Guiding Principles in Developing Equity-Driven Professional Learning for Educators of

Gifted Children

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Abstract

Gifted education in the United States has a long history of underrepresentation of culturally, linguistically and economically (CLED) gifted students. Despite the many years of attention toward this pervasive problem, the gap in equity and access to gifted services for CLED students has not closed due to a variety of practices related to assessments, teacher referrals and support structures. The authors contend that many issues stem from a common underlying cause: a lack of cultural knowledge and competency pertaining to gifted youth. This article presents guiding principles based in professional learning, equity, gifted pedagogy for use in crafting training experiences: pulse-taking, establishing safe zones, individualizing professional learning plans, cultural training beyond surface-level, school/home connections, identifying grows and glows, and engaging in courageous conversations.

Keywords: Professional learning, gifted, underserved populations, equity

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Children

As educators, we know we must always learn and grow in the craft of teaching through

ongoing, job-embedded professional learning experiences. The content and methods of these

experiences, however, vary greatly; professional learning should reflect the needs of the students,

teachers, schools, and community, and the stakeholders at large. Since an issue that has plagued

the field of gifted education is equity and access to gifted programs, the content of professional

learning needs to address identification and services for gifted culturally, linguistically and

economically diverse (CLED) youth. However, in a typical general education environment,

professional learning opportunities rarely focus on gifted students. Even rarer within the limited

gifted offerings is professional learning about underrepresented and underserved populations, or

CLED students.

In the literature, underserved or underrepresented populations refer to schools whose

identified population is not similar to the general population from which it is drawn.

Overwhelmingly, the disproportionality occurs in Black, Hispanic, and Native American

populations (Hodges et al., 2018; Snyder et al., 2016). Identification itself is an issue, but even

then, some CLED students may choose not to participate in a program and others may begin but

not remain, thus perpetuating the underrepresentation crisis. Briggs et al., (2008) describe three

factors to increase participation of CLED youth in gifted programs: "(a) the recognition of the

underrepresentation problem by district faculty and staff, (b) an increased awareness of cultural

impact on student academic performance, and (c) the establishment of program supports to help

program director and teachers make changes" (p. 142). Retention is a critical issue for CLED

gifted students, and culturally responsive training is a crucial program support in this retention effort.

The purpose of this article is to define the need for culturally relevant gifted professional learning, which is grounded in professional learning standards and goals that support gifted learners and increase CLED gifted students' identification for and retention in programs. Seven guidelines will be explored as foundational principles in developing equity-driven professional learning experiences for educators. A future article will see these principles in action, through the use of case students in professional learning.

Standards in Gifted Education Related to Diversity, Equity, or Cultural Responsiveness

Research-based best practices in professional learning indicate that experiences should be systematic and ongoing, incorporate reflection and feedback, and provide job-embedded practical applications (National Association for Gifted Children [NAGC], n.d.). Equity-driven professional learning should be grounded in research-based practices that reflect the educators' community and create an awareness of gifted characteristics of CLED youth.

In 2019, the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) updated their standards for gifted programming. These Pre-K-Grade 12 Programming Standards include evidence-based practices for educators with corresponding student outcomes. The standards and practices address equity, based initially on student outcomes. For example, in Standard 6: Professional Development, 6.3. Equity and Inclusion the student outcome indicates: "All students with gifts and talents are able to develop their abilities as a result of educators who are committed to removing barriers to access and creating inclusive gifted education communities" (NAGC, 2019, p. 17), and the standards delineate a corresponding evidence-based practice that works towards that student outcome (Practice 6.3.1., see Table 1). These standards, however, represent the

minimum of practices; standards alone do not adequately represent the breadth and depth of culturally responsive teaching, inclusion, diversity, or equity in professional learning.

In describing the use of the standards to develop high quality programs, Ford and Grantham (2011) stated, "ultimately, curriculum standards must do far more than simply stress the multicultural composition of the United States. Instead, standards must also outline classroom practices that help educators to impart the knowledge, skills, and disposition necessary for educators to participate fully and meaningfully in a multiethnic and multiracial society" (p. 49). They used the National Association for Multicultural Education's curriculum guidelines (inclusiveness, diverse perspectives, accommodating alternative epistemologies/social construction of knowledge, self-knowledge, and social justice/equity) and theoretical grounding in multicultural and culturally responsive education in order to create a cultural framework for the standards. This framework grouped evidence-based practices from the standards and provided culturally specific examples. For example, for Standard 6, Professional Development, Ford and Grantham (2011) offer examples for culturally relevant professional development:

- includes characteristics and needs of gifted students who are culturally different
- focuses consistently on recruiting and retaining culturally different students in gifted education
- focuses on ways to eliminate discriminatory assessment and test bias
- focuses on the negative impact of prejudice and discrimination on expectations for culturally different students' under referrals to gifted educations, relationships, classroom management, and more
- focuses on understanding racial identity and strategies for promoting racial pride in students

- [incorporates] multicultural literature

- [ensures that] culturally different speakers serve as professional development

   speakers and trainers (p. 67)

In addition to the Programming Standards, NAGC and the Council for Exceptional

Children (Talented and Gifted Division, CEC-TAG), developed Teacher Preparation Standards

in Gifted and Talented Education (2013). These standards also have a strong focus on diversity

throughout (see Table 1). Recognition of students, providing appropriate services, and

assessment are all areas that are recognized by the standards as integral for an accurate

understanding of cultural, linguistically, and economically diverse student needs.

Table 1

Select Standards in Gifted and Talented Education that Address Equity

NAGC and CEC-TAG Teacher Preparation Standards Strands	NAGC Pre-K-Grade 12 Programming Standards (2019) Evidence-Based Practices
Learning and Development	
1.1 Beginning gifted education professionals understand how language, culture, economic status, family background, and/or area of disability can influence the learning of individuals with gifts and talents.	**1.2.1.** Educators develop activities that match each student's developmental level and culture-based learning needs. **1.2.3.** Teachers create a learning environment that promotes high expectations for all children, support for perceived failures, positive feedback, respect for different cultures and values, and addresses stereotypes and biases.
Assessment	
4.1 Beginning gifted education	**2.1.1.** Educators develop environments and instructional

professionals understand that some groups of individuals with gifts and talents have been underrepresented in gifted education programs and select and use technically sound formal and informal assessments that minimize bias in identifying students for gifted education programs and services.	activities that prepare and encourage students from diverse backgrounds to express characteristics and behaviors that are associated with giftedness. **2.1.2.** Educators provide parents/guardians with information in their preferred language for communication regarding behaviors and characteristics that are associated with giftedness and with information that explains the nature and purpose of gifted programming options. **2.2.5.** Educators select assessments that minimize bias by including information in the technical manual that describes content in terms of potential bias, includes norms that match national census information or local populations, shows how items discriminate equally well for each group, and provides separate reliability and validity information for each group. **2.2.8.** Educators inform all parents/guardians about the identification process. Educators obtain parental/guardian permission for assessments, use culturally sensitive checklists, and elicit evidence regarding the child's interests and potential outside of the classroom setting. 2.3.1. Educators select and use equitable approaches and assessments that minimize bias for referring and identifying students with gifts and talents, attending to segments of the population that are frequently hidden or under identified 2.3.2. Educators understand and implement district, state, and/or national policies designed to foster equity in gifted programming and services.
Curriculum Planning and Instruction	
	3.3.1. Educators develop and use curriculum that is responsive and relevant to diversity that connects to students' real-life experiences and communities and includes multiple voices and perspectives. **3.3.2.** Educators encourage students to connect to others' experiences, examine their own perspectives and biases, and develop a critical consciousness. **3.3.3.** Educators use high-quality, appropriately challenging materials that include multiple perspectives
Learning Environments	
2.1 Beginning gifted education	**4.4.1.** Educators model appreciation for and sensitivity to

professionals create safe, inclusive, culturally responsive learning environments that engage individuals with gifts and talents in meaningful and rigorous learning activities and social interactions. **2.3** Beginning gifted education professionals adjust their communication to an individual's language proficiency and cultural and linguistic differences.	students' diverse backgrounds and languages. **4.4.2.** Educators model appropriate language and strategies to effectively address issues such as stereotyping, bias, and discriminatory language and behaviors. **4.4.3.** Educators provide structured opportunities to collaborate with diverse peers on a common goal. **4.5.1.** Educators provide opportunities for advanced development and maintenance of first and second language(s). **4.5.2.** Educators provide resources that reflect the diversity of their student population to enhance oral, written, and artistic forms of communication.
Professional Learning	
6.3 Beginning gifted education professionals model respect for diversity, understanding that it is an integral part of society's institutions and impacts learning of individuals with gifts and talents in the delivery of gifted education services. .	**6.1.1.** State agencies, institutions of higher education, schools and districts provide comprehensive, research-supported professional learning programs for all educators involved in gifted programming and services. This professional learning addresses the foundations of gifted education, characteristics of diverse students with gifts and talents, identification, assessment, curriculum planning and instruction, learning environments, and programming. **6.1.2.** State agencies, institutions of higher education, schools and districts provide sustained professional learning for educators that models how to develop learning environments responsive to diversity and instructional activities that lead to student expression of diverse characteristics and behaviors that are associated with giftedness. **6.1.3.** State agencies, institutions of higher education, schools and districts provide educators with professional learning opportunities that address social issues, including anti-intellectualism, equity, and access. 6.3.1. Educators participate in professional learning focused on curriculum and pedagogy that are responsive to diversity for individuals with gifts and talents. **6.3.2.** Educators recognize their biases, develop philosophies responsive to diversity, commit themselves to removing barriers, and create inclusive learning environments that meet the educational interests, strengths, and needs of diverse students with gifts and talents. **6.3.3.** Educators understand how knowledge, perspectives, and historical and current issues influence professional

	practice and the education and treatment of individuals with gifts and talents both in school and society. **6.5.1.** Educators use professional ethical principles and specialized program standards to guide their practice. **6.5.2.** Educators comply with rules, policies, and standards of ethical practice and advocate for rules, policies, and standards that promote equity and access.

Note: (NAGC, 2013, pp. 1-6; NAGC, 2019, pp. 1-18)

Understanding these standards establishes a solid foundation for best practices within the field of gifted education. In developing professional learning experiences in gifted education, there are other standards to consider beyond those in gifted: one must also consider the standards related to best practices in professional learning and equity.

Standards Related to Professional Learning

Learning Forward, a professional learning organization, created a set of standards designed to build the knowledge and skills of educators in order to progress in school improvement goals (2017). Along with the seven standards, the organization offers research that supports each of the standards, and an assessment inventory (for purchase) to use to assess the standards in practice, for purposes of school planning, pre-post professional learning data, evaluation, priority identification, and to assess practices and improvement efforts. The seven standards are:

Learning Communities: Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students occurs within learning communities committed to continuous improvement, collective responsibility, and goal alignment.

Resources: Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students requires prioritizing, monitoring, and coordinating resources for educator learning.

Learning Designs: Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students integrates theories, research, and models of human learning to achieve its intended outcomes.

Outcomes: Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students aligns its outcomes with educator performance and student curriculum standards.

Leadership: Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students requires skillful leaders who develop capacity, advocate, and create support systems for professional learning.

Data: Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students uses a variety of sources and types of student, educator, and system data to plan, assess, and evaluate professional learning.

Implementation: Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students applies research on change and sustains support for implementation of professional learning for long term change (Learning Forward, 2017, paras 2—7).

Competencies and Principles Related to Culturally Responsive Teaching and Equity

Culturally responsive training differs by domains; in education, culturally responsive standards are more often embedded, such as in the case of the NAGC and NAGC-CEC standards indicated earlier, rather than an inclusive set of national cultural competence standards. A recent report published by New America (Muñiz, 2019), the results of a 50-state survey of teaching standards, creating eight competencies for culturally responsive teaching (see Figure 1), are shared. These competencies were drawn from research and used to guide a review of the state

standards. The competencies are teacher-focused; in the context of professional learning it is important to view these competencies in two ways. First, as a guideline for how the teacher can approach a culturally responsive learning environment, thus the topic of professional learning. For example, the competency "draw on students' cultures to shape curriculum and instruction" may be the focus of professional learning as it is an essential skill which should be taught to teachers. Second, these competencies can be viewed as the professional learning method or strategy. Using the same example, the professional learning should be individualized to the participants, by reflecting the culture of the community and the faculty culture rather than using generalizations.

Figure 1

8 Competencies for Culturally Responsive Teaching

Note: Muñiz, 2019; The New America Report carries a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. This figure is reproduced without any changes. newamerica.org/education-policy/reports/culturally-responsive-teaching/

Additionally, the National Education Association (NEA, n.d., adapted from Diller & Moule, 2005) identified five basic cultural competence areas in which educators and educational systems at large should strive to attain growth. The first skill area is *valuing diversity*; individuals and systems focus should strive to accept differences and move from acceptance to respect of those cultural differences, which could include cultural customs, backgrounds, traditions, values, and communication methods. Being *culturally self-aware* is a reflective skill; to understand others- one must first understand oneself. Understanding the self, and reflecting on one's own experiences, skills, knowledge, beliefs, interests and values, has the power to shape the educators' sense of self. This in turn impacts how they fit within the dynamic of their school and community. *Dynamics of difference* is the skill area that focuses on understanding the potential pitfalls in communication and how to best react to these challenges. *Knowledge of students' culture* naturally follows "know thyself"- and the old adage "you can't teach what you don't know." Educators must learn the cultures of the students that are in their charge, specific to their community. The final skill area is *institutionalizing cultural knowledge and adapting to diversity*, in which educators who are culturally competent and possess skills can work towards institutionalizing this knowledge and serve the population at large (NEA, n.d., adapted from Diller & Moule, 2005).

Paul Gorski (2019) identifies five equity literacy principles based on his earlier work with his colleague (Gorski & Swalwell, 2015).

1. Direct Confrontation Principle: discussion or training open by acknowledging that racism exists, and it is not up for debate. The first question to answer is how does racism operate in our school?

2. Redistribution Principle: take time to review processes, policies, and practices to determine how they marginalize some students; then work to fix them. Gorski (2019) mentions behavior policies and handbooks, while in gifted education, identification and enrichment opportunities should be high on the list.

3. Prioritization Principle: place emphasis on the needs and interests of CLED students. "Remember that, in inequitable contexts, equality--attending *equally* to everybody's interests--reproduces inequity" (Gorski, 2019, p. 60).

4. Equity Ideology Principle: rather than focusing on strategies, view equity as a lens or an ideological approach.

5. #FixInjusticeNotKids Principle: rather than trying to alter the students to meet the needs of the system, address the issues of systemic bias, eliminating the context that creates the injustice.

Equity literacy principles take a broader view than cultural competence or proficiency view; rather than looking at a classroom or school, equity principles focus on broad initiatives with a goal of systemic reform, with a goal of justice.

How do educators go about developing, growing and measuring progress in these areas? What framework for professional learning best supports cultural competency and equity? Geneva Gay, well known for her work on culturally responsive teaching, offered pillars for progress; benchmarks to measure the growth in this important construct. While all of the pillars for progress are important indicators of culturally responsive pedagogy, only one specifically

addresses professional learning: "it requires staff development of teachers that includes cultural knowledge and instructional skills, in concert with personal self-reflection and self-monitoring techniques for teaching to and about ethnic diversity" (Gay, 2000, p. 214). The context of professional learning, however, is imperative.

Equity in the Context of Professional Learning for Educators of Gifted Children

A principal factor contributing to underrepresentation is the role of the teacher as the "gatekeeper" to the identification process, and thus the gifted program. While the role itself may be problematic, the lack of knowledge of and training for this responsibility is the true barrier (Irby & Lara-Alecio, 1996; Lewis et al., 2014). Professional learning is an opportunity to strategically address these complexities, providing targeted learning experiences. Thus, the role of professional learning in guiding these gatekeepers, more specifically culturally responsive professional learning grounded in equity and social justice on topics in gifted education, is essential to stem the tide of disproportionality in gifted programs. Ford (2014) stipulates that even when teachers have degrees in the gifted field, there is a need for continual professional learning, "targeting equitable identification and assessment instruments, policies, and procedures; affective development; psychological development; social development; cultural development; curriculum and instruction; and services and programming for gifted students from all backgrounds" (p. 150) and that "professional development on culture and cultural differences must be ongoing and substantive" (p. 152).

First, the content of professional learning should include cultural awareness training. A greater cultural awareness leads to the acceptance of practices that help prepare CLED students for gifted identification and set students up for success in the programs or advanced courses; frontloading is one such example (Briggs et al., 2008). While it can vary in implementation,

simply described, frontloading provides students exposure to the types of questions or curriculum they will experience, such as critical or creative thinking strategies, or it can supplement instruction prior to acceleration, providing bridges for gaps in knowledge. Cultural awareness training moves teachers away from statements such as "if he was gifted, then he should be able to…" turn in work on time… speak up in class… ask questions when a concept isn't understood… and so on.

Personal or teacher beliefs are subjective theories related to instructional practices as well as characteristics of students' learning and social behaviors (Matheis et al., 2017; Voss et al., 2013). Teachers' beliefs are complex systems developed through experiences, understandings of the world as well as assumptions (Matheis et al., 2017; Preckel et al., 2015). In addition to needed growth in cultural awareness, teachers of children with gifts and talents may hold incorrect beliefs about gifted characteristics (Baudson & Preckel, 2013). These subjective beliefs may negatively impact teachers' views of gifted students as well as their interactions with the students (Matheis et al., 2017). Teacher beliefs towards gifted students have been shown to be positively impacted by teacher education and professional development (Matheis et al., 2017).

Professional learning focused on instructional strategies and gifted pedagogy are often the focus during gifted professional development. The benefits of the content focus during professional learning is well researched (Garet et al., 2016). But, the content of professional learning also needs to focus on the various ways to develop and provide support for CLED gifted students. Academic supports are not the only scaffolds needed to retain CLED gifted students. Noncognitive, or affective, variables are essential in achievement and motivation, and thus retention in gifted programs. Gifted students of color benefit from teachers trained in building relationships with their students, and in helping students build relationships with their fellow

students (Moore et al., 2005). Culturally responsive training can help gifted teachers learn how to build these relationships, gaining greater awareness of gifted characteristics within the culture (Lewis & Novak, 2019). For example, Grantham and Biddle (2014) explored the role of teachers in racialized bullying, that of gifted Black students being victimized for 'Acting White'. Labeled 'Upstanders', teachers that knowingly take a stand, proactively working against acts of injustice, are able to help gifted Black students by not allowing the Acting White phenomenon to continue unchecked and working to change the ideologies of their students. This, however, requires a level of cultural knowledge. Grantham and Biddle state, "If teachers are not able to "see" the Acting White phenomenon due to culturally induced blindness, they will not be able to help Black students and unknowingly contribute to their under-representation" (2014, p. 181). This increased level of cultural knowledge can also help teachers create learning environments representative of their students' diverse cultural backgrounds and traditions. These environments should be "culturally responsive, rather than culturally neutral, culturally blind, or culturally assaultive" (Moore et al., 2005, p. 63). Relationships and supportive environments that are culturally responsive work to support the CLED gifted learner in gifted programs, and in school overall.

Gifted curriculum is characterized by a variety of features, such as complexity, creativity, differentiation and acceleration. Culturally responsive curriculum moves a step beyond this, by incorporating elements of diversity in both a global sense and a reflective sense. These elements include an increased knowledge and understanding of the cultures represented in the class and community, the provision of service-learning projects that impact the local community, and the implementation of bilingual or dual language materials. Successful gifted programs that recruit and retain CLED students embrace curricular practices that enable students to make meaningful

connections among what they are learning and the students' language and culture; professional learning must reflect these practices. Such practices include finding mentors from culturally diverse backgrounds, offering and encouraging activities bilingually or in the students' native language, and integrating CLED gifted students' cultural traditions into the gifted program and the learning process (Briggs et al., 2008). In order to appropriately respond to gifted CLED students' needs, schools need to monitor their progress; keeping proactive watch rather than being reactive with support and resources (Moore et al., 2005).

While there are a myriad of strategies that can help to ameliorate the immediate cause of underrepresentation in gifted programs, such as the use of local norms or portfolios in identification, these strategies, while beneficial, will not have the needed impact of systemic change: a shift in mindset, particularly around equity in gifted education (Gorski & Swalwell, 2015). Research in gifted education establishes a foundation of content and context for the need for targeted professional learning, in conjunction with standards in both professional learning and gifted programming and teacher preparation. The competencies, skill areas, and benchmarks in equity literature provide a foundation for assessing growth and movement along the cultural proficiency continuum. With these elements working together, a need for a strong framework still exists; and out of this need the guiding principles were created.

Guiding Principles for Developing Equity-Driven Professional Learning

Personal beliefs have a strong influence on the delivery of instruction, so much so, that they often overpower professional knowledge (Nelson & Guerra, 2014). Diller and Moule (2005) indicate that when growth occurs in one of these areas, growth is most likely seen in the other areas.Therefore, using professional learning to increase awareness of underserved populations of gifted and talented learners is critical to changing teacher mindsets. This section outlines seven

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equity-driven guiding principles and examples for developing effective professional learning

(Lewis, 2017; Lewis et al., 2018). Table 2 provides each of the seven principles with an

explanation along with alignment to the standards and research that was, and will continue to be,

discussed throughout this article.

Table 2

Standards, Research and Competencies Alignment for the Seven Principles for Equity-Driven

Professional Learning for Educators of Gifted Children

Principle	Description	Competencies Alignment*	Standards* Alignment	Research Alignment
Taking a Pulse	Pre-assess the faculty to determine prior knowledge and areas of strengths and weaknesses Use the data to guide the professional learning sessions Formative Assessment	C: Reflecting on one's cultural lens; Recognize bias in the system N: Valuing diversity; Being culturally self-aware	LF: Data NAGC: 3.1 Curriculum Planning**	Nelson & Guerra, 2014; Matheis et al., 2017 Preckel et al., 2015
Individualizing Professional Learning Plans	Using the pre-assessment data, create individualized professional learning plans for teachers and staff Vary the length and speed of the learning	C: Bring real-world issues into the classroom; Draw on students' culture to shape curriculum and instruction N: Dynamics of difference;	LF: Learning Communities; Learning Designs NAGC: 3.1 Curriculum Planning**	Nelson & Guerra, 2014 Gilson, 2018 Matheis et al., 2017 Preckel et al., 2015

	sessions for teachers and staff	Knowledge of students' culture		
Establishing a Safe Zone	Establish guidelines for the professional learning sessions Develop trust and ensure confidentiality by setting appropriate boundaries	C: Promote respect for student differences; Model high expectations for all students N: Valuing diversity; Dynamics of difference	NAGC: 6.3 Equity and Inclusion; 6.4 Lifelong Learning LF: Learning Designs	Gay, 2000 Teaching Tolerance, 2019
Going Beyond the Tip of the Iceberg	Examine cultures and the importance of cultural awareness in the classroom Focus on characteristics of giftedness within the cultural context	C: Promote respect for student differences; Reflect on one's cultural lens N: Knowledge of students' culture; Institutionalizing cultural knowledge and adapting to diversity E: Equity Ideology	NAGC: 6.1 Talent Development; 6.3 Equity and Inclusion NAGC-CEC: 1.1 Learner Development and Individual Learning Differences	Irby & Lara-Alecio, 1996 Lewis et al., 2014 Briggs et al., 2008 Lewis & Novak, 2019 Moore et al., 2005 Ford, 2014 Ford et al., 2005 Gay, 2000
Bridging the Gap between School and Home	Establish ways to engage parents and communities in school, especially regarding information and support for gifted learners	C: Collaborate with families and the local community; Communicate in linguistically and culturally responsive ways	NAGC: 6.1.Talent Development NAGC-CEC: 1.1 Learner Development and Individual Learning Differences	Ford, 2014 Buchanan & Buchanan, 2017 Lewis & Novak, 2019

	Build cultural awareness of the parental and community perceptions towards gifted education	N: Knowledge of students' culture

E: Prioritization; Redistribution | | |
| Identifying Grows and Glows | Invite teachers to share what works well for them (strategies and tips); help make connections to cultural competency and best practices for gifted learners

Encourage teachers to share areas where they have room to improve their craft and understanding of CLED gifted students | C: Draw on students' culture to shape curriculum and instruction

E: Direct Confrontation | NAGC: 6.4 Lifelong Learning

LF: Learning Communities; Implementation

NAGC-CEC: 7.3 Collaboration | Grantham and Biddle, 2014 Briggs et al., 2008 Gay, 2000 |
| Engaging in Courageous Conversations | Ask the tough questions- growth occurs when one is challenged to question understandings

Be respectful of others

Allow time for processing; | C: Recognize and redress bias in the system

N: Institutionalizing cultural knowledge and adapting to diversity

E: Direct Confrontation; | NAGC: 6.3 Equity and Inclusion; 6.4 Lifelong Learning

LF: Implementation (particularly in applying change research) | Ford, 2014 Clark, 2001 Gunnlaugson, 2007 Moore, 2018 Gay, 2000 |

	changes in beliefs and practices occur over time	Equity Ideology; #Fixinjusticenot kids		

Note:
*Standards are abbreviated using the following conventions:
NAGC: National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) Pre-K-Grade 12 Programming Standards, 2019
LF: Learning Forward Professional Learning Standards, 2017
NAGC-CECTAG: NAGC and the Council for Exceptional Children (Talented and Gifted Division, CEC-TAG), Teacher Preparation Standards in Gifted and Talented Education Competencies and Skills are abbreviated using the following conventions:
C: 8 Cultural Competencies (Muñiz, 2019)
N: 5 Skill Areas (NEA, n.d., adapted from Diller & Moule, 2005)
E: Equity Literacy Principles (Gorski & Swalwell, 2015)
**NAGC Standard 3.1 includes the use of pre-assessments (3.1.4) and differentiated curriculum (3.1.4), and refers to these practices' use with educators and their students, not within the context of professional learning.

Taking a Pulse

Effective instruction begins pre-assessments and incorporates formative assessments; similarly, in professional learning, the facilitator should start with assessing the cultural knowledge and skills of the teachers and continue to gauge their understanding throughout. The results of a teacher's belief survey, such as a self-efficacy scale regarding multiculturalism provide valuable information for the facilitators regarding the participants' perceptions towards underserved populations, thus enabling the facilitators to tailor the professional learning sessions for the unique needs of their participants. For example, if the goal is to provide training on cultural awareness in general, a pre-screening instrument might be a cultural awareness survey, many of which can be found online, and an example is provided in Table 3. In order to ascertain gifted teaching practices, a teaching observation scale such as the Classroom Observation Scale-Revised (COS-R, VanTassel-Baska et al., 2013) could be used as a self-assessment, completed by the teachers, and the data shared as a needs assessment to determine areas of growth.

While any topic may be on the table in gifted, equity-focused professional learning, the central focus beyond the gifted topic is being culturally aware; thus, it is important for individuals to recognize their own personal preconceived notions, experiences and knowledge in the cultural domains (NEA, n.d.). In order to get an accurate pulse of the teachers, it is imperative that this survey is conducted in a confidential manner in order to assure participants that their honest reflections will not have a negative impact on them. Routine monitoring of the pulse is needed to ensure that professional learning continues to target areas of need and growth. With at least two weeks' time between measures, though a month may be more ideal, the survey mentioned above can be re-administered to track progress and to set goals. This ties closely with two other principles, individualizing professional learning plans and identifying glows and grows.

Individualizing Professional Learning Plans

Similar to gifted instruction, the one size fits all approach does not work in professional learning geared to developing awareness of underserved groups. Instead, facilitators should utilize the results from the pulse surveys, along with student, school and district data, and design individualized professional learning plans. This may include frontloading information at times, strategically grouping at others, similar to utilizing these teaching strategies with gifted students.

Nelson and Guerra (2014) found correlations between targeted professional development and changes in teacher perceptions, attitudes, beliefs and understandings. By using a needs assessment, such as a gifted teaching scale as a self-assessment (as referenced in Table 3), the administrator in charge of conducting professional learning can use that data to prioritize topics. The COS-R (VanTassel-Baska et al., 2003) is divided into six subscales: accommodating for individual differences, creative thinking strategies, critical thinking strategies, curriculum

planning and delivery, problem solving, and research strategies. By using this instrument as a needs assessment, the professional learning can be planned around only a few of the topics represented by the subscales indicated as needed on the survey, or all of the topics, but prioritized in order of need.

Just as in the classroom when we provided targeted instruction for our students through differentiation, targeted professional learning should be differentiated for the gifted educators (Gilson, 2018). Within one faculty, cultural competency will vary greatly based on the group members' experiences and backgrounds. It is essential that the training meet these varied needs so that participants experience growth. For instance, the needs assessment may indicate that different groups of faculty have different learning needs, in terms of content and concepts. Some would best benefit from an exploration into the concept of systemic bias and cultural competence, while others might benefit from an exploration of the manifestation of gifted characteristics in different cultural groups, while a third might have accurate understandings of both of these areas, and best be served by an investigation of portfolio systems for identification used in different districts. In this case, a Professional Learning Community (PLC) approach could benefit the faculty. The administrator can set up three different PLCs, each with its own topic, methods of learning, goals, and outcomes. A book study might be a good choice for this PLC approach, with group one focusing on equity literacy, group two on multicultural gifted education, and group three on portfolios.

Establishing a Safe Zone

Increasing understanding about underserved populations of gifted and talented students requires a safe learning environment. All participants, educators, paraprofessionals and administrators need to feel confident that they can come together to have challenging and, in

some cases, uncomfortable discussions. Facilitators establish this safe zone by setting boundaries of respect where thoughts, ideas and questions are invited and encouraged--even the "elephant in the room" types of questions.

For example, a school district is experiencing a shift in the demographics within the district, moving from a highly affluent white student population to a bilingual lower-social-economic population. Many of the educators have expressed concerns about not being able to teach "this kind of student". This scenario of changing demographics is not that unusual in school districts. Professional learning communities with an established safe zone allow educators to ask questions: why does this child act this way? why would a parent support a child in making these decisions? Within a safe zone, educators are encouraged and better able to value diversity which entails accepting and respecting cultural differences (NEA, n.d.).

In establishing a safe zone, it can be helpful to establish group rules or norms at the start of meetings or discussions. In *Critical Practices for Anti-Bias Education*, Scharf (2018) suggests five components of shared inquiry and dialogue: listening, respect, humility, voice, and trust. Listening has greater meaning than hearing, or even understanding- it is listening behind what is said, for underlying meanings, context, experiences, and feelings that are carried on the words. Respect involves believing that each member of the group has the right to their own ideas and opinions, and the integrity of the group is strong, so that all opinions can be shared without risk. Humility is recognizing that as each individual has one's own opinion, it is imperative to recognize that these opinions are only one perspective and there are perspectives that have not yet been heard, from within and out of the group. Voice is a commitment to speaking one's own truth and asking questions if something isn't understood. Trust is the crux of the safe zone,

building an environment in which conflicts, if and when they arise, can be worked through.

Additional resources for discussion norms are provided in Table 3.

Going Beyond the Tip of the Iceberg

Professional learning is an opportunity to share about cultural traits, characteristics, success and challenges for the cultural groups represented in the school and beyond and must be as multifaceted and complex as curriculum for gifted children at times. Exploring culture beyond the tip of the iceberg (Ford et al., 2005) builds meaningful understanding of culture groups. Valuing diversity and building on the knowledge of the students' culture enables educators to recognize non-traditional gifted characteristics which may have otherwise been overlooked. Facilitators provide targeted professional learning that examines the heart of the cultural groups, sharing a baseline understanding of the cultural group that helps the educator better understand their students (NEA, n.d.). After the baseline knowledge is established, the professional learning cycle continues, and ways giftedness may present itself within the cultural groups should be explored.

An excellent resource to use when examining the impact of CLED diversity on gifted is *The Varied Faces of Gifted/Talented Students* (Texas Education Agency, 2006). This matrix highlights how gifted traits may present differently between traditionally gifted students and those from poverty, English Language Learners from poverty or Special Education gifted students from poverty. By using this, or another compelling resource, teachers can critically examine the impact of cultural diversity on gifted characteristics. For example, the matrix could be used to examine case studies to identify characteristics of students represented in published cases such as "Raul" or "Rebecca" (Weber, Boswell, & Behrens, 2014) which address Standard 4: Learning Environments found in the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) Pre-K-

Grade 12 Programming Standards (2019). Alternatively, the educators could be asked to reflect on their students and make connections to students that they see represented by the matrix in their classes, as a starting point in discussion. Facilitators should seek out resources which identify culturally unique gifted characteristics for their student population. Throughout these professional learning sessions, facilitators are maintaining a safe zone and keeping a pulse on the participants.

Bridging the Gap between School and Home

The relationship among the teacher, the parent, and the student is essential to the social and academic success of students. Parental involvement is too often a struggle for teachers in all areas of the K-12 classroom. Professional learning can serve as a vehicle to foster a positive relationship between teachers and parents from underserved populations. Facilitators can model ways to engage parents from underserved populations in the education of their children. Misunderstandings related to what gifted programming entails may be a factor limiting the underserved student's identification and enrollment.

Role playing scenarios where parents and teachers are interacting helps to highlight situations where miscommunication due to cultural differences may occur. Buchanan and Buchanan (2017) offer six steps to partner with diverse families, such as learning about the child, family and community; embracing a strengths-based perspective; and acknowledging a shared commitment. The role-play scenario could make connections to these essential practices, as guidelines during the role play, or during the debriefing. During a professional learning session, a facilitator might ask two educators to take on the role of parents represented in their school population, providing a situation that is common to that specific culture. For example, in a school with a high Mexican cultural population, educators can role play parents and a teacher, in a

scenario where the teacher brings the parents a concern about their child not being available to participate in after-school enrichment opportunities. The educator expresses a strong opinion, believing strongly in the advocacy for the child, the benefit of the enrichment, while the roleplaying parents might bring up issues of the child's responsibilities at home and explain the importance of the role of the older child in taking care of the younger children.

During the process of the role play, if cultural characteristics aren't evident in the scenario, the facilitator should include them as part of the debrief, such as the importance of family or the collectivist nature of the culture. After going through the scenario, an open discussion, or debrief, is held between the facilitator, group, and role-players; the debrief informs about cultural characteristics, what is important to cultural groups, and what could be considered negative (ranging from abrasive to devaluing to insulting or offensive), if, as an outsider, an educator doesn't respect those needs and values. At times, the debrief needs to confront stereotyped behaviors exhibited in the role play. The role play process may lead to a discussion about perspectives and viewpoints regarding culture; the teacher believes that he or she is advocating for the child, but by ignoring the child's culture, is the teacher truly advocating for the whole child? Depending on the discussion, a "second take" of the role play scenario may benefit the group, putting the discussion and ideas into action.

Recognizing when and how cultural miscommunication happens is an important step in being culturally aware, but it is equally important for participants to know how to react to situations (NEA, n.d.). A common cultural "misstep" is an educator assuming that a student needs to be "rescued" from his or her life… such as telling Native American student, "don't you want to get out and make a better life for yourself, off the reservation?", while a characteristic of gifted Native American students is a desire to return to the tribe and contribute to its success,

even at a young age (Fisher, 2008). This deficit thinking on the part of educators is a significant

detour in equity work (Gorski, 2019). Professional learning provides an opportunity to educate

teachers on ways to invite parents from underserved populations to be a part of the gifted and

talented community as well as to share about their cultural identity and beliefs, and the impact

they may have on education.

Identifying Grows and Glows

Professional learning is an ideal situation for teachers to collaborate and share what

glows, or works, in their classrooms. Standard 7.3 of the NAGC-CEC Teacher Preparation

Standards in Gifted and Talented Education focuses on collaboration, with families and

professional colleagues (NAGC, 2013a). The nature of classrooms for children who are gifted

can be one of professional silos at times, but through collaboration, resources can be shared. For

example, many schools have an ESL teacher who, or a program that is, already implementing

best practices for English learners (EL). These same strategies would benefit a gifted EL student,

but perhaps the gifted and talented resource teacher is not aware of them. Through collaborative

efforts gifted teachers are able to enhance their knowledge base as well as to share in resources.

Within professional learning, the concept of "grows and glows" is to share ideas of what

has worked, what hasn't, and create a shared space of ideas that can be expanded upon with the

facilitator's guidance. The guidance here is essential, in order to redirect any misconceptions. For

example, if an educator shares "when my gifted students are done I have them tutor others, since

they learn the content better when they teach it to others"; the intervention of the facilitator is

imperative so that this belief can be redirected to a more meaningful way to support gifted

students' personal growth. When professional learning has an established safe environment as

well as a sense of trust among colleagues, gifted teachers are more likely to ask for help, or

express grows, as well as be receptive to the redirection from facilitators when expressing glows. Teachers learn from each other and from the facilitators, sharing areas in need of growth and asking for advice on working with CLED gifted students.

Engaging in Courageous Conversations

Creating new understanding and meaning is an active process, for children as they learn new and advanced vocabulary, mathematical skills, or inquiry lessons, but also for adults as they stretch their comfort zones and engage in discussions regarding cultural thinking and beliefs. Webb's Depth of Knowledge and Hess' Cognitive Rigor Matrix, which are often utilized by school districts with regards to gifted pedagogy and challenging instruction, highlight the learning process that must occur for developing new knowledge and understandings; so too must the professional learning facilitator consider these thinking skills. Webb's Depth of Knowledge evolves from describe to explain to interpret in four levels from recall to extended thinking. For example, a facilitator may begin a discussion asking a lower level question "What are common celebrations in the Native American culture?" Followed by carefully scaffolded questions about history and traditions to eventually lead to the ending question, "How might the way we have celebrated Thanksgiving at our school in the past put our beliefs in equity at odds with our practices? How can we design a new process to teach about Thanksgiving through an equitable lens?"

Critical debate, discussion and reflections are all part of the process for educators participating in professional learning. Engaging in discussion and pushing through levels of discomfort, similar to zones of proximal development, are essential. If the fruit of the proverbial discussion is too easy to reach, deep and shifting understandings that will push change are not

going to be realized. Meaningful conversations which dive deeply into cultural awareness have the potential to ignite change in teacher perceptions and beliefs (Clark, 2001).

It is the sustained conversations over time which provide the learning environment for teacher perceptions and beliefs to change (Gunnlaugson, 2007; Moore, 2018). Professional learning that provides a safe zone for these conversations, enabling them to move beyond surface level assumptions and venting into rigorous, divergent conversations (Clark, 2001; Moore, 2018). Facilitators should guide the candid conversations utilizing accurate information about the underserved populations, the impact of one's cultural beliefs may have on one's educational beliefs and learning preferences. Facilitators should view themselves not as the keeper of knowledge but rather as the guide, personally remaining open to learning themselves about the nuances which impact all learners.

Educators who have mastered the art of teaching understand that learning is a life-long journey. These educators actively seek out new instructional strategies and ways to hone their craft and meet the needs of their students. Once teachers see a change in their students, their change in practice leads to a change in personal beliefs (Guskey, 2002). Professional learning provides teachers' an excellent avenue to raise awareness for gifted and talented underserved student populations, implement change in practices, and ultimately lead to a shift in personal and systemic beliefs.

Table 3

Resources for the Seven Guiding Principles for Developing Equity-Driven Professional Learning

Guiding Principle	Resource/Title/Source
Taking a Pulse	Cultural Competence Self-Assessment https://www.racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/mason.pdf

Taking a Pulse	Methods for Conducting an Educational Needs Assessment https://www.extension.uidaho.edu/publishing/pdf/BUL/BUL0870.pdf
Individualizing Professional Learning Plans	*Leading for Differentiation: Growing Teachers who Grow Kids* C.A. Tomlinson; M. Murphy 2015; Alexandria, VA: ASCD
Individualizing Professional Learning Plans	Moving Toward Differentiated Professional Learning for Teachers Learning to Differentiate for Gifted Students C. Gilson in: *Best Practices in Professional Learning and Teacher Preparation: Methods and Strategies for Gifted Professional Development* (Vol. 1) Edited by A. Novak and C. Weber 2018 Waco, TX: Prufrock Press
Establishing a Safe Zone	Guidelines for Discussing Difficult or Controversial Topics http://www.crlt.umich.edu/publinks/generalguidelines
Establishing a Safe Zone	Managing Difficult Classroom Discussions https://citl.indiana.edu/teaching-resources/diversity-inclusion/managing-difficult-classroom-discussions/
Going Beyond the Tip of the Iceberg	The Varied Faces of Gifted/Talented Students http://www.gtequity.org/docs/equity_in_ge.pdf
Going Beyond the Tip of the Iceberg	Identifying and Supporting Culturally, Linguistically and Economically Diverse Gifted Learners: Guiding Teachers through the Four Zones of Professional Learning K.D. Lewis & A.M Novak In: *Best Practices in Professional Learning and Teacher Preparation: Special Topics for Gifted Professional Development* (Vol. 2) Edited by A. Novak and C. Weber 2019; Waco, TX: Prufrock Press.
Bridging the Gap between School and Home	A Guide for Engaging ELL Families: Twenty Strategies for School L. Breiseth, K. Robertson & S. Lafond (note: this resource is specific to ELL) Colorín Colorado; 2011 https://www.colorincolorado.org/sites/default/files/Engaging_ELL_Families_FINAL.pdf
Bridging the Gap between School and Home	Six Steps to Partner with Diverse Families K. Buchanan & T. Buchanan https://www.naesp.org/sites/default/files/Buchanan_JF17.pdf

Identifying Grows and Glows	5 Ways to Increase Knowledge Sharing in your Organization D. Youngren https://bloomfire.com/blog/522359-5-ways-to-encourage-knowledge-sharing-within-your-organization/
Identifying Grows and Glows	Collaborative Professional Learning National Staff Development Council https://learningforward.org/docs/default-source/chapter-preview/learning-school-chapter-2.pdf
Engaging in Courageous Conversations	Racial Justice in Education Resource Guide (2017) National Education Association (NEA) and Human and Civil Rights (HCR) https://neaedjustice.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Racial-Justice-in-Education.pdf
Engaging in Courageous Conversations	*Exploring Critical Issues in Gifted Education: A Case Studies Approach* C.L. Weber, C. Boswell, & W.A. Behrens 2014; Waco, TX: Prufrock Press.

Conclusion

Ford et al., (2018) created the Bill of Rights for Gifted Students of Color, designed to be culturally responsive, and based in equity. The document groups rights into categories of advocacy and accountability, access to programming and services, gifted program evaluation and accountability, gifted education evaluation and assessment, educators, curriculum and instruction, social and emotional, and families and communities. Among these rights for children with gifts and talents are the rights to have preservice and current educators "trained and dedicated to recognizing and valuing their expressions of gifts and talents…[those] who are unbiased and hold culturally responsive philosophies... [and those who are] trained in multicultural education *and* gifted education" (p. 127-128). Training teachers in culturally responsive pedagogy in order to recognize and meet the educational needs of CLED gifted students is explicitly and implicitly embedded in these rights.

The Seven Guiding Principles for Equity-Driven Professional Learning are based on best practices in professional learning, the NAGC programming standards, and social-justice framed equity work. Examples of the principles in action using case studies in professional learning will be available in a future issue of *Gifted Child Today*. The seven guiding principles for developing effective professional learning illuminate a crucial path towards reducing and eliminating the disproportionality that has marred gifted programs for far too long, fostered by systemic and institutional racial biases against students of color. These principles are a tool to enact change, supporting professional learning experiences that feature a safe space for teachers to ask questions and grow, while working together to develop a school culture that is respectful of, and responsive to, the cultures in the community it serves, and is thus poised to find and foster talented CLED youth.

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