study utilized analysis of information focusing on the process and meaning of data that were collected. With semi-structured interviews, the researcher continued to modify interview questions in the course of data collection.

After completing the interviews and scripting the memos, contents were transcribed and read twice. Then adapted into the coding system in categories of codes, which included parent codes of the four themes (as shown on Table 3) and nine sub-codes. The problems were then categorized, and specific points noted indicating how often each problem occurred. The analysis system was useful in identifying emergent interpretations and recording insights as they emerge from the memos.

This study also utilized thematic coding by MAXQDA-12 (1995–2016), a professional data analysis software for both qualitative and mixed methods research. MAXQDA helped to organize, evaluate, code, annotate, and interpret data, and create reports for the researcher to share in this process. Through thematic coding, questions were aligned to the concept map to establish relationships and patterns following the outline of theme and subthemes of the study (VERBI GmbH, 2016).

The study was then narrowed to focus on process and meaning; methods were modified as new findings emerged, and new ideas and themes were used with respondents (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2013). While analyzing data, the entire set of responses and information were read once again, and emerging categories and relationships were noted. These were applied in further adapting the coding system, categorizing codes into parent categories through literature and participant inputs, and sorting information according to categories.

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations. This study was limited to the process of identification of students with learning disabilities for gifted and talented programs and services. The participants are a heterogeneous group of professionals who have varied levels of exposure but serve in the same district, so they expressed common views in certain topics. The setting was limited to two elementary schools and one middle school in a specific school district in New Jersey. The schools were chosen for in-depth study and as was previously stated, these grades are chosen because most students are identified for specialized programs during those years. Also, time for interviews was limited as busy professionals were not always available for continuous reviews.

Therefore, some topics such as socio-economic and political contexts, funding, and comparison of state and national data were not exhaustively explored as some were outside the purpose of the study, which is identification. In addition, not all expected data on gifted students by gender and ethnicity were readily available due to constraints of district bureaucracy.

Delimitation. The delimitation of this case study is the sample size of six teachers and four administrators who were selected for the research because they work directly with students in the grades three to six of a New Jersey urban/suburban school district. It is possible that some had bias based on previous experiences in either gifted and talent programs and/or learning disabilities services. During interviews information were obtained to help understand the gender and ethnic averages of gifted and talented students in the schools of study (see Appendix C).

Ethical Considerations

Denzin and Lincoln (1994) warned that the highest forms of ethics should be followed while collecting data because of the "risk of exposure, embarrassment, loss of standing, employment, self-esteem" (p.237). So, district procedure were followed in obtaining permission for this project. Written approval was received from the superintendent and the chair of the district Institutional Review Board (IRB) committee. Following their caution, the school district of interest is anonymous and all participants are represented by letters A-P.

The consent of participants were obtained before they were included in the study, as stipulated by Bethel University Institutional Review Board (IRB), which stated that informed consent allows the participants to withdraw at any time in the process of the study. Letters of consent will be provided where they were required (see Appendix B). No interviews were conducted until approval was granted to the researcher by the Bethel University IRB. Also, the school district IRB committee reviewed the research proposal and approved the study according to district policy. Only data that are open to public view were utilized in this study and all sensitive information have been de-identified before publication.

After in-depth interviews, a comparison of information from different individual interviews was conducted to ensure the credibility of data collected from different sources. The process included member checking, which involves discussing findings with participants to confirm the accuracy of the data received; this is to ascertain consistency in the data. Also, deviant cases were cross-checked before conclusions were drawn; these are reports that may not fit into the general notions, but which needed to be verified and

specifically analyzed as they are essential to the strength of the findings (Patton & Cochran, 2002, Shaw, 2015).

Chapter Conclusion

In conclusion, this study dwelt on the process of identification of gifted elementary school students with learning disabilities, for placement in the least restrictive environment of a public school setting. The purpose of placement is to strengthen their abilities and support them in the areas of special needs according to their IEPs, in order to improve overall academic achievement. This chapter provides the procedure for collecting relevant information that enabled the researcher to learn and understand grassroots application of the theories behind GLD in the setting of this study.

Chapter IV: Results

The purpose of this case study is to examine the socio-political context in relation to gifted students with learning disabilities (GLD) and to understand the process and criteria for identifying gifted students, students with disabilities, and gifted students with learning disabilities in an urban-suburban school district in New Jersey. The study explored how affected students are identified for educational services in grades three to six, the extent to which the exceptionalities of gifted and talented (GT) students are complicated by specific learning disabilities, and how these twice exceptional students can be supported. The results were used to make recommendations for appropriate placement of GLD students for needed services.

In the first phase of this research, the study focused on semi-structured interviews of grades three to six teachers in three schools within the sample district. The researcher provided a protocol of nine questions focusing on step-by-step strategies in the identification of students, behavior of students that may point to learning disabilities, behavior demonstrated by students that indicate giftedness and exceptional talents, and teacher observation skills and readiness to serve students with dual exceptionalities. Teachers were also expected to discuss their experiences and knowledge of students with exceptionalities. In addition, school administrators were interviewed including two elementary school principals, one middle school principal and one guidance counselor. The same semi-structured interview questions were administered along with three additional questions based on family and community advocacy and financing of gifted and learning disabilities programs.

A focus group discussion session was also held administering the same questions asked of the administrators. This focus group consisted of five professionals from different fields, including a school social worker, school psychologist, speech therapist, special education consultative teacher, and a learning disabilities teacher consultant (LDTC). The session lasted about one hour and yielded interdisciplinary facts and opinions on factors that affect identification and placement of students with learning disabilities in gifted programs.

In the course of the research, additional data were received from the district's supervisor of gifted and talented programs, which further explained the demographics of students in the GT programs with regard to gender, ethnicity, and classification status according to IDEA and Limited English proficiency. These are mostly students of Hispanic and African-American origin who are 155 and 239 in number respectively, making up 93% of the gifted and talented population. This is representative of the district demographics. The data also show 226 female and 196 male students in the program, including two males with disabilities and one female with a disability as displayed in Table 4 with details in Appendix C, which is a breakdown of elementary school civil rights reports.

Table 4

Civil Rights Report submitted on 11/30/16

School: District

Students enrolled in the gifted and talented programs	Hispanic or Latino of any race	American Indian or Alaskan Native	Asian	Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	Black or African American	White	Two or more Races	Total	LEP	Students with Disabilities (IDEA)
Male:	78	0	4	0	103	9	2	196	1	2
Female:	77	0	3	2	136	7	1	226	0	1
Total	155	0	7	2	239	16	3	422	1	3

Table 4

A synopsis of the interviewees' responses are provided below. Also, evidence from demographic data and findings from semi-structured interviews are discussed. Following these, a preliminary interpretation of data is provided in relationship to the literature.

Interview Results

Background of Respondents

Field research began with administrators who provided responses to semi-structured interview questions asked by the researcher. This group of administrators included three principals and one counselor, all of whom were certified teacher/administrators with at least ten years of experience; one of these participants had 44 years of experience as an education professional. Seven classroom teachers participated in the semi-structured interviews over the course of three weeks between November 17th and December 6th, 2016. The teachers had taught from three to 13 years with an average of seven years. Each educator had a unique background in a subject area, career path, and socio-cultural background as they were purposively chosen to provide

diverse perspectives of student assessments and identification for exceptional programs within the district.

The teachers were from the three schools of interest and had varied levels of experience and exposure to students with learning disabilities and pupils in the gifted and talented programs. The researcher also interviewed principals of the three sample schools in order to learn their administrative practice in identifying GLD in their respective schools. The interdisciplinary focus group was also organized and moderated by the researcher to authenticate the individual input. Not everyone initially suggested by the principals consented to the interview. One elementary teacher opted out because she did not feel confident to address the questions provided. A second social studies teacher could not participate due to time constraints. Also, a learning disabilities teacher consultant (LDTC) in the focus group was called out a day before the session in order to attend to family needs. Nevertheless, replacements were found for all three participants. Therefore, the entire process of semi-structured interviews ran successfully and a summary of the participants' qualifications is shown in Table 5.

Table 5
Participants' Qualifications

Participants	Educational Function	Position in the District/School	Length of Educational Service	Highest degree earned	Field of Study	Date and Time of Interview	Educational licenses held
A	Principal	Middle School Principal	Overall – 17 years Principal – 5 years	Masters	Elementary Education/ Administration	Wed. 11/16/16	Principal
B	Principal	Elementary School Principal	Principal 10 years	Ed. D.	Educational Leadership	Monday 11/21/16	Principal
C	Supervisor	Supervisor of Guidance Counseling, District HIB Coordinator, Instructional Leader	Educator – 44 years, Counselor – 40 years, Present position – 10 years	Doctorate	Educational Administration, Counseling	Thursday 11/18/16	Guidance Counselor
D	Principal	Elementary School Principal	22 years overall, Health and Physical Education teacher High School – 6 years, Vice Principal – 6 years, Principal 10 years	MA (Education)	Health and Physical Education	Monday 11/28/16	Elementary Education K – 8, Teacher of Health and Physical Education, Supervisor, Principal, Building Administrator.
E	Teacher	Music teacher – Elementary	8 years	Masters	Music Education, Educational Administration	11/21/16	Teacher of Music Administrative license
F	Teacher	General Education/ BSI teacher (elementary)	13 years	Masters	Reading	11/18/16	Elementary Education
G	Teacher	Visual Art teacher	8 years	M.A.	Art	11/21/16	Teacher of Art
H	Teacher	Elementary teacher, I&RS/504 team member	13 years	Bachelors	4th and 5th grade teacher	11/30/16	Elementary Education license

Participants	Educational Function	Position in the District/School	Length of Educational Service	Highest degree earned	Field of Study	Date and Time of Interview	Educational licenses held
I	Teacher	6th grade Math teacher	9 years	Master of Education, Ph.D. Candidate in Psychology	Business/Public Administration, Elementary Education	12/1/16	K – 6 teacher certification
J	Teacher	5th grade Social Studies teacher	3 years	Master of Education	History, Social Studies and Education	12/5/16	Elementary Education K-8
K	Teacher	5th grade Science and Social Studies teacher	9 years	Bachelors	Elementary Education	12/5/16	Elementary K – 8 education
L	School Social Worker	Case Manager/Social worker /CST member	11 years	Masters (MSW)	Social work	11/17/16	School Social worker
M	Speech Language Specialist	Speech therapist/CST member	<1 year	Masters	Speech Language Pathology	11/17/16	Initial elementary teacher
N	Consult Teacher/LDTC	Consulting Teacher/ Learning Disabilities Teacher Consultant/Child Study Team Participant	Overall - 15 years Present district - 9 years	Post Masters	Learning Disabilities Teacher consultant	11/17/16	Teacher of Art, Teacher of Students with Disabilities, Administrative license.
O	School Psychologist	Case manager/CST	11 years	Masters	BA psychology MS ED School Psychology	11/17/16	NJ certified school psychologist
p	Consult Teacher	Consulting Teacher/ Child Study Team Participant	16 years	BA Sociology, Masters in Education	Consult Teacher, Language Arts and Science	11/17/16	Teacher of the handicap

Knowledge of District Assessments and Improvement Plans

It was necessary to understand the level of exposure of educators to the district vision of continued improvements. When asked, "What is the district's improvement plan?" Two teachers out of seven responded that the district uses the school improvement plan (ScIP) or the DEAC, thereby implementing New Jersey plans for growth and improvement. Out of the four administrators, three stated that district assessment and improvement plan included, ScIP, DEAC and data driven instruction under the superintendent supervision. One administrator was unable to articulate the district's improvement plan. The focus group members had different functions in the learning and assessment of students such as, evaluation and testing of students for initial evaluation, annual reviews and reevaluations. They determine the eligibility of students for special education and related service and write IEPs. The case managers and consultative teachers consult with teachers to implement IEPs, modify students' work, and monitor progress of students throughout the year. Also, they help to provide technology and strategies which students need to access language and participate in class.

Professional Role of Participants

The first question "What is your role regarding student learning and assessment?" yielded varied responses, which showed that the administrative participants had knowledge of their educational functions as: instructional leaders, hiring of staff, lesson plan reviews, maintenance, location of staff, doing all for student achievement, participating in professional learning communities (PLC) and common planning meetings, providing professional development (PD) for staff, evaluating teachers,

supervision of faculty and staff, ensuring that assessments meet standards, and disaggregating diagnostic data.

All four administrators understood that they were instructional leaders; two emphasized the need to ensure that their aim should be to improve student achievement. Three school leaders emphasized that lesson plans should be reviewed to meet standards, two out of four pointed out teacher evaluation as part of their role. Only one administrator stressed that providing professional development for staff is paramount to meeting the needs of students in a dynamic educational system. In addition, six out of the seven teachers interviewed described their diverse roles, including working with struggling students in reading, assessment and assigning lessons to help, using rubrics, preparing to teach content area material, designing curriculum, subject matter enrichment, real life application of subject areas, infusing technology into pedagogy, research and project based learning, differentiation, data driven instruction, and following the curriculum.

Six out of the seven teachers interviewed emphasized major areas such as assessments and standards-based lesson planning. Four teachers prepared and taught content areas, three members used real-life application/technology based strategies. Two others differentiated instruction to meet the needs of struggling students. Also, two teachers referred to their utilization of a curriculum. An honors-level curriculum was developed to use with students who are able to study in a subject area at a more advanced level. A second teacher-created curriculum was designed for students in regular, grade-level classes. One is for honors in the subject area for those who are able to study at a more advanced level, while the other is the regular class. The other teacher followed already provided curriculum based on the nationally used common core states standards

and/or the New Jersey core curriculum content standards. As such, curriculum is viewed from different perspectives. The district allowed the use of teacher-made curriculum in special subject areas, while English Language Arts and Math curriculum are aligned to common core state standards and are research-based as provided by the district.

Each of these teachers focused on student learning and assessments through preparation and delivering of engaging lessons to all students. Some teachers apply differentiated instruction and others emphasized the use of project based learning which is both formative and summative resulting in differentiated products. Interviewee I, responded: "We only administer already made assessments…We also use Universal Design for Learning, so we differentiate assessments and use observation and practice." (personal communication, December 1st, 2016). As such, accommodation is provided to individuals based on learning needs.

As professionals of various fields of education, the members of the focus group described their roles as child study team (CST) members who are involved in identification and evaluating of students to determine eligibility for special education and related services and reassessment of students every three years. The case managers were in charge of writing IEPs and ensuring its implementation by monitoring progress throughout the year. Meanwhile, the consultative teachers implement the IEP in classrooms through making modifications of students' work and helping teachers differentiate instruction. Therefore, these professional perspectives elucidate the understanding of how students are served both in regular and special education settings of the district.

District Improvement Plan

What strategy is your district utilizing for improving testing/assessment results?

The present district superintendent has a vision of improving the entire district through his dynamic leadership. The strategies that have been adopted are viewed from several perspectives by administrators, teachers, and child study team members. In recent years there has been a lot of emphasis on the continuous improvement of test scores as some of the district schools are categorized as "schools in need of improvement" by New Jersey report card standards (NJOE, 2014). Interviewee I observed that the district upholds the district strategy for improving testing/assessments as essential as a major element of professional development in the district:

> For testing and assessment, we are provided with professional development (PD). People come in from the state to work with teachers because we are a need school. They come twice a month to help with strategies to improve. We also have PDs twice a month. We have PLC (professional learning communities) and PLD (professional learning development). It is working but there are a few issues, which have to do with the attitude of some students towards learning, some come with a lot of problems, which obstruct learning and hinder motivation for learning (personal communication, December 1st, 2016).

As an administrator, Interviewee A presented the strategies his school practices as follows:

> Not teaching to the test but teaching to prepare for the test or beyond the test, rigorous, quality, first-time instruction as much as possible, remediation, we make it differentiated with questioning and discussion activities. Also, there must be

> efficiency, higher level interaction, and open-ended responses especially in math class. Students should be taught to logically reason, synthesize answers, collaborate, share ideas and arguing respectfully, which is the key (personal communication, November 11th, 2016).

Other administrators added that they have concentrated on standards mastery, use of technology-based strategies, and other 21st century skills for teaching and assessments.

Teacher interviewees provided more classroom-based assessment methods and, as presented by the interviewees, the assessments must be meaningful, based on research, and driven by reviewed data. Interviewee G acknowledged this as follows:

> Every subject area teacher is helping students with reading, writing and math and there is cross-curricular teaching, which help to improve creativity and critical thinking skills. Students then discover reasons to create by their own ideas. They learn how to think and defend their views through written reflection for continued growth (personal communication, November 21st, 2016).

These educators emphasized the goals of the School Improvement Panel (ScIP) and 21st century skills including, questioning, higher order thinking, checking for understanding, focusing on Math and Language Arts using compare/contrast strategies, open ended responses, and close reading techniques.

The focus group members did not know the district strategies applied in the classroom but observed that there is more integration of technology tools such as iReady, Kurzweil, and Read 180. Also, regular benchmark assessments have been common place in recent years. A discussion ensued on whether these new strategies are working or not. Members of the group felt that the benchmark writing was not effective and was not

working for everyone. Also, the iReady assessments were helpful to assess where students were but many students do not always take the iReady seriously so it cannot be solely relied upon. It was also observed that there were too many assessments and the students were overwhelmed and do not take any of them seriously any more.

Exploring Instruments In the Identification Process

Question 1: What tools do you use to identify students at risk of disabilities in mainstream classes?

Interviewee A established that the primary tool for identification is the classroom teacher who utilizes students' class work and homework to discover who is struggling. Elementary school teachers will often begin with phonological awareness screening, to find foundational skills, letter sound and names, and to target areas of weakness. Other school-based programs include the Intervention and Referral Services (I&RS) committee, which helps drive programming for early interventions. The district also has a Title I designation, before-the-bell and after-the-bell programs, Read 180, and Math 180, technology-based software. The Read 180 and Math 180 sometimes take the place of students' specials or electives. In addition, the schools conduct formal/informal running of records, and use DRA reading and writing components to find students' comprehension levels, iReady assessments, and writing benchmark assessments. Armed with these data, the school will begin prescriptions. Also, parents or the home base are important for explaining what happens at home and can suggest to the school other areas to look closely at the student. Outside agencies can also provide information for students' identification for exceptional services.

Teachers demonstrated different levels of exposure to tools for identification of children with disabilities. Most of the general education teachers reported that they assess the quality of students' work to determine if the work meets appropriate standards. They observed how children grip their pencils and if there are anger and emotional issues and communicate these to the child study team (CST). They also discuss with other teachers, especially when a student cannot read, write, or do basic math. Interviewee G shared that his school principal provided an intervention manual that is broken down by subject areas with strategies for mostly math and reading. This manual provided different methods of teaching concepts. It also provided research-based strategies to apply with students to help find justification and documentation prior to failing a student. On the other hand, Interviewee F stated, "At the beginning of the year, I am given IEPs to sign off on, CST members sometimes sit in and observe certain students. We can report to the CST but they do not give us idea what to look for." (personal communication, November 18th, 2016). Differing, Interviewee I stated, "I don't have to identify students. We don't have gifted and talented programs in the district, we have people who have the potential so what we do is to bring the gift out of them (personal communication, November 18th, 2016). Thus confirming that there is limited understanding of the tools for identification.

Meanwhile, the focus group regarded at-risk children as struggling and not on grade level. They explained that the iReady reading and Math tech-based tools will help to initially identify them as it has the capability of placement at different grade levels. When a student is placed below grade level, it is a red flag. Also, basic spelling problems, poor note taking, delay in processing information, and lack of growth in learning concepts after they have been provided with support by applying I&RS strategies for six or more weeks that reveal serious concerns of students' educational potentials or needs.

Question 2 - What tools are used for identifying students for gifted and talented education?

Three out of the four administrators interviewed recognized a need for teacher feedback and the use of norm-referenced testing, Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) for identification. The CogAT is a nationally standardized, norm-referenced test (NRT), which means that it compares any student being assessed with all other children who took it (Yorkville Gifted Resource Department, n.d.). This test evaluates reasoning and problem-solving skills in three diverse areas: verbal, nonverbal, and quantitative. The result of the test may identify students for gifted programming in English language or Mathematic or both, depending on their scores. Also, the state criterion-based test, made by the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Career (PARCC) scores, and end-of-year report card grades are elements of the data that will help determine who qualifies for gifted education. All these are taken to the GT supervisor who then produces a list of the students who qualify and that list is sent to the schools for scheduling.

Five out of seven teachers interviewed acknowledged that they do not know the tools and are not involved in identifying students for GT programs. As interviewee J stated, "We don't have much of a say as to who is placed in the GT program. From fourth grade if they pass a certain test they are placed in the program. I am not given the privilege of recommending them." (personal communication, December 5th, 2016). Also, Interviewee K added, "The Gifted and Talented Coordinator will test the students at the end of the previous school year to see if they meet the requirements to be placed in an honor class." (personal communication, December 5th, 2016). Six out of seven teachers did not know of any specific tools; however, one of the seven teachers knew that the

CogAT was a tool the GT department used for identification, along with observation and recommendation based on grades.

Also, the focus group did not know what the gifted and talented department regarding testing students. One participant was curious and said, “I don’t know if honors and GT are considered the same thing here.” (personal communication, November 17th, 2016). Another focus group member mentioned, “In the elementary school they pull some kids that do well in basic skills and provide them with an additional test which they use to determine if they are gifted.” (personal communication, November 17th, 2016). Following this testing they may be included in the honor or gifted and talented program. The two terms, honors and gifted and talented programs were used interchangeably throughout the discussion and it was unclear if the district actually had a district GT program. Interviewee I taught one of the GT-designated classes and had a similar viewpoint, as she stated:

> We don’t have gifted and talented programs in the district, we have people who have the potential so what we do is to bring the gift out of them. We have three tiers of gift – 1st, 2nd and 3rd with 1st being the highest level of potential … If you are to take the kids, we have with those in gifted program, they will not measure up. They come in not having the ability, then we teach them problem-solving skills. After teaching them, I want them to demonstrate their learning (personal communication, December 1st, 2016).

Exploring Step By Step Strategies In Identification of Students

In response to the third question “What is the procedure for identifying gifted students with disabilities in your school?” Two out of the four administrators considered

that students must be considered individually according to gifted and talented identification procedure. Also, two teachers affirmed that behavior affects consideration of students with LD in gifted education. Interviewee D objected, and stated, "LD students tend to act up," (personal communication, November 28th, 2016), while Interviewee A believed that behavior may reflect on students' academic performance. While recommending students for programs, teachers provide qualitative feedback that include, students' attendance concerns, class participation, and maturity level. Furthermore, Interviewee A revealed the consideration of extenuating circumstances, such that unfair expectations are not placed on children and they are not given challenges that will set them backwards. An additional question was posed to Interviewee A as follows: How do we balance up bias when there are three children earning the same score from all GT assessments? He responded that they will be weighed according to their level of maturity for the program. In view of that, the most mature will be chosen first. He defended this stance, stating that students who are not mature for the program may be forced into a challenge that they cannot cope with.

Although gender was not one of the main interview questions, three out of four administrators argued that gender, and not ethnicity, indirectly plays a part in students' placement. For instance, it affects placement in homerooms because there is an attempt to balance between boys and girls and there are more girls than boys in the district's GT program (see Table 4).

Two out of seven teachers were not familiar with achievement requirements for identifying GLD. Two others pointed out the use of a GT test, which one called CogAT. The others described the process as checking students' ability to express themselves, high

reading level, staying engaged, and challenged. For the cognitive abilities requirement, all of the teachers interviewed said they were not familiar with the tests, although one mentioned CogAT as an achievement test. When asked what part students' behavior played in the process of their consideration for GLD programs, three respondents thought that behavior affected the consideration of students for GLD. Interviewee H believed that behavior should not be part of the considerations while Interviewee I expressed the view that there must be a reason for any negative behavior. Therefore, Interviewee I asserted:

> You find behavior problem if the brain is not fully occupied so they act out. Once behavior is redirected to something then it can change. For example, if a child does not like Math he will act out during Math classes but take them to another subject they like, they behave well. That's why teachers should use multiple intelligences in teaching. When such a child is put in an advance class, he will shine especially where the lessons are made applicable to real life. (personal communication, December 1st, 2016).

According to the teacher interviewees, ethnicity did not play any known part in the district identification and placement processes, and all teachers agreed that the district is diverse and most of the programs indicate a thorough mix of all ethnicities. Nevertheless, Interviewee J pointed out the socio-cultural backgrounds, immigration status of students or their parents, and level of exposure to the English language will affect students' readiness for gifted learning. Also, one teacher highlighted the fact of having more girls than boys in district gifted programs (see Table 4).

The Focus Group's discussion in this segment is summarized as follows:

- Achievement – The program would accept students who scored high in the state tests, NJASK or PARCC, and did well in tests.
- Cognitive – Some high cognitive students with learning disabilities did not go into GT because of some stigma that special education students cannot be gifted.
- Behavior – Behavior can impede inclusion into GT, especially with the assumption that if you have an IEP you cannot be gifted.
- Ethnicity – This is hard to identify in the district because of the large minority population. This district is predominantly African-American and Hispanic.

The group observed that some students start to misbehave because they are frustrated and others because of low self-perception or self-esteem, while others act up because they are not challenged enough by the classes they are enrolled in. As such, increase of academic challenge or rigor may help them to improve. Many students with behavior problems who have average or above-average intelligences may get frustrated if they are not taught according to their potentials, so they begin to revolt. This is more obvious in the subjects in which they have difficulty. If they are not being challenged enough they lose interest. Therefore, it is important to identify students who need rigorous learning in order to raise the standards for students with exceptionalities.

Exploring Behavior of Students That May Be a Pointer to Learning Disabilities

Question 4. What are some of the indicators you may look for in identifying and recommending a student for learning disabilities services?

Teachers, administrators, and child study team members encounter students with indicators of learning disabilities also described as special needs. From information

gathered from four administrators, indicators for identifying and recommending students for learning disabilities services emerged as follows:

- disparity between effort and ability (what they can produce is less than what they are able to produce)
- low level of motivation,
- struggling even after hard work.
- Student is unfocused
- unable to pass assessments,
- functioning below grade level,
- having difficulty comprehending,
- being a behavior problem consistently.
- unable to decode or retain information
- has difficulty reading and understanding more than 1 step direction at a time.

One administrator admitted lack of knowledge of how students with disabilities can be identified but guessed that he may "talk to the parents, and check health records" adding, "I'm not familiar with IEP procedure." This response highlights a deficiency in implementing a process where the educational leaders are not conversant with required procedure.

Each teacher interviewed had some field experience with students who had indications of a learning disability. These students were placed into three categories: (i) lack of motivation, (ii) frustration with subject matter, (iii) socialization issues. Interviewees reported that these students are noted for the following:

- lack of assignment completion
- failing grades
- poor organizational skills
- lack of motivation, and
- low literacy and numeracy skills and achievement.

In view of this, Interviewee I expressed as follows:

> When students have behavior issues that defy every form of intervention, they should be referred to the intervention and referral services (I&RS) committee, who will create a learning plan for the student. This is a process that will help the child to have all the support he needs. Additionally, it is needful to expose every child to the curriculum and help student to learn to independently solve problems thereby providing foundations for each child. When a student is a couple of grade levels below they will be referred and their parents will get involved in the intervention process. (personal communication, December 1st, 2016).

The focus group, made up of professionals who have the technical expertise for identifying students with learning disabilities, explained that when a student has been referred to CST by parents, teachers or school leaders, that student will follow legal procedures to conduct a series of assessments (personal communication, November 2016). Different members of the focus group explained the evaluation tools utilized within the district including: Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children – fifth edition (WISC-V) for psychological evaluation, Woodcock Johnson – fourth edition (WJ-IV) for achievement testing, and Comprehensive Evaluation and Language Functioning (CELF-V) for speech language testing. These major tests determine the ability to follow

directions, psychological appraisal, thinking abilities, verbal reasoning, as well as reasoning skills and will measure the child's strengths and weaknesses. Following the tests, a determination of discrepancy between the IQ and the actual achievement of a student is found. If there is at least a 1.5 standard deviation between achievement and cognitive ability in the area of basic reading skills, reading comprehension, oral expression, listening comprehension, mathematical calculation, mathematical problem solving, written expression or reading fluency, the student will be classified as having a learning disability in the specific area(s) and qualifies for special education and related services (New Jersey Department of Education, 2014). This is the method mainly utilized by the district. Meanwhile, the RTI is recommended by the NAGC, especially to identify those with giftedness (NAGC, 2013).

Exploring Behavior Demonstrated By Students That Indicate Giftedness and Exceptional Abilities

Question 5: What are some of the indicators you may look for in identifying and recommending a student for gifted services?

To recommend a student for gifted services, there are several indicators that teachers and administrators seek to identify. These indicators could be categorized into the following three headings: (1) work efficiency (2) critical/higher order thinking skills and (3) Intrinsic motivation. Therefore, Interviewees' responses have been tabulated into these three categories in the figure below (see table 6).

Table 6 – Shows responses to indicators for identifying students for gifted services

Column1	Work efficiency	Critical/Higher order thinking	Intrinsic motivation
Administrators	Consistency of work	evidence of high order thinking skills	preparedness for class
	high test scores	analysis skills	seriousness of purpose
			inner motivation
Teachers	completing work quickly	critical thinking skills	taking extra step
	above grade level	understanding math concepts	super focus
	strong vocabulary	researching topics	above and beyond
	high self-expression	taking initiative	
	technology skills	thinking outside the box	
	high quality work		
	straight As/above and beyond		

Table 6

Most contributors believe that there is a need for more work efficiency and higher order /critical thinking skills in their classrooms. Also, some interviewees are of the view that signs of intrinsic motivation indicate a manifestation of giftedness. One administrator mentioned that there are no indicators; rather, "students take a test and are placed." (Interviewee B, personal communication, November 21st, 2016). Interviewee D also noted that the GT departments would test all students so everyone has an exposure to the tool but added, "I am not sure of the tool they use." (personal communication, November 28th, 2016).

Teachers revealed that practical indicators of academic proficiency, such as work completion, strong vocabulary, self-expression, critical thinking skills and understanding math concepts are commonly demonstrated by GT students. Interviewee D argued that the criteria for identification should not be summative; rather, there are combinations of

data utilized for identification, which serve to question the extent of students' proficiency before they are considered for gifted education. With the idea of consistently exhibiting high quality work and having a super focus and seriousness of purpose, some of the teachers seem to demand perfection before a child is placed in gifted education. In addition, Interviewee J included humor as an indicator of giftedness, which is similar to Terman's (1925) perfect subjects, which does not consider a student with only one area of giftedness. At that point gifted individuals were thought to be all-rounders, who can neither learn differently nor have a specific learning disability but should fit into the perfect classroom structure.

The focus group expressed that they are uncertain what indicators to look for in identifying gifted students since they know that the GT department handles identification. This questions the outcome for gifted students with learning disabilities who need a collaborative approach to their identification. As Interviewee C declared, "I will think the IEP will partner with a gifted prescription. I think students with an IEP should incorporate that into the GT program. IEPs should be partnered with GT." (personal communication, November 18th, 2016). There is obvious need for more partnership between the departments so that a child can get the support of both departments as noted by Interviewee C. However, the focus group did not elaborate on the reason for the lack of collaboration between the two departments that cater to most exceptional learners. This disconnect calls for further review as that might be of benefit to affected individuals.

Exploring Teacher Observation Skills and Readiness to Serve Students With Dual Exceptionalities

Question 6 – Are you aware of any students in your classroom who are gifted with learning disabilities (GLD)?

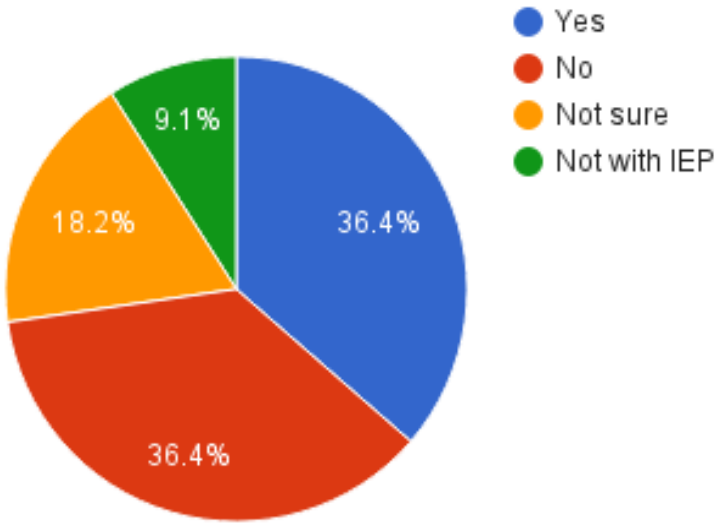

Figure 7. This figure illustrates the percentage of interviewees who are aware of students in their classrooms with GLD.

In exploring teachers' and administrators' readiness to identify students for GLD services, it was discovered that out of 11 participants interviewed, 36.4% were aware of GLD in their classroom, 36.4% were unaware of any GLD, while 18.2% were not sure and 9.1% knew children who struggled with learning but had no IEPs who were in gifted programs (see figure 7). The focus group affirmed that they know three such students at the moment who had an IEP and are also in the gifted program. From Appendix C, district data confirmed that there are three gifted students with disabilities, including two male students and one female student. Civil Rights records did not indicate their exact classifications therefore, it is unclear if any of these students has a learning disabilities.

These three pupils constitute just 0.019% of the 150 students in the three schools of this research.

Question 7 – Are you able to follow protocol to recommend students for GLD services?

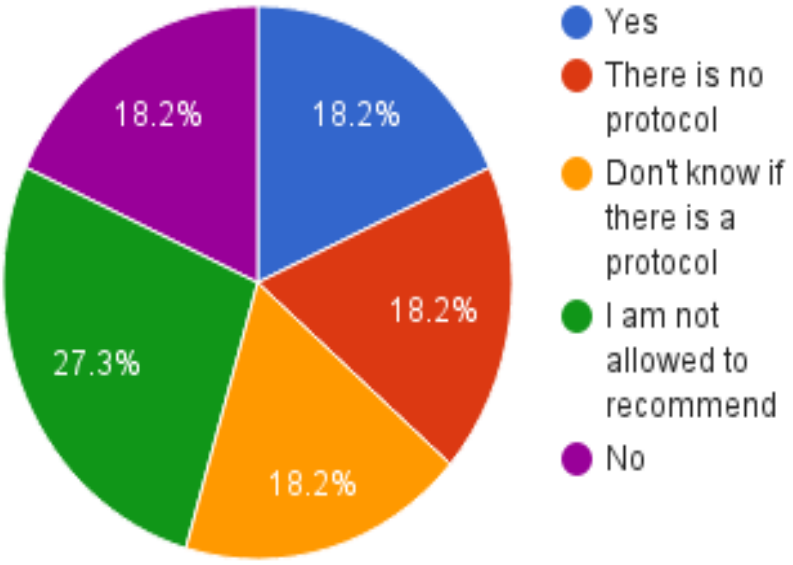

Figure 8. This figure illustrates the percentage of participants who can follow protocol to identify students for GLD services.

Regarding following a protocol to recommend students for GLD services, there were disparities in the responses received, thus the answers were grouped as *Yes* – 18.2%, *No* – 18.2%, *There is no protocol* – 18.2%, *Don't know if there is any protocol* – 18.2%, and *I am not allowed to recommend* – 27.3%. Most of the teachers who stated they were not allowed to recommend students were from the non-academic subject areas (as termed by the district), which include art and music and the non-state tested academic subjects, such as social studies and science. Two of them expressed disappointment about their inability to have a say in this important decision regarding their students' academic endeavors. Interviewee G explained how he tries to get around this, "I recommend informally to the other teachers but I am not sure if they follow up." (personal

communication, November 21st, 2016). Hence, he does not have equal opportunity to participate thereby limiting the students who are gifted in that subject area, because they get overlooked.

The focus group agreed that they generally do not know what the protocol is because GT programs and LD services are separated into two parallel programs and rarely meet together. However, they were aware of a recent effort to test every student for giftedness. In 2015/16 school year every general education student was tested for GT. Apparently, GT and LD programs exist separately in the district and that separation is placing a limit identifying students who may qualify for GLD programs.

Question 8 - What do you consider factors that may prevent a student from being identified as both gifted and with learning disabilities?

Responses from four administrators, seven teachers, and a focus group of support services professionals demonstrated that the hindrances could be classified under the nine headings as shown in Figure 9 below.

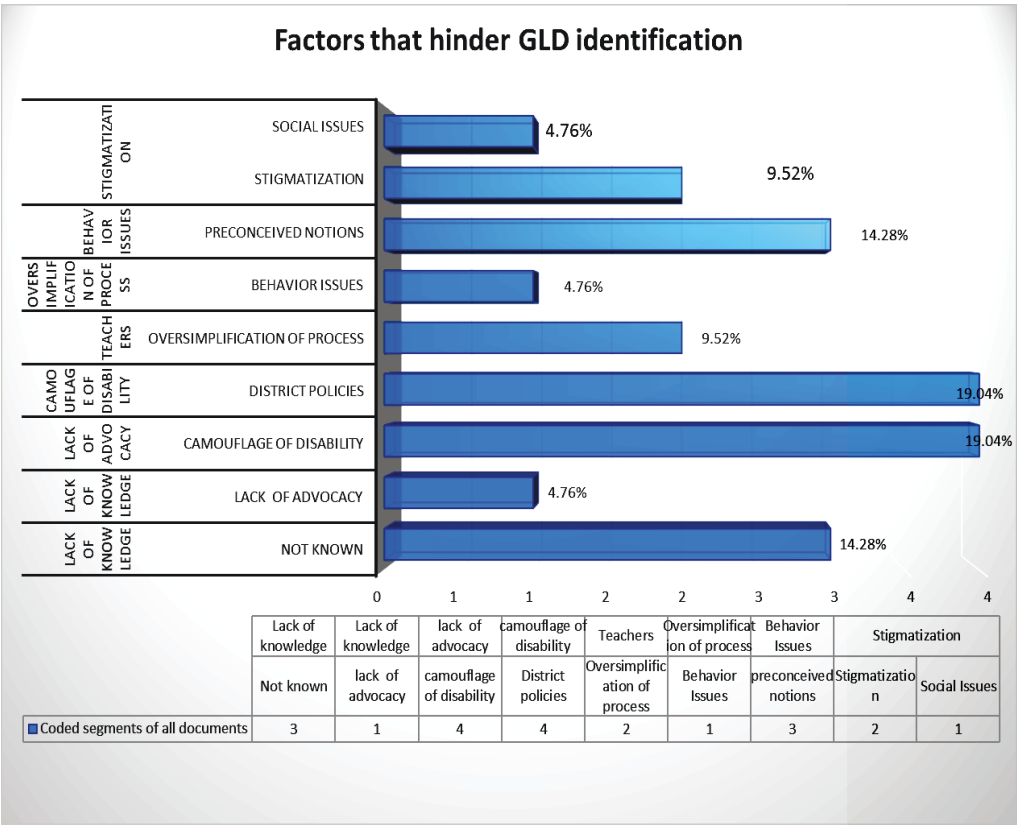

Figure 9. Illustration of the different factors that hinder the proper identification and appropriate placement of students who are gifted with learning disabilities.

Administrators generally viewed teacher inability to recommend the appropriate students as a major issue. In the words of Interviewee A, "If a teacher does not understand that GLD can happen and is possible, then they cannot recommend the child." (personal communication, November 16th, 2016). Some educators had preconceived notions about what is expected of gifted children. For instance, Interviewee B remarked, "I think they may not do well in the test, depending on their disabilities." (Interviewee B, November 21st, 2016). This impression is a biased expectation that students with learning disabilities are more likely to do poorly in cognitive tests, which is at variance with the first criterion for determining a student's eligibility for LD services, as stated by the New Jersey Education Association (2017):

> A specific learning disability can be determined if a severe discrepancy is found between the student's current achievement and intellectual ability in one or more of the following area: Basic reading skills, Reading comprehension, Oral expression, Listening comprehension, Mathematical calculation, Mathematical problem solving, Written expression, and Reading fluency (New Jersey Education Association, 2017, pp. 2).

This criterion suggests that if a students' intellectual ability is high but he is achieving or scoring at a lower level, he is likely to qualify for LD services in the subject of need. The implication is that most students with learning disabilities are at average or above average cognitive levels or IQ.

If the student has cognitive strength and/or high IQ but a discrepancy is found between his ability and academic achievement, then it is possible for him or her to do well in the cognitive abilities test (CogAT). Consequently, schools that do not allow such students to take the test because they are already classified with learning disabilities are doing a disservice to the child. Interviewee D reported that in her school, every child is tested and "if you make the cut for GT, you are placed into the program." (personal communication, November 28th, 2016). In addition, this participant wondered about the process of testing being used. She questioned the GT identification process in the district and asked the age of the assessment in use, to ascertain whether or not the program was research-based and up to date. Interviewee D added, "The G&T program is outside of the curriculum and I am not sure if it is research-based." (personal communication, November 28th, 2016). Casting further doubt, Interviewee C flinched and said, "Sometimes, I am not sure." (personal communication, November 18th, 2016). However,

the overall observation by those interviewed was that lack of advocacy, poverty, and camouflage of true talent by disability are reasons why it is difficult to identify many eligible students.

Teachers criticized the district policies that separate GT for LD placement as being the reason for lack of appropriate placements. Also, the district does not include creative arts and music as gifted programs, so if a student does not excel in Math and English language arts, it is unlikely that he or she will partake of gifted education. The placement policy limited intelligences to linguistics and logical-mathematical, and failed to recognize spatial intelligence, which manifests in creative arts, as well as musical intelligences, along with four other forms of the multiple intelligences theory (Gardner, 1983). Souza (2003) also held the view that individuals have a combination of gifts and some are even merged with specific learning disabilities.

In addition, most of the participants mentioned that students who are disruptive in class are often not included in gifted and talented programs. Interviewee I viewed the issue of behavior from a different perspective, and stated:

> You find behavior problem if the brain is not fully occupied, so they act out. Once behavior is redirected to something then it can change. For example, if a child does not like math he will act out during math classes but take them to another subject they like, they behave well. That's why teachers should use multiple intelligences in teaching. When such a child is placed in an advanced class, he will shine especially where the lessons are made applicable to real life. (personal communication, December 1st, 2016).

This viewpoint highlighted the need for 21st century learning strategies in today's classrooms and reiterated the need for differentiated instruction for gifted students because each child's needs should be met individually.

Question 9: What do you know about students' exceptionalities that you wish you knew when you first started teaching? Explain.

This reflective question received responses that revealed the effects of experience in the field of education. Most of the interviewees demonstrated advancement over the years due to an open-mindedness to learning on the job. A few respondents considered children holistically, with patience and understanding. Another administrator regarded parent involvement as key to successful assessment and had a clearer view of the effects of gender, culture, and religion on student achievement. Also, some have learned many strategies for reaching diverse student groups.

Conversely, a number of participants learned little or nothing about gifted education. After over a decade of teaching, Interviewee E expressed:

> I have learned very little about gifted students. There is very little exposure about helping to meet the needs of all gifted children. Some gifted children get pushed aside because they are not adequately addressed, diverse population makes it hard to service everyone as testing has been such a priority in the district. (personal communication, November 21st, 2016)

Interviewee B had a fixed mindset and had learned "nothing really" about gifted students with learning disabilities, but rather insisted that children should be viewed as individuals and not as "high or low achieving."

The rest of the respondents offered observations and suggestions for the district as it continues to improve programs for exceptional students. Interviewee H advised:

> I think colleges need classes about GLD. There's a lot we don't know about the exceptional child. They teach a little about special education but there's much we don't know. Teachers need more training and professional development on this and some can go to college to learn about GLD and do more research on LD and GT together. We're not prepared to test about these two exceptionalities when they exist together. (personal communication, November 30th, 2016)

Interviewee I was of the notion that teaching should include:

> Not just going into class to teach a subject area but there should be PD provided for special education, so teachers should take courses to help us develop along the way. These help us know more about our student population. There are other underlying factors that a teacher needs to find out in order to reach students, e.g. Issues at home, divorce, etc. so as to make a connection between school, family and community. (personal communication, December 1st, 2016)

The focus group summed up their reflection:

> We have continued to learn the nature of different children which shows that one size does not fit all. We have come to respect each other, so the students can learn. As case managers we are more aware of how to handle negative attitude of regular education teachers. Also, it is easier to address how the general education teachers feel about special education. Also, we've learned know that there are administrators who cared more about scores than meeting the needs of students with disabilities. (personal communication, November 17th, 2016).

Table 7

GLD Parent Advocacy/Support

	Yes	No
Parent Advocacy	1	3
Support for improving GLD	1	3
	25%	75%

Table 7

The following is a report on additional interview questions to administrators, guidance counselor, and the focus group:

1. How often do you find parents advocating for the inclusion of their children with LD in gifted programs? Have parents' involvement helped to improve the quality of education for GLD in the district?

Parent Advocacy

Interview responses of administrators and focus group members indicated limited occurrence of parent and support group advocacy for GLD in the district. One administrator reported that parents sometimes speak up for their gifted children but not for those with learning disabilities. The other three instructional leaders had no experience of parents making requests that their children with learning disabilities be identified with giftedness nor did they advocate for them in any way. Interviewee C described this as follows:

> Never in this place because they look more at disabilities instead of looking at academic giftedness. There are biases where some people do not know the definition of giftedness. Sometimes your biases get into the way of a community

of learners. Due to parents' lack of knowledge, children get overlooked. (personal communication, November 18th, 2016).

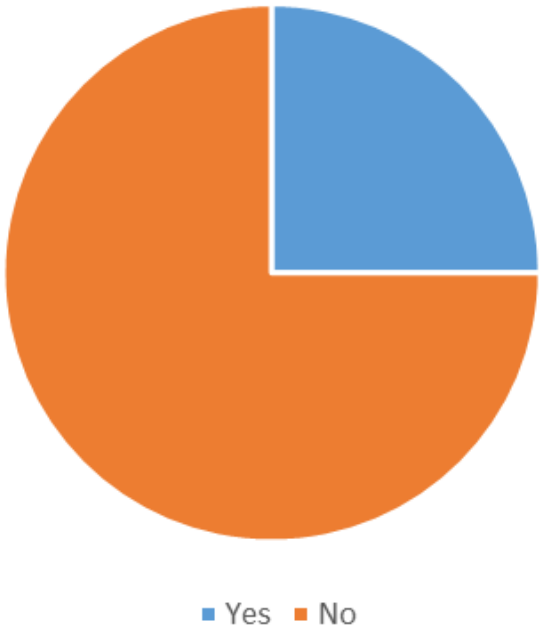

Figure 10. Parent advocacy in the district. This figure further illustrates interviewee perspectives on how much parents advocate for their children with disabilities to participate in the gifted programs.

Interviewee D strengthened this premise: "I have been the one to push parents into GT. I help to involve parents in it. Many think their children can't do it especially if they have disabilities." (personal communication, November 28th, 2016). The focus groups confirmed this statement:

> Parents are often quiet; just two parents with children in general education have advocated for them. Yes, once in a while, parent involvement helps to raise the bar for children's achievement. We had one student last year. I don't know if they advocated for them. Many are against placing their kids in inclusion classes.

> Some are working towards their children becoming more independent. (personal communication, November 28th, 2016)

The above statement indicates that parents need to know their rights and understand the process of identification and placement of exceptional children before they can advocate for their children.

When asked if there are support individuals and groups interested in improving GLD in the district, only Interviewee A acknowledged that a vice principal contributed extra time to fit students in with the right teachers and advocate for students based on their exceptionalities. Other administrators interviewed were either unaware of any form of advocacy or asserted that there simply is none. As such, the district does not have strong support for improving GLD programs. The focus group agreed that they have not heard of any one advocating for gifted students with disabilities.

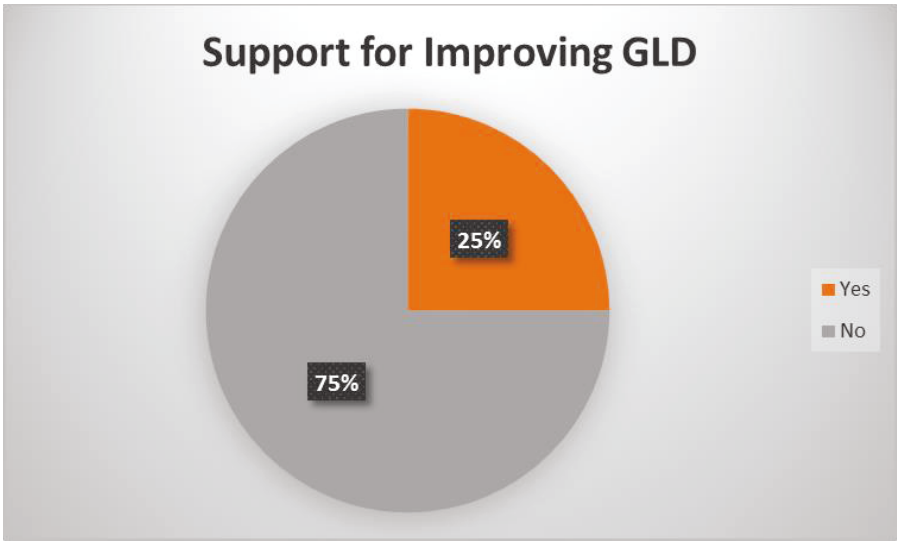

Figure 11. Support for improving GLD services. This figure shows interviewee's views on the extent of community support for children with disabilities to participate in the gifted programs

Funding

Table 8. *Effects of Funding*

Effects of funding on the process	Not key	No	Yes, by not providing all needed courses
	1	2	1
	25%	50%	25%

Table 8

As shown in Table 8, two out of four administrators interviewed responded that finance is not a consideration for the identification of students as GLD. One interviewee observed that finance could play a part but it is not a key consideration. However, one administrator asserted that funding is a consideration, and added, "But it doesn't have to be." This viewpoint was corroborated by the focus group who concluded:

> Sometimes funding affects identification and placement because a district will not provide all courses needed. They focus on academic subjects as they term it, that is, English language arts, math, science, and social studies.

Another issue that may adversely affect the child is the inadequate course provision for all students. Some key courses are not being considered as equally important. This resonates with the concerns earlier expressed by the art and music teachers of creative art courses not being included in the gifted and talented program.

Triangulation with the focus group and two previously interviewed teachers confirmed that art, music, physical education, health and technology are not represented in the GT program districtwide. Some were of the notion that art, music, speech, health, and technology should be incorporated into the math and English language pedagogy, which has been the status quo for many years. Focus group members decried that,

whereas in real life people can choose a career in any field they want, yet in the school district, every student is expected to be average or above average in reading and math, while music, arts, science, and social studies are deemphasized. As such, there is an over-reliance on traditional methods of identification instead of utilizing multiple intelligences strategies. Therefore, the focus group concluded that, "unless teachers and parents say something, a child may go ahead thinking he or she is stupid, yet he or she is highly talented". This highlights the essence of making sure parents are aware of their rights to comprehensive evaluation of their children who they suspect may have some exceptionalities (NAGC, 2013).

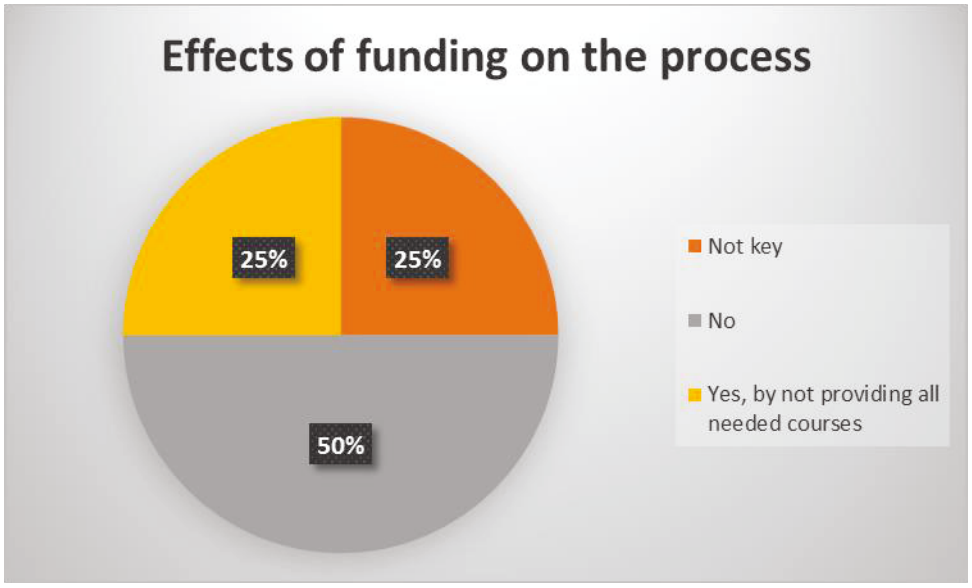

Figure 12. Effects of funding on GLD. This figure illustrates the the experience of participants about how district budget can affect gifted programs.

Chapter Summary

In responding to question 9, what do you know about students' exceptionalities that you wish you knew when you first started teaching? Explain.

Interviewee H summarized the outcome of this research as follows:

> I think colleges need classes about GLD. There's a lot we don't know about the exceptional child. They teach a little about special education but there's much we don't know. Teachers need more training and professional development on this and some can go to college to learn about GLD and do more research on LD and GT when they coexist in an individual, as we are not prepared to identify these two exceptionalities when they present together.

Chapter 5 concludes this case study, highlighting the implications of these findings and recommending further research on this topic with its related areas of need, aimed at improving services for gifted students with all forms of disabilities.

Chapter V: Implications and Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to examine the socio-political context relating to gifted students with learning disabilities (GLD) in an urban-suburban school district in New Jersey. Based on the implications of dual exceptionalities of giftedness and learning disabilities, the data results can be used to determine a framework for moving children from general education, so they can receive services as gifted students with learning disabilities. The issue of twice-exceptionality relates to being gifted in one or more subject areas and having a specific learning disability in one or more achievement areas. Renzulli's 3-Ring conception of giftedness shows that gifted individuals possess three traits at varying levels, which are "above average ability, creativity, and task commitment" (Renzulli, 1978, p. 182). While working on developing giftedness in young people and adults, Renzulli (1984) developed *The Enrichment Triad Model,* which clarified how to identify students for gifted education through exposure to various disciplines and stimulating independence in studies and problem-solving abilities.

Renzulli (1984) also stressed the need for multiple criteria for the identification of students for gifted education. In his earlier writing, Renzulli (1981) noted his disagreement with the one track, inflexible methods of gifted identification and the idea that gifted children remain in the program for the entire year. He thus recommended the *Revolving Door Identification Model* (RDIM), which utilizes data from several sources and are wide ranged enough to accommodate individuals with disabilities and place each student in the LRE (see Figure 2).

Through the course of this study, it became obvious that many educators are unaware of the intricacies of identification of students with learning disabilities. It was

observed during the interviews that there is the tendency to use the terms *special needs, low performing*, and *learning disabilities* interchangeably. The implication, then, is that district educators need to be exposed to the assessments and necessary diagnostic processes before a student can be classified as one with specific learning disabilities. Teachers need to be made aware of the cognitive testing using norm-referenced IQ tests (such as, the WISC IV, WJIII, or CogAT, as described below) and achievement tests (such as the WJ IV achievement test), that also help to identify gifted students.

The Cognitive Abilities Test™ (CogAT®) comes in a multiple-choice format. It is used to test pupils K-12 to identify children to be admitted into gifted and talented programs. It is utilized for measuring the cognitive level of children. The author is David F. Lohman, and was first published by Riverside Publishing in 1968. The test measures children's abilities in three major areas: verbal, nonverbal, and quantitative reasoning skills. Although the 6th editin is still in use, the most recent edition is CogAT form 7, which was published in 2011 (Lohman, 2011).

The Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children® - Fourth Edition (WISC IV) is a clinical psychology test that measures a child's intellectual for children age 6 to 16 (6:0–16:11). It has been placed for use at tier three on the RTI model. It was first published by the Psychological Association in 1949 (Encyclopedia of mental disorders, n. d.). The fifth edition, WISC V with more interative options for testing and scoring was published in 2014. This test is administered individually.

The Woodcock Johnson III - Test of Cognitive Skills (WJ III - Cognitive) and the Woodcock Johnson III – Test of Achievement (WJ III – ACH) are intended to test individuals from ages 2 to 90+. The WJ III - Cognitive is designed to measure general

and specific cognitive functions. WJ III - ACH is utilized to detect and understand an individual's present strengths and weaknesses. These two assessments are administered individually to enable the evaluator to discover over-underachievement and determine patterns of discrepancy within the child's cognitive or achievement capacities. The authors are Richard Woodcock, Nancy Mather, and Kevin McGrew, and it was published by Riverside Publishing in 2007. In 2014, the groundbreaking WJ fourth edition was published and it is reputed to be easier to use than ever before (Schrank, McGrew, Mather, and Woodcock, 2014).

District educators ought to know that diagnosis is not guesswork but must be administered by licensed diagnosticians. District and state criteria for student classification should also be made known to educators, therefore there should be mandatory professional development for special education, general education, inclusion teachers, and other service providers to teach ways of identifying likely misplacement of students. Therefore, the district ought to provide a protocol to adminstrators, faculty and staff on how to identify students for LD, GT and GLD placement according to district policy.

In addition, educators must be aware of the socio-cultural environment in which they serve. There should be close interaction between educators and the general population in order to make the numerous legal procedures effective within schools. Parents should understand the importance of the legal code to help them work more effectively with educational service providers. Regular forums should be provided to educate parents on the requirements of IDEA-2004 and other education-related laws and advocacy groups. In addition, it is clear that though evaluation documents are explained

by case managers, many parents do not understand the Individualized Education Plans (IEP). Hence, it is necessary to hold workshops to guide them through the IEP and what it means, and encourage them to ask questions in the process. This is important because educators need parents to be partners in implementing the academic interventions that their children need.

The purpose of IDEA (2004) has been summarized as "ensuring that all children with disabilities receive a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) that meet their unique needs; ensuring that the rights of children with disabilities and their parents are protected" (IDEA 20 U.S.C. ~ 1400 (d) in Yell, 2012 p. 65). The aim of having a continuum of placements in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) is for students to be reassessed and their IEP modified for more or less restrictive settings as needs arise.

Prior to 1975 when the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA) passed, many children with disabilities were not included in public education, but were left to struggle on their own in the general classroom with no individualized support. The EAHCA offered financial assistance to states to help educators develop and improve educational programs for students eligible for special education and related services. The EAHCA was then revised as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 2004, which mandated a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) for students with special needs.

FAPE requires that section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 safeguard the rights of individuals with disabilities in programs that receive federal financial funding, and it also requires school districts to provide a free and appropriate education to every qualified child with disability in the school district's jurisdiction. As a result of these

congressional acts, an appropriate education is determined on individual basis and is provided at public expense alongside special education and related services, under the supervision and direction of qualified professionals, without charge to the student. The services much meet state educational standards for each child in conformity with an IEP. (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

The requirements of FAPE under IDEA are more rigorous and detailed than those under section 504. IEP requirements apply to states receiving financial assistance under IDEA, while 504 plan is personalized for students receiving services within the federal rehabilitation program. The cost of FAPE includes tuition, room and board, psychological and medical services necessary for diagnostic and evaluative purposes, and adequate transportation in both public and private schools as deemed appropriate. Students may be placed in a private school that meets their program need at district expense if the district cannot provide the stipulated program. Students with dual exceptionalities will benefit from the 504 plan, which provides needed support in the general education classroom. Instruction can be differentiated for students based on both gifted programs and their IEP. In the state of Pennsylvania, the Gifted Individualized Education Plan (GIEP) is provided for gifted students and could be combined with the IEP requirements for students with LD (Pennsylvania Department of Education, n. d.) (See Appendix D). This is presently not the case in the state of New Jersey.

Districts should ensure that there is an easy-to-follow program for children with special needs from pre-K to 21 years through the district programs required by local, state, and federal laws for individuals with disabilities, including students who are also gifted or who have other socio-cultural differences. Children with LD can often benefit

from a number of research-based intereventions and the sooner they receive help, the better the outcomes will be. The IDEA requires each state to implement early identification policies to discover and refer children who may have disabilities to the state's early intervention (EI) program (Gilchrist, 2013).

The district should endeavor to follow a continuum of program options in placing a student in the right classroom to receive services as mandated by the special education legal code. Appendix D provides a school district illustration of the continuum of placement for the least restrictive environment.

Students could also be in general education with gifted services. The Department of Special Education should provide services to students with exceptionalities for all eligible students, ages 3-21 years old, through special education programs located in all schools within the district. In collaboration with designated staff, related and supportive services should be provided for all students according to their needs and their strengths in inclusive classrooms to allow for interaction of students with disabilities with their regular education peers, thus complying with a major requirement of IDEA-2004.

Parents should be provided with information on their parental rights in special education to avoid misconceptions and to educate them on the benefits their children may have at every stage of their identification, evaluation, IEP provision, and implementation. Parental input is needed for a more objective evaluation because a student may have hidden gifts that manifest outside of the classroom or school environment.

New Jersey uses the Daniel Two-Part Test for inclusion placement, which answers the following questions:

> Can education in the general education classroom with supplementary aids and services be achieved satisfactorily? …If a student is placed in a more restrictive setting, is the student integrated to the maximum extent appropriate? (Yell, 2012, p. 278).

The Child Study Team (CST) must be taught to adhere to the rule of the Daniel Two-Part test while identifying students for placement or when teacher or parents request a student's change of class. Consequently, service providers must work together to guide parents and teachers on the legal mandates for their children's education. Students should be provided with what is needed and considered appropriate for academic progress. For a dually exceptional student, interdisciplinary collaboration between the CST and the GT departments is required. This has not been the case in the district of this study. The response of the focus group revealed that there is no protocol that includes interdepartmental assessments; the currently low number of students with LD in the honors program does not preclude the need for such a protocol. The child study team members are not aware of any form, protocol, or procedure for identifying gifted students with learning disabilities, so the gifted identification is completely handled by the GT department. They provide the program plan for all students in the gifted program. Hence, there is need for a review of the identification process to recognize the experience of exceptionalities, especially where there is need to provide an IEP for the gifted child. The identification method should result in of producing a GIEP as in the state of Pennsylvania, which recognizes dual exceptionalities and provides for them at the state level (see Appendix E).

Responses from interviewees reveal limited awareness of how gifted students, especially those with learning disabilities are being identified in the district. This calls for more training and interdepartmental collaboration to enable educators receive a balanced understanding of giftedness. This will result in a districtwide definition that will be known and accepted by both gifted and talented and special education departments. Interviewee 2 reasoned that children should not be viewed as high or low performing. This questions the basis for any special programs and placement in schools because these are often viewed in connection with economic viability, social relations, and educational policies.

In that vein, Despain (2014) suggested that Bowles and Gintis' (2014) Schooling in America is needed by educators and school leaders as a tool to help them understand the relationship between educational and socio-economic issues and how they work together to improve society. They argued that schools encourage segmentation of the society through policies that are put in place to control education and human behavior, so children from less educated parents with low income are likely to have less access to educational programs and services in spite of their IQ (Despian, 2014). On Table 7, the response to additional questions #1 shows that due to limited parental advocacy in the district, many students with learning disabilities are not being identified or included in gifted programs. Also, a students may be excluded from gifted and talented programs because their need for individualized support have not been applied many parents do not have the knowledge needed to advocate for their children.

Through the superintendent's "parent university," a districtwide project for parents, the district now provides access and exposure to schools' operatives and policies,

such as parent portal, homework support, state standards, student conduct, etc. However, some parents are constrained by educational level, language, economic pursuits, and other personal issues. To advocate for a child's academic needs, parents should be able to understand and articulate the children's needs. But lower social class parents do not have the time or knowledge to effectively do so (Despain, 2014). Consequently, their children may not get the services they need to meet high levels of academic attainment yet, as early as the 19th century, Horace Mann had viewed education of the poor as a method of raising their status and so improving their lot (Badolato, 2011), which is in line with IDEA (2004) mandate of free appropriate education for individuals to achieve to their highest educational potentials

Nevertheless, no interviewee in this research, identified ethnic or socio-economic background as the reason for nonidentification of students for GT or GLD in the district. Table 4, indicates that 93% of students are of Black and Hispanic groups, which are nationally in the minority (Humes, Jones, and Ramirez, 2011). Following USDOE (2010) mandate, the district defined its own GT policy based on New Jersey State's multifaceted definition. Therefore, the district needs to continue to review and update its GT program and not limit it to state tested subjects in order to avoid teaching to the test. Rather, students should be exposed to real world subjects through project-based learning that encourage multiple intelligences and utilization of today's ever-advancing technology.

Professional Development Recommendations

To identify students for GLD programs, teachers must be conversant with differentiated instruction and universal design for learning (UDL) principles, which focus on knowing the learner. Tests such as the Brigance Diagnostic assessments, The DRA,

and iReady help to obtain and analyze this information, which needs to be provided to the collaborating teachers in an inclusive classroom for appropriate education to take place. These assessments include chronological age, gender, socio-economic level, learning styles, learning pace/rate, handedness, multiple intelligences, personal quality, readiness level, potential learning disabilities, health and well-being, family circumstances, and English language proficiency level. Teachers can obtain this information by interview/questionnaire using a personal data form. Also, language interpreters should be provided for students and parents, if needed and other language versions of tests should be utilized, when possible. Learning style tests may also be conducted using several available formats. Instruction can be differentiated through content, process, product, or learning environment. In this case Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligences (MI) theories are used to identify individual talents and aptitudes that could be tapped to enable students to grasp concepts (Gardner, 1999).

RTI Tiered Instruction

Tomlinson described (1999) successful teaching as "student engagement. In other words, students must really understand or make sense of what they have studied. They should also feel engaged in or hooked by the ways that they have learned." (p.1). This premise is identified in the teaching method known as tiered instruction, which can be applied in all the strategies of differentiated instruction. Tiered instruction simply means addressing different levels of learning within the same classroom. This practice is easily explained in Figure 13.

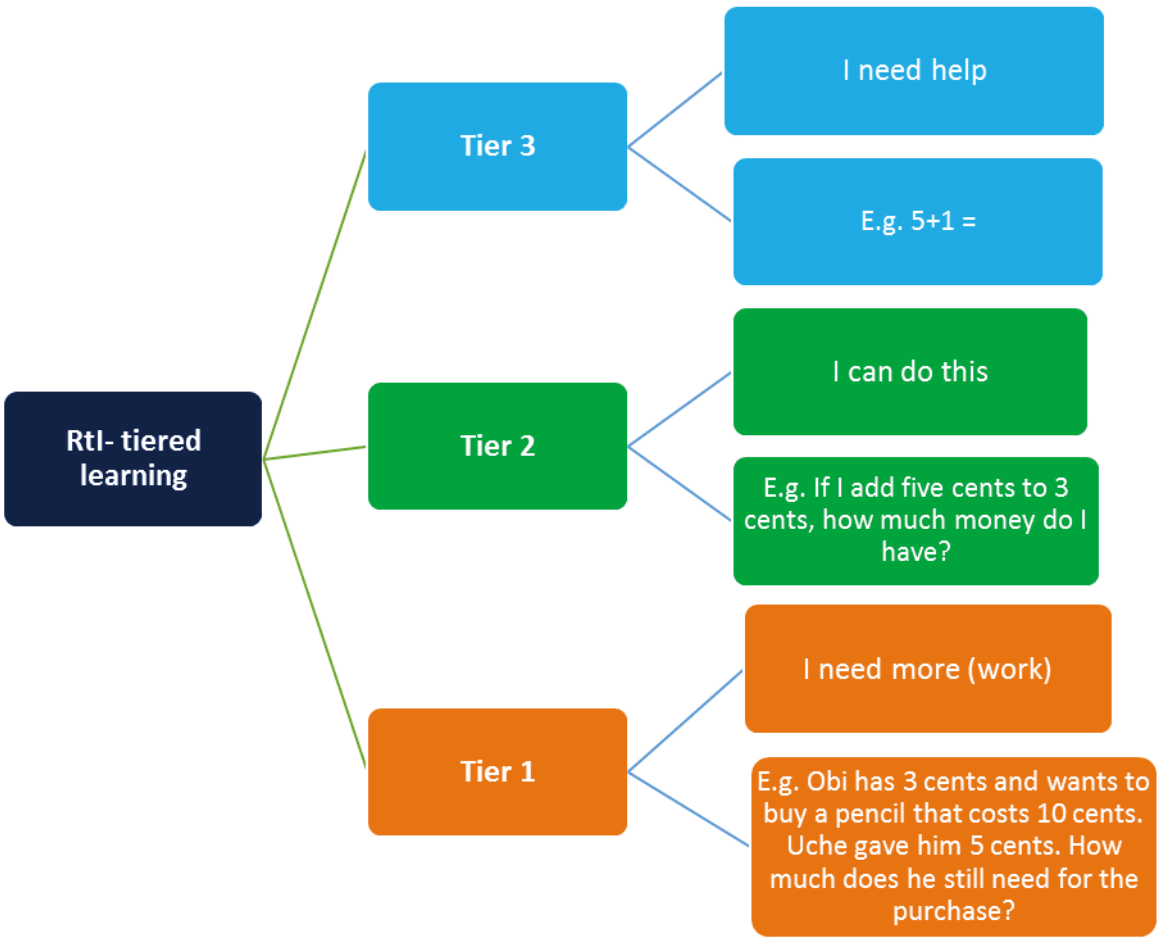

Figure 13. RTI tiers of instruction. This figure illustrates example of how tiered instruction for identification of students in general education. (from personal notes)

Tomlinson (2002) further explained Tiered assignments as based on academic levels designed to meet the needs of students regarding readiness and expounding the learning process. Tier One – grow, building a foundation to grow understanding. Tier Two – extend, connecting knowledge to extend understanding, and Tier Three – flexible use, using resources flexibly to create real understanding. These three tiers of learning can be used to plan lessons that include all learning styles, tap all multiple intelligences, and link lessons to curriculum. In the course of these activities, there is a tendency to understand the unique traits of each child. This is the main idea behind RTI.

Teachers of children with special needs, such as students with learning disabilities, and teachers of the academically gifted should be familiar with the ideals of differentiation, which are based on the fundamental rudiments of good teaching. However, it is important that all teachers and paraprofessionals understand that these best practices should be implemented in all classrooms in order to meet the needs of all students, not merely the GT or LD students.

The important concern in this specialized setting is the need for standards for differentiated assessment and/or grading of students. Inclusion students are expected to test in the same method despite differences in their learning and thinking styles. Special needs students may be given extra time but their tests must be written in the same format as all others. They are all expected to pass the same standardized norm-referenced tests at the same level. This is not only discouraging but is also discriminatory with regard to individual intelligences. This inequitable practice requires proactive work on the part of educators to create policies that will establish a more diversified standard for assessment that accommodate MI and learning styles strategies for students with LD.

The reauthorized IDEA, signed on December 3, 2004, requires each state to have in place a State Performance Plan (SPP) that evaluates the state's implementation of the 20 indicators, known as Part B, which describe how the state will improve educational results and outcomes for children with disabilities. It requires states to report annually to the United States Department of Education (USDOE), Office of Special Education Programs (USDOSEP). Also, IDEA requires state yearly report to the USDOE regarding its SPP targets by submitting an Annual Performance Report (APR). The federal

monitoring priority areas include general supervision, placement of students with disabilities in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), and disproportionality.

New Jersey takes on the responsibility for special education monitoring; the state is responsible to improve educational results and functional outcomes for all children with disabilities and to ensure that public agencies meet the requirements for improving educational results for children with disabilities. New Jersey works to correct noncompliance through a data-driven special education monitoring system that is aligned with the SPP indicators through the New Jersey Office of Special Education Programs (NJOSEP), which analyzes collected data to identify local districts manifesting one or more areas of noncompliance. Also, school districts are required to use state tools to conduct regular comprehensive self-assessment to identify and locally correct areas of noncompliance, while the state assesses them every six years.

It is important for district and school administrators, teachers, and Child Study Team members to be aware of the SPPs and the indicators that focus on improving educational results for children with disabilities. As such, district professional development programs should address these areas and take steps to align services to be up-to-date with IDEA requirements, which is insistent on least restrictive placement to avoid marginalization of students no matter their disabilities.

Replication of Study. A replication of this study should further investigate placement and services that will help include children of all abilities in standards-based classrooms where GT, GLD, LD, and English language learners are included in one classroom (Voltz, 2010). Other topics that will need further exploration will include the following:

1. How would lack of parental involvement affect students' achievement and placement in GLD programs?
2. Professional development programs for teachers on how to identify and teach exceptional children
3. Test review and providing protocol for GLD identification
4. How socio-economic status, ethnicity, language, or immigration status affect students' performance on norm-referenced tests?
5. Judging that this is a capitalist economy where individuals receive education for personal and family advancement and economic interests, how will education of gifted children with learning disabilities benefit the educational system or society as a whole?
6. How are gifted students with learning disabilities serviced in schools?
7. Mixed abilities classrooms versus tracking system.

Chapter Conclusion

This research explored issues of identification and programming for gifted students with disabilities as a current issue in public education. The most recent federal educational reform, every student succeeds act (ESSA) 2015, recognizes the need for this population to be provided with gifted education as mandated by the Tested Ability to Leverage Exceptional National Talent Act of 2016 (TALENT Act, 2016), which is another federal law stating that there are mainstream teachers who lack the preparedness to identify students with high ability with LD and as a result are unable to serve twice exceptional students. Therefore, the US Department of Education wants to solve this problem by providing funds for the training of administrators, teachers and other service

providers, to enable them assist gifted students, including high ability students with disabilities (NAGC, 2016). As such, states are required to define how they will expend their Title II funds to ensure that teachers are able to identify students with high abilities combined with specific learning needs. Also, local districts will go on to utilize data to explain how they will close the achievement gap between gifted students through research-based strategies.

This study identified the need to break fetters that keep students from academic achievement. Numerous research works and state mandates recognize the difference between students due to diverse gifts and talents. It is possible to bridge the educational gap between students, thereby providing the support needed to move a student from the restrictive setting of special education resource rooms to the gifted education setting for part of the day or on a permanent basis. This does not disqualify the student from receiving support services, if they have documented learning disabilities. Rather, a combination of GT and special education IEP will be provided to ensure that a students' needs are met in whatever setting they are placed.

Perhaps, Albert Einstein would not have been expelled from one of his schools if he had teachers that understood his learning needs at an earlier age (*Encyclopedia of World Biographies*, 2015). Who knows how many budding artists, scientists, technologists, mathematicians, linguists are in our public schools waiting for their boundaries to be broken down by teachers who are yet ill-prepared to do so. This research is of the view that GLD students are academic giants, waiting to be reinforced.

In addition, the lack of creative subjects in the district of this study is a major setback to the process of providing gifted programs to students with LD. For instance, the

arts may be the only reason why a particular student would want to be in school, so funding should be provided for creative arts programs at all levels of education.

Finally, by the acknowledgement of multiple intelligences and the differentiation of instructional strategies, educators are able to identify students who are gifted with learning disabilities using the 3-tier research-based RTI method. Districts should have handbooks that provide guidelines for identification and support of GT, LD, and GLD population. This should include steps to follow in recommending students for evaluation and possible classification. Also, teachers of all subject areas should be given the chance to recommend students for GT programs.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

District/School: _____

Interviewee: _____

Interviewer: _____

Survey Section Used:

A: Background of Participant: _____

B: Participant's Educational Function: _____

C. District Improvement Plan: _____

D. Core Interview Questions - Gifted Students with Learning Disabilities: _____

E. Interview Comments and/or Observations: _____

F: Interview Comments and Observations:_____

_____

_____

_____

Documents Obtained:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Post Interview Comments and Leads:

_____

_____

Interview – Identifying Gifted Students with Learning Disabilities for services

Permission Protocol

I ask your permission to audio record this interview to assist me with note-taking. Please note, that the tapes will be kept for the duration of the project, will be handled with confidentiality, and will be destroyed after they have been transcribed. Therefore, please sign the release form which meets human subject requirements and states as follows:

(1) All data will be kept confidential,

(2) Your participation is voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time if you do not feel persuaded to continue

(3) This study shall not inflict harm in anyway.

I appreciate your willingness and availability to participate in my research.

The *interview will last no longer than one hour. You will answer the following questions to the best of your ability. In order to keep to time you may be redirected to focus on the main points to save time.*

Introduction

You are participating on this interview because you were identified having the professionalism and experience to serve students with mixed abilities in your school or within the district. *The purpose of this research study is to understand the identification process of K – 6 gifted students with learning disabilities in a suburban/urban school district in New Jersey.* Our study is not meant to evaluate your performances or

proficiencies. It will be an avenue to understand the process of identifying gifted students with learning disabilities in the district.

A. Background of Participant:

What is your position in the district? _____

How long have you been in your present position? _____

How long have you worked at your school? _____

Highest degree attained: _____

Field of study: _____

B. Participant's Educational Function:

1. What is your role regarding student learning and assessment?

Probes: How are you involved in teaching, learning, and assessment here?

2. How do you apply innovative assessment strategies for teaching/learning?

C. District Improvement Plan

What strategy is your district or school utilizing for improving testing/assessment?

Probes: Is it working – why or why not?

D. Core Interview Questions - Gifted Students with Learning Disabilities

1. What tools do you use to identify students at risk of disabilities in mainstream classes?
2. What tools are used for identifying students for gifted and talented education?
3. What is the procedure for identifying gifted students with disabilities in your school?

    - Achievement
    - Cognitive

- Behavior
- Ethnicity

4. What are some of the indicators you may look for in identifying and recommending a student for learning disabilities services?
5. What are some of the indicators you may look for in identifying and recommending a student for gifted services?
6. Are you aware of any students in your classroom who are gifted with learning disabilities (GLD)?
7. Are you able to follow protocol to recommend students for GLD services?
8. What do you consider factors that may prevent a student from being identified as both gifted and with learning disabilities?
9. What do you know about students' exceptionalities that you wish you knew when you first started teaching? Explain.

Additional questions for administrators, guidance counselors and the focus group:

1. How often do you find parents advocating for the inclusion of their children with LD in gifted programs? Have parents' involvement helped to improve the quality of education for GLD in the district?

2. Are there other support individuals or groups that are interested in improving GLD programs in the district? Comment on what they are doing.

3. Does funding affect the identification and placement of students in gifted or GLD programs? (Are there any limiting factors with regards to budget?)

E. Interview Comments and/or Observations:

_____

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Thank you for participating,

Ngozi Martin-Oguike

Doctoral Candidate,

Bethel University, Saint Paul, MN.

Appendix B: Consent Letter

Consent Form for Level 1 Research with Humans

You are invited to participate in a study on the topic: Identification of Gifted Students with Learning Disabilities: Case Study of a New Jersey Urban/Suburban School District. I hope to learn about the district practices of identifying gifted students with learning disabilities. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are involved in teaching or providing services directly to heterogeneous groups of students with a public school district. This research is a part of requirement for the completion of my doctoral dissertation in the College of Adult and Professional Studies, Bethel University, St. Paul, Minnesota.

If you decide to participate, I will send you the interview questions. The interview session will be scheduled which will take between 30 and 45 minutes and will not exceed two seating. This should be done in the office or classroom that is convenient for you. The questions are practical and have no correct answers, so you should be comfortable answering these questions. Individual responses will be kept strictly confidential. Focus group members will undertake to keep the discussion confidential by signing the confidentiality agreement provided. All data will be utilized strictly for academic purposes. Any information obtained in connection with this study that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. In all written reports or publications, you will not be identified or identifiable and only aggregate data will be presented. Numbers and pseudonyms will be adopted to represent participants, schools and the district.

With your permission, your interview session will be audio recorded and transcribed, then saved on a CD. All recordings will not be saved with identifiable names. They will be deleted and erased from the computer system after use. Also, the CD will be physically destroyed as soon as the data is analyzed by approximately December 31, 2016. The process will include

member checking, which involves discussing findings with participants to conform the accuracy of data received.

Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect any future associations with the researcher or any organization in any way. If you decide to participate, you are free to discontinue participation at any time without affecting personal or official relationships. Data from this research will not be released to the superintendent, principals, supervisors or any administrator. All information provided by individual respondent regarding school process or any negative practice will not be identified with any interviewee.

This research project has been reviewed and approved in accordance with Bethel's Levels of Review for Research with Humans. If you have any questions about the research and/or research participants' rights or wish to report a research related injury, please call Ngozi Martin-Oguike, 732-634-2397.

You will be offered a copy of this form to keep.

You are making a decision whether or not to participate. Your signature indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to participate. You may withdraw at any time without prejudice after signing this form should you choose to discontinue participation in this study.

_____ _____

Signature Date

_____ _____

Signature of Researcher Date

Research Advisor:

Dr. Cheryl Bostrom

Adjunct professor, Ed. D. Program

Bethel University

651 274 9986

c-bostrom@bethel.edu

2/02

Appendix C: Focus Group Non-Disclosure Statement

Identification of Gifted students with learning disabilities: Case Study of a New Jersey urban-suburban school district by Ngozi Martin-Oguike

I ……. hereby agree to maintain the confidentiality of the information discussed by all participants and researchers during the focus group session.

…… ……

Signature of Participant Date

I ……. hereby agree to maintain the confidentiality of the information discussed by all participants and researchers during the focus group session.

…… ……

Signature of Participant Date

I ……. hereby agree to maintain the confidentiality of the information discussed by all participants and researchers during the focus group session.

…… ……

Signature of Participant Date

I ……. hereby agree to maintain the confidentiality of the information discussed by all participants and researchers during the focus group session.

…… ……

Signature of Participant Date

……..…… ……..

Researcher's Signature Date

Appendix D: Civil Rights Report submitted on 11/30/16

School: District

Students enrolled in the gifted and talented programs	Hispanic or Latino of any race	American Indian or Alaskan Native	Asian	Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	Black or African American	White	Two or more Races	Total	LEP	Students with Disabilities (IDEA)
Male	78	0	4	0	103	9	2	196	1	2
Female	77	0	3	2	136	7	1	226	0	1
Total	155	0	7	2	239	16	3	422	1	3

School #1: 3 and 4

Students enrolled in the gifted and talented programs	Hispanic or Latino of any race	American Indian or Alaskan Native	Asian	Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	Black or African American	White	Two or more Races	Total	LEP	Students with Disabilities (IDEA)
Male: 19	8	0	0	0	11	0	0	19	0	0
Female: 25	7	0	0	0	16	1	1	25	0	0
Total: 44	15	0	0	0	27	1	1	44	0	0

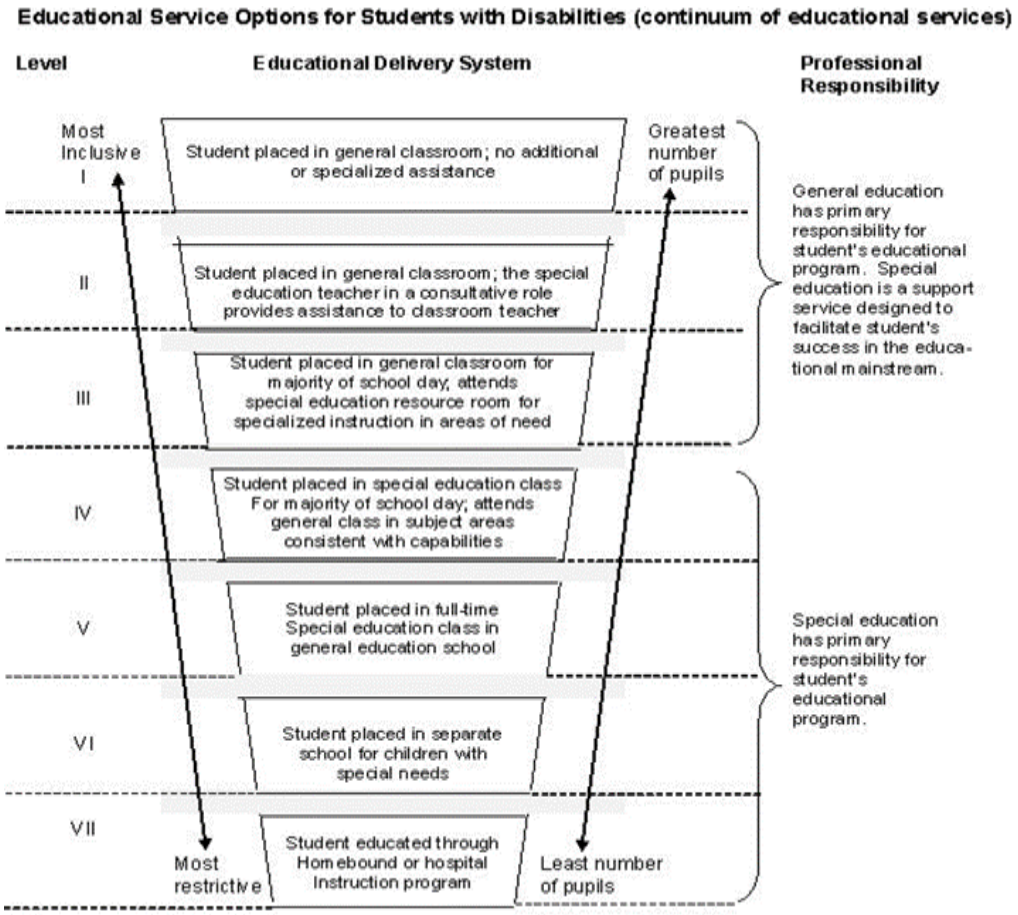
School #2: Grades 3 and 4

Students enrolled in the gifted and talented programs	Hispanic or Latino of any race	American Indian or Alaskan Native	Asian	Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	Black or African American	White	Two or more Races	Total	LEP	Students with Disabilities (IDEA)
Male: 18	7	0	1	0	8	2	0	18	0	0
Female: 12	4	0	0	0	8	0	0	12	0	0
Total: 30	11	0	1	0	16	2	0	30	0	0

School #3: Grades 5 and 6

Students enrolled in the gifted and talented programs	Hispanic or Latino of any race	American Indian or Alaskan Native	Asian	Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	Black or African American	White	Two or more Races	Total	LEP	Students with Disabilities (IDEA)
Male: 72	32	0	2	0	35	3	0	72	1	1
Female: 60	22	0	1	2	35	0	0	60	0	1
Total: 132	54	0	3	2	70	3	0	132	1	2

Appendix E: Continuum of Placement



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Appendix F: Pensylvannia GIEP for Elementary student

SAMPLE GIFTED INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PLAN (GIEP)

From the Pennsylvania Department of Education Elementary Examples

A. ANNUAL GOAL:

The third grade student will continue the acceleration of rapid pacing in the mathematics curriculum.

B. SHORT-TERM LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Short Term Objective(s)	Objective Criteria	Assessment Procedures	Timelines
Given the third grade mathematics curriculum, the student will demonstrate mastery of all fourth grade skills and concepts and continue into the fifth grade mathematics	Mastery level 90% or higher on two consecutive trials	Teacher made tests Curriculum-based assessment Standardized assessment Performance-based assessments Projects	End of third marking period

C. SPECIALLY DESIGNED INSTRUCTION TO BE PROVIDED TO THE STUDENT:

(Include this information for each annual goal.)

SDI	Projected Date for Initiation	Anticipated Frequency	Location	Anticipated Duration
Offer accelerated instruction	Implementation date for GIEP	For each unit	Regular education classroom and/or Gifted support classroom	One school year
Provide learning opportunities with other accelerated students	Implementation date for GIEP	For each unit	Regular education classroom and/or Gifted support classroom	One school year

Computer-Assisted Instruction	Implementation date for GIEP	For each unit	Regular education classroom and/or Gifted support classroom and/or Computer Lab	One school year

A. ANNUAL GOAL:

The fifth grade student will develop independent research skills.

B. SHORT-TERM LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Short Term Objectives	**Objective Criteria**	**Assessment Procedures**	**Timelines**
(1) Given a unit from the regular education curriculum, the student will select appropriate resources based upon a self-selected topic	3-5 resources including Internet sources, books and periodicals	Proficient on an established rubric	By the end of the first marking period
(2) Given information from a variety of sources, the student will paraphrase information and record in note form	Note cards for each selected sub topic, a power point presentation or charts/graphs	Proficient on an established rubric	End of the first marking period
(3) Given APA style format, the student will prepare a bibliography of resources	APA Style format	Proficient on an established rubric	End of the first marking period

(4) Given a variety of choices, the student will communicate information according the pre-approved student contract	Quality product as judged by educators, self and peers	Proficient on an established rubric	End of the first marking period

SPECIALLY DESIGNED INSTRUCTION (SDI) TO BE PROVIDED TO THE STUDENT:
(Include this information for each annual goal)

SDI	**Projected Date for Initiation**	**Anticipated Frequency**	**Location**	**Anticipated Duration**
Study major issues, themes and concepts	Implementation date for GIEP	For each unit	Regular education classroom and Gifted Support Classroom	One school year
Provide independent learning opportunities through learning contracts	Implementation date for GIEP	For each unit	Regular education classroom and Gifted Support Classroom	One school year
Provide methodological assistance for research and investigation	Implementation date for GIEP	Weekly	Regular education classroom and Gifted Support Classroom	One school year