

Gatekeepers in Gifted:

A Case Study of the Disproportionality of Gifted Black Youth in Elementary Programs

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Abstract

Gifted identification and services, like many aspects of education, are inequitable and disproportionate in favor of White students. Obama Elementary School serves 421 students, 29% are Black, 58% are White; the school's gifted program is 10% Black and 86% White. Rebecca Johnson, the gifted teacher, brings this to the attention of her principal, who has Rebecca present to the School Improvement Team. Rebecca receives pushback from a culturally unresponsive and equity-illiterate group. This case study provides teaching notes on gifted identification and services as well as cultural proficiency and equity literacy, and is framed in both gifted education and anti-racism.

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*In the whole world you know
There are billion boys and girls
Who are young, gifted and black,
And that's a fact!
-Nina Simone & Weldon Irvine
Young, Gifted, and Black*

Lorraine. Nina. Malcolm. John. Ella. Martin. Barack. Young. Gifted. Black. There are far more names that are unrecognized. Unseen. Unheard. Overlooked gems is sometimes used to describe minoritized students underrepresented in gifted programs. A starker mirror reflects the truth, the outcome of systemic racism: de facto segregation in the nation's gifted and talented programs. What is gifted, often referred to as TAG, or talented and gifted? Unlike special education, it does not have a federal mandate, nor is it governed by federal law. Gifted education does have a federal definition, last updated in 1993:

Children and youth with outstanding talent perform or show the potential for performing at remarkably high levels of accomplishment when compared with others of their age, experience, or environment. These children and youth exhibit high performance capability in intellectual, creative, and/or artistic areas, possess an unusual leadership capacity, or excel in specific academic fields. They require services or activities not ordinarily provided by the schools. Outstanding talents are present in children and youth from all cultural groups, across all economic strata, and in all areas of human endeavor (Ross, 1993, p. 3).

Beyond this, TAG support at the federal level is through the Jacob K. Javits Grant, an opportunity for research related grants, though this is not always funded. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) provided limited provisions for gifted education through such avenues as Title II funds in professional learning. On the whole, gifted education is left to the state. This case will explore this issue through the lens of a gifted teacher, an assistant principal, and a

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principal, and can be used in a variety of settings, for teacher development, administrator preparation, or gifted professional learning.

Teaching Case Narrative

School and Setting

Bloom River County is located in a rural area of the Southeast United States. The population of Bloom River County is 19,762. Much of the population works in the chicken processing plant in the county, though some do drive to a nearby urban area for work. A large portion of the county is considered a food desert, with limited access to fresh foods. The county also has limited access to health care facilities. Families usually drive about 40 minutes to a nearby urban area to access doctors and hospitals. Many of the families have lived in Bloom River County for multiple generations.

Obama Elementary School (OES) is a Kindergarten through fifth grade school. OES is one of three elementary schools located in the Bloom River County School District and the school district serves 2,890 students. OES has a population of 421 students: 58% of the students are White, 29% are Black, 11% are Latinx and 2% are Multi-Racial or Other. The faculty and staff of OES are 84% White, 4% Black, and 12% are Multi-Racial or other. Most of the teachers have worked at OES for 6 or more years. The school has a faculty-led governance, in which the teachers join different committees in order to facilitate the organization and the structure of the school; committee leadership is elected by the members each year. Committees include the diversity committee, school improvement team, beautification team, community outreach, parent support team, curriculum team, and data team. Each committee has its own goal and mission to improve the school. Only the diversity committee is responsible for ensuring diversity across the school community.

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The Players

Ms. Rebecca Johnson is the Talented and Gifted (TAG) education teacher at Obama Elementary School (OES). She is a White teacher in her first year in this position, though she was at OES for the past 6 years as a 3rd grade teacher. Rebecca was excited to transition to TAG teacher after she'd studiously completed four graduate level courses and practicum hours to earn her endorsement, as required by the state. She was a bit disappointed to move away from her grade-level team and into a position where she serves students and faculty as a sole practitioner.

Dr. Brenda Thomas, a Black female, is the current Principal of OES. She was a third grade teacher for 9 years and attended graduate courses to earn an MA in educational leadership. For 5 years, she was a beloved Assistant Principal at Bloom River Middle School, while also completing doctoral work. Brenda is in her 2nd year as Principal at OES. The Assistant Principal of OES is Mr. Ted Mowry, a White male, who is in his second year. Previously, Ted was a middle school social studies teacher at BRMS; he earned his MA in educational leadership prior to his move to OES.

Diversity Committee

After a year without making alterations to the structure of the school committees, Brenda and Ted decide to become more involved in faculty-led committees, as members, not in leadership roles. Ted decides to join the Diversity Committee, where he gets to know Rebecca, the TAG teacher. The Diversity Committee is made up of volunteer teachers and staff that organize events during the year. There is a Black History Month Assembly in February each year. In December, the school celebrates "Christmas Around the World" with each grade level studying about celebrations in different countries and sharing their learning with other classes. In 3rd grade classes, students bring in a food dish to represent their cultural heritage during a social

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studies unit on diversity each year. Aside from these designated events, diversity is not often mentioned, unless it is in the context of disaggregating data.

Rebecca spoke to Ted after a meeting one afternoon about her frustrations with the Diversity Committee, and its complacency with simple celebrations rather than a focus on diversity and equity. Rebecca had been a member of the diversity committee for the past six years, but has never felt that the leadership of the committee, which has changed frequently, has been responsive to change in this regard; they've dismissed her suggestions and have always done the same activities year after year. Based on a comment Ted made during the meeting, she felt comfortable approaching him about this issue. This led to a discussion of the diversity in the TAG program. Ted suggested a meeting with Brenda, as both his thesis and her dissertation were on equity and anti-racism work, he knew she would be concerned.

Gifted Program

TAG services in Bloom River County Schools begin for students with assessment and identification at the end of 2nd grade. All students are screened using a school-wide administration of the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT), along with rating scales sent home to families and rating scales completed by teachers, both of which look to identify characteristics of gifted students. Students are identified by district identification committees in either Math, English/Language Arts (ELA). The identification process in Virginia consists of four principal stages, using multiple sources of information: screening, referral, data collection and assessment, and identification and placement. While the stages are regulated, the specific methods and procedures within the stages are left to the districts. Screening may consist of achievement or standardized test scores, classroom achievement, or performance or potential. Students may reach the referral stage as a result of the initial screening, or students or they may be referred by

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parents, self-referral, or “anyone else”. Once referred, the district must follow through with the third step: data collection and assessment. Per 8VAC20-40-60A.7, this data collection must include a variety of data, including performance, behaviors, aptitudes and interests. The regulation requires the use of a measure that assesses *demonstrated* advanced accomplishment or achievement, such as a nationally-normed test, as well as an instrument that can assess the *potential* for the same levels of accomplishment of achievement, ability or aptitude. In determining eligibility, at least 3 measures from Table 1 need to be included (note the *and/or* in the nationally normed tests and the *requirement for general intellectual or specific academic aptitude). While the identification regulations require the tests to be included, both do not need to be part of the identification and placement decisions. An important component of regulation 8VAC20-40-40 is that “the identification process must ensure that no single criterion either makes a student eligible or ineligible for the school division’s gifted education program” (Virginia Department of Education, 2012, p. 5).

Table 1
Virginia Identification Process: Categories of Acceptable Identification Measures

Assessment of appropriate student products, performance, or portfolio	Record of previous accomplishments (such as awards, honors, grades, etc)
Record of observation of in-classroom behavior	Additional valid and reliable measures of procedures
Appropriate rating scales, checklists, or questionnaires	Individual interview
Individually or group-administered, nationally normed aptitude and/or achievement tests*	

Note. (8VAC20-40-40D.3; Virginia Department of Education, 2012, p. 5); *Required for general intellectual or specific academic aptitude identification

Students begin pull-out services in 3rd grade; students leave their general education class for 1 hour each week per subject area (Math or ELA), and those identified in both areas receive 2

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hours of services per week. Current student enrollment in the TAG program at OES is 86% White, 10% Black, 3% Latinx, and 1% Multi-Racial or other. Using the statistics of the school population, and a relative risk ratio calculation, a White child is 2.33 times more likely to be identified as gifted than a Black child. Virginia's regulations include any variety of instruction, setting, faculty/staff selected for delivery of services to be considered services assuming they are based on the students' needs, specific to their areas of assessed strengths. It is left to the school division's discretion to determine the service option or options; the regulations allow this on the philosophy of the district and the needs of the identified students in the district (Virginia Department of Education, 2012).

The policy in place when Rebecca took over the TAG program was that students receiving TAG services are required to make up missed work from their class on their own time, outside of school or during recess or lunch. This upsets Rebecca; she feels students are "punished" with extra work for being part of the TAG program. Rebecca discusses this with the 4th grade teachers. Karen responds that "Some of those kids shouldn't be pulled out at all. I don't even know how they qualified. David is always clowning around and out of his seat. He doesn't even deserve the privilege of TAG class!" Her team members nod in agreement. When Rebecca discusses the make up work with 5th grade teachers, she receives similar resistance. Amy shares, "I wouldn't send them if it wasn't mandatory. It's a pain to make up the work and some haven't earned it with their behavior."

The Problem

Rebecca is deeply concerned about the disproportionate number of White students in TAG compared to the total school population. Based on Rebecca's training, she understands that the identification process and assessment may be partly to blame for the disproportionality.

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Based on her recent conversation with the teachers, she is also concerned about the teachers' perceptions of giftedness and their cultural responsiveness around gifted children of color. She feels this is not only impacting the identification, but also how the children feel while attending the gifted classes, their response to the program, the work they are required to make up when missing class, and even their treatment upon returning to class. At Ted's suggestion, she brings her concerns to the attention of the principal.

Brenda invites Rebecca to share the data at a School Improvement Team (SIT) meeting. The SIT consists of the lead teacher from each grade level, an elective teacher representative, the school counselor, and the Principal and AP, however Ted is not in attendance that day. Rebecca shares the disproportionality data with the team. She also discusses the possibility of using alternate methods to identify the students who qualify for services.

The teachers are noticeably annoyed at the topic of TAG and disproportionality. One teacher comments, "My students all have to pass the SOLs. I have to focus on state tests, I don't have time to worry about students who are already successful." Others reiterate comments about student behavior issues, saying "those kids don't belong in the program, it's for good kids that earn the privilege, not the ones that will end up in jail anyway". As Rebecca looks around the meeting, she realizes the teachers at the SIT meeting will not be her allies in her disproportionality fight. Moreover, though Brenda allowed her to bring up the topic on the meeting's agenda, she is not speaking up now to support the program or students.

Rebecca leaves the SIT meeting feeling dejected. She did not expect to face so much resistance to her discussion around disproportionality in the TAG program, and is unsure of why Brenda did not say anything in the meeting. Rebecca touches base with Ted about what he missed he missed in the meeting, expressing her disappointment about Brenda's lack of

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response. Ted and Brenda later touch base and debrief the meeting; Brenda was taken aback by the level of resistance expressed by the teachers. Moving forward, a cohesive response is needed to address this issue. How do Rebecca, Ted, and Brenda work together to support the TAG program? This involves not only supporting the students and making the best choices for the children in their care, but also working with teachers and addressing their needs for professional learning in equity, cultural responsiveness, and gifted understandings.

Teaching Notes and Background

Gifted Education

Within states, there are two primary questions regarding oversight and policy in gifted education: is there a mandate, and is there funding? The mandate is generally yes or no, though you could have a mandate to identify gifted students, but not provide services- Connecticut is one such state. Most state mandates, however, are both identify and serve. With funding, the pendulum swings between no funding, partially funded, and fully funded. Given that individual states have such different contexts for gifted education, the authors suggest that classes use the policies from their states; see Table 2 for resources to find this information.

Table 2
Resources for State Policies in Gifted Education

Davidson Institute Database	http://www.davidsongifted.org/search-database/entrytype/3
NAGC Gifted by State	https://www.nagc.org/information-publications/gifted-state
2014-2015 State of the States in Gifted Education	https://www.nagc.org/resources-publications/gifted-state/2014-2015-state-states-gifted-education

Given the context that gifted varies by state, the examples in this case are based on the state requirements of Virginia, regulation 8VAC20-40-20. Gifted students are defined as:

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those students in public elementary, middle, and secondary schools beginning with kindergarten through twelfth grade who demonstrate high levels of accomplishment *or who show the potential* for higher levels of accomplishment when compared to others of the same age, experience, or environment. Their aptitudes and potential for accomplishment are so outstanding that they require special programs to meet their educational needs. (emphasis added, Virginia Department of Education, 2012, p. 4)

Virginia's mandate requires identification and services, in grades K-12 in general intellectual or specific academic aptitude, including visual/performing arts or in career/technical aptitude (Virginia Department of Education, 2012).

One potential identification measure in Virginia is appropriate rating scales, checklists, or questionnaires; this is not an unusual step in the identification process nationally. As in the case of OES, teacher checklists, sometimes in combination with parent checklists are frequently used as a data point in the gifted identification process. Teacher referral or recommendations, while sometimes used synonymously, occur at different points in the identification process, are not the most equitable measures, due to lack of training for teachers, potential bias on the part of the teachers, and bias in the instrument itself.

While the terms can be used interchangeably, there are differences in referral and recommendations. Referral is generally the first step of a process; also called nomination, the teacher submits a list of students that they see as potentially gifted, thus they are making a judgement on students that should be referred for testing. In this case, the teacher serves as a gatekeeper to the gifted program, a barrier or entry point to accessing the program.

Recommendation is generally the stage after an initial screening where teachers are asked to provide feedback on individual students; this is the case in OES. Even with recommendation, the

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teacher can be a gatekeeper, a barrier to the final decision of access, but at that point, they are one of many data points, rather than an initial yes or no. The distinction between the two concepts is that in referral or nomination, teachers peruse a full class list and choose students, whereas in recommendation, teachers are given a list of students and asked to respond to just those students. Realistically, districts use these words to mean the same concept, but conceptually, the timing and role, regardless of the term used, has an impact.

Per Virginia regulation, identification must include a variety of data, including performance, behaviors, aptitudes and interests. There is a requirement of “multiple criteria to seek out students with superior aptitudes, with special attention paid to the identification of students who are economically disadvantaged, have limited English proficiency, or have a disability” (Virginia Department of Education, 2012, p. 4-5). In addition, the regulation requires the use of a measure that assesses *demonstrated* advanced accomplishment or achievement, such as a nationally-normed test, as well as an instrument that can assess the *potential* for the same levels of accomplishment of achievement, ability or aptitude. In determining eligibility, at least three from below measures need to be included:

- Assessment of appropriate student products, performance, or portfolio
- Record of previous accomplishments (such as awards, honors, grades, etc)
- Record of observation of in-classroom behavior
- Additional valid and reliable measures of procedures
- Appropriate rating scales, checklists, or questionnaires
- Individual interview

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- Individually or group-administered, nationally normed aptitude and/or achievement tests (Required for general intellectual or specific academic aptitude identification) (Virginia Department of Education, 2012, p. 5)

Note the *and/or* in the nationally normed tests and the *requirement for general intellectual or specific academic aptitude. While the identification regulations require the tests to be included, both do not need to be part of the identification and placement decisions. An important component of regulation 8VAC20-40-40 is that “the identification process must ensure that no single criterion either makes a student eligible or ineligible for the school division’s gifted education program” (Virginia Department of Education, 2012, p. 5).

Disproportionality can result from either or both the referral and testing processes in identification. Simply stated, disproportionality occurs when the rate of identification does not mirror the population of the school. As indicated in the case study, at OES a White child is 2.33 times more likely to be identified as gifted than a Black child. For the purposes of the case study, a highly recommended report is System Failure: Access Denied, published online by Purdue University (Gentry et al, 2019). A similar index in this report is noted as a representation index, or RI- the percent of a group that is identified divided by the percent of that group in the general population. The closer the RI is to 1, the better represented in gifted programs that population is. This report has data broken down at the national level and state level. Within those levels, the data is further broken down by urbancentric locales as well as Title I vs Non Title I. Pertinent to this case study, at a National Rural Level (overall, not broken down by Title I status), the RI was .51 for Black equity (a score of F). In Virginia, the same statistic (rural, overall, Black equity) was .39; again, an F (Gentry et al., 2019).

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Considering the impact of the teacher as a gatekeeper for gifted services (Betts, 2016; Ford, Grantham, & Whiting, 2008), the training provided to the teacher is a crucial part of the gifted identification puzzle. But what training is offered? Unfortunately, little to none. Gifted education is not part of the undergraduate teaching program at most institutions; only three states require regular classroom teachers to have any training on gifted students (National Association for Gifted Children, 2014). Prior to asking teachers to complete referrals or recommendation checklists, most districts do not provide any professional learning or inservice as to gifted characteristics or identification, however this is a strong recommendation among gifted researchers and practitioners (Lewis & Novak, 2019). In particular, this professional learning should include culturally responsive and equity-minded training on the nature and needs specific to gifted children of color. Consider the case of Obama Elementary School: given the responses at the SIT meeting, what is the likelihood that in-depth professional learning has occurred for the teachers?

Background in Cultural Proficiency

Cultural proficiency is a mindset that enables educators and schools to react successfully to people who differ from one another (Lindsey et al., 2018). In order for individuals to view cultural proficiency as a natural way to interact with people, they need to see cultural difference as something to embrace, and not something to overcome (Nuri-Robins et al., 2007). Becoming culturally proficient requires an inside-out approach where individuals examine their own beliefs and actions in order to make change (Lewis & Novak, 2019; Lindsey et al., 2018; Nuri-Robins et al., 2007). Culturally competent and culturally proficient behaviors move schools and individuals toward positive interactions with members of diverse groups (Lindsey et al., 2018).

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Lindsey et al. (2018) provide the Cultural Proficiency Continuum as a conceptual framework for measuring personal and school development. The six points along the continuum indicate ways of viewing and responding to difference. Consider the case of OES above when reviewing the continuum in Figure 1.

Figure 1
Cultural Proficiency Continuum (Lindsey et al., 2018)

Destructiveness	Incapacity	Blindness	PreCompetence	Competence	Proficiency
Seeking to eliminate the cultures of others in schools	Trivializing other cultures, seeking to make them inferior or wrong	Not noticing or acknowledging cultures, treating all groups the same way	Increasing awareness of what is not yet known about working in diverse settings	Aligning personal values and school policies, promoting healthy, positive interactions with various groups	Acting as an advocate within the school and community to meet the educational needs of all diverse groups

The first three points on the Cultural Proficiency Continuum are reactive and culturally incompetent. These views of cultural difference can be destructive (Ward, 2013). They focus on “them” being the problems that need to be fixed. It is expected in these phases that others should assimilate to solve the problem of diversity. If any policy change occurs, it is usually in the addition to existing policies, not creation of new systems.

The last three points on the Continuum are proactive and seek a goal of educational equity. Individuals functioning in this area of the Continuum work to transform systems for equity (CampbellJones et al., 2010). The focus here is on “us” and our practices. Diversity is seen as a goal and stakeholders adapt to meet the needs of diverse groups. Policies and practices are adapted and created to meet the needs of all.

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“Culturally Proficient change is systemic change, which requires that school leaders work strategically with stakeholders throughout the system” (Nuri-Robins et al., 2007, p. 8). School leaders can initiate change through study and dialogue. Teachers and staff need to go on a reflective journey to learn about themselves and analyze their own belief systems (Lindsey et al., 2018; Ward, 2013). School leaders and teachers must embrace the diversity of their school and community populations to move toward cultural proficiency. In the case of OES above, it is not clear that all staff and school leaders have the same understanding of these concepts.

When centering one’s work around equity, there is a common diversion of multicultural education. This multicultural education often looks like celebrating cultural diversity and not social justice work (Gorski, 2006). Cultural arts and crafts celebrations are “not about equity because they are no threat to inequity” (Gorski, 2016, p. 225). Multicultural education is only one of several detours in the equity path. Gorski lists six additional diversions, see Table 3, that leaders must be conscious of while progressing towards equity (2020). Consider which of these detours is present in the description of OES in the case study.

Table 3
Common Racial Equity Detours

<p><i>Pacing for Privilege Detour</i> Pacing racial equity efforts in a way that prioritizes the comfort and interests of white people over actual progress toward racial equity.</p>	<p><i>It’s About Class, Not Race Detour</i> Denying that racism is an issue by insisting that class is the real issue. Conflating racial and class inequity, such as by using examples of class inequity as proxies for racial inequity.</p>
<p><i>Shiny New Program Detour</i> Relying on popular programs to do the racial “equity” work even when they were never designed with racial equity in mind. [(e.g., SEL, PBIS, trauma-informed education, and restorative practices.)] This doesn’t mean these aren’t valuable programs. It just means they don’t identify or eliminate racism, which is what racial equity efforts should do.</p>	<p><i>Poverty of Culture Detour</i> Racism is a power and oppression issue, not a culture issue. Cultural competence is important, but does not prepare us to recognize or eliminate racism. (Note: Some culture-framed approaches like culturally responsive, culturally relevant, and culturally sustaining education are built on racial equity commitments.)</p>

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<p><i>Individualizing Racism Detour</i> Understanding and responding to racism only as interpersonal incidents, attitudes, or biases while ignoring institutional and structural racism. Adopting antibias approaches or studying microaggressions instead of antiracism approaches. Both are important, but is not sufficient for the goals of the latter.</p>	<p><i>Deficit Ideology Detour</i> Focusing “equity” efforts on programs, initiatives, or practices designed to adjust the mindsets, cultures, values, behaviors, or grittiness of Students of Color while ignoring racial inequity. Racial equity should focus, not on “fixing” ...[students], but on redressing the racist conditions that marginalize [them].</p>
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Note. Gorski, 2020, p. 1-2.

Culturally relevant pedagogies and strategies instead help a student relate course content to their cultural context (Ladson-Billings, 1995). When implementing culturally relevant pedagogies, they must be used in their intended designs to respond to both unique individual cultures and students’ rights to just opportunities (Gay, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 2014). Teachers’ understanding of culture often focuses on a narrow definition of race (Gorski, 2009; Rueda et al., 2007). This narrow focus on culture does not identify where it overlaps with issues of equity (Aragona-Young & Sawyer, 2018).

Educators can focus on equity literacy, a term that describes educators developing knowledge and skills to dismantle inequities in their sphere of influence (Gorski, 2016; Gorski & Swalwell, 2015). In working to support equity for Black students, educators must realize there is no one shared culture for all Black students and families. To work for equity, educators need to understand barriers that exist, whether they have direct influence over them or not (Gorski, 2016). Some barriers exist outside the realm of educators, such as income inequality, and some exist within the boundaries of an educator’s influence such as access to advanced classes.

Cultural proficiency is the foundation of the work of teachers and administrators in addressing disproportionate representation in gifted programs. The cultural proficiency of individuals working in schools drives their ability and/or willingness to drive change. In the sections that follow the ideas of equity and cultural proficiency, specifically addressing

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disproportionality in gifted programs, are addressed. The reflective questions and activities that follow are grounded in these theories.

Recognizing Gifted Students of Color

While the term culturally diverse is commonly used, professor Donna Ford (2010) suggests that culturally different might be a more descriptive term, as all people and all groups have a culture. As with assessment, one cannot claim to have a culture free assessment, at best a culture fair assessment, because the author of the test has a culture and some innate bias; the best we can strive for is fair. Lewis & Novak (2019) have a four zone professional learning plan that is designed to produce positive changes in the representation of culturally, linguistically, and ethnically diverse gifted populations; the first two zones tie in particularly well to this case. The first zone is increasing educators' understanding of cultural norms- including diving deep into their understanding of their own culture, and what they bring into the classroom as their potential biases. The second zone is helping educators to understand the characteristics of the students' cultures that are represented in their classes and communities, how giftedness is represented in those cultures, and how that may not be the picture of giftedness they have in their mind.

The four zone plan is specific to learning about the cultures of the communities served; so too is the recommendation of the authors. Table 4 provides general characteristics of gifted Black students from the literature, as that is the population discussed in the case study, along with what the untrained teacher may interpret these characteristics as, rather than expressions of giftedness. The authors acknowledge that research, by its very nature, serves to generalize: gather data, study it, generalize to the broader population. However, even as researchers, we caution that when working with cultural responsiveness and equity, generalizing is not the best strategy. Rather, individualizing is key. Knowing the community you serve is essential: is the

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Black population composed of Jamaican, Nigerian, and/or American cultures, for example? Is your community first, second, third generation (or beyond), immigrant, and/or refugee? Did their ancestors come to the United States by choice, or in shackles? Forced and enslaved migration, families torn from their homes due to war, conflict, destruction, or enslavement, is not the same immigration experience as crossing the bridge of Ellis Island. Is the community primarily African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME), Baptist, and/or Church of Christ? Do your parents, students, and community members prefer African American or Black? These answers vary by and within communities. While Table 4 provides a general list of attributes, knowing your specific community, parents, and students is essential in equity work; for this case study, you can use Table 3, or you might prefer to research the communities where your students serve.

Table 4

Characteristics of Black Gifted Learners and Corresponding Teacher Perceptions

Cultural Characteristic and Gifted Manifestations	Teachers' Perceptions of the Gifted Traits
Oral Tradition: communication, including advanced sense of humor, puns, jokes, creative storytelling, frank and honest communication, direct communication, call and response learning	“Talking back”, inappropriate humor, insolence, misbehavior, language use may be considered less intelligent rather than intentional use of colloquialisms
Movement or Verve: activity, movement, hands-on learning and engagement through experiential learning, dance and movement in class	Not paying attention during lessons, distracted, not following directions to “be seated or sit still”, hyperactive/ADHD, immature
Communalism: tendency to choose team or group work; social during work, though on task/working;	Talking equals cheating during assignments, the need for help, or is equated with not following directions rather than companionship or collaboration
Affective: emotionality is at the forefront of expression; may underachieve due to desire to fit cultural norms or peer pressure	Students can't or won't do the work; they're not gifted if they aren't motivated; their peers matter more than the work and that doesn't “cut it” in this class

Note. Characteristics adapted from Ford, et al., 2002 & Stambaugh & Ford, 2015

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One frame of looking at the reactions of teachers to Black gifted students is the lens of anti-blackness. Blaisdell (2020) explains that this epistemology positions teachers in our racialized system to naturally frame blackness as a negative. Thus, when this blackness is expressed as a positive, or Black joy (such as the examples in Table 4, chatting with a classmate, telling a joke, dancing or singing) a negative reaction is triggered. This then categorizes those positive expressions as negative, inferior, sometimes even dangerous or criminal. This case has a strong need for background knowledge in gifted education, but there is also a need for a deep understanding of cultural proficiency and equity work, discussed in more detail in the following section.

In this case study and throughout this section on background knowledge, the authors have described one small cross-section of barriers to students: internal resistance on the part of teachers as gatekeepers. This resistance is partly through knowledge and training, and partly through a lack of cultural knowledge and proficiency. The authors acknowledge that there is a breadth and depth of additional barriers that also exist to the identification of gifted students of colors. Such barriers include the testing itself (touched on briefly in the identification section) and the use of national norms over local norms, external resistance from district administration, and systemic oppression and the racialized system of inequity that exists in schools, just to name a few. For the sake of simplicity, and page limitations, this case study and the discussion questions and activities that follow, focus primarily on the internal resistance of gatekeepers as well as the broader questions of cultural proficiency and equity in the school.

Classroom Activities and Discussion Questions

This case aligns with National Educational Leadership Preparation (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2018) Standards:

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Standard 2, Component 2: Program completers understand and demonstrate the capacity to evaluate, communicate about, and advocate for ethical and legal decisions (p.13)

Standard 3, Component 3: Program completers understand and demonstrate the capacity to evaluate, cultivate, and advocate for equitable, inclusive and culturally responsive instruction and behavior support practices (p.16)

The following reflective questions and activities approach the case from either a gifted, an equity standpoint, or both simultaneously. Additionally, the questions and activities may take on the perspectives of the administration, either the principal or assistant principal, or the teacher-leader and advocate: the gifted teacher.

Reflective Questions (Discussion or Written):

- Consider OES' approach to diversity- what level is this on the cultural proficiency continuum (refer to Teaching Notes and Background)?
 - How does this position on the continuum affect the staff's stance on disproportionality in the gifted program?
 - How can the leadership work on moving towards positive change on the continuum?
 - Now that the AP has joined the Diversity Committee, what role will he have on the steering the committee, since the committee feels this level is acceptable?
 - What role should Rebecca play in that process?
- What responsibility does Brenda have to ensure equitable representation in her gifted program? *You may need to look into how gifted programs operate in local schools- are they the purview of the school or the district?*

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- Where does the responsibility of gifted representation lay, at the district level?
School level?
- What role does Brenda play in facilitating/supporting Rebecca in her goals?
- Given what you have read about gifted manifestations across cultures (Teaching Notes and Backgrounds), what response would you have to the teachers in the SIT meeting, regarding their responses to the gifted behaviors? What would you have done or said during the meeting?
- What's next?
 - Given that the meeting was not successful from Rebecca's perspective, what is her next step?
 - What is next for Ted, after he is caught up on the SIT meeting?
 - What are Brenda's next steps? Consider next steps in terms of following up with Rebecca and in terms of the issues that Rebecca brought to the table.
- Systemic Change: The issues that Rebecca brought to the table both are based in the root of systemic bias and oppression. They do not have a single easy fix. While there may be "band-aid" solutions that will provide temporary relief, the essential solution is systemic change. Discuss the systemic changes needed at both the school and district levels regarding equity, anti-racism, and knowledge of learner needs.

Reflective Activities:

- Journal Entry: Explore Brenda's lack of support for Rebecca. Why didn't she vocalize support at the SIT? Consider, in particular, her role as a Black leader, of a predominantly White staff, in her second year. Might she feel reluctant to push for issues of equity? Why? Could there be other reasons for her reluctance? Why? Consider also the purview

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of gifted education- is it the district or the school? You can take the perspective of Brenda, Ted, or Rebecca (e.g. questioning the support or reflecting on your reason for your lack of support. The authors caution against putting yourself into the role of a Black female if you do not have that lived experience.)

- Role Plays
 - A conversation between Rebecca and Brenda after the SIT meeting. What do you think would be the focus for each of them for the conversation?
 - A conversation between Rebecca and Ted after the SIT Meeting. How would Rebecca describe the events of the meeting? What advice might he provide her going forward? Consider Ted's professional role in relation to both parties, and his responsibilities to the school as you role play his response.
 - A conversation between Brenda and Ted. What might Ted's next steps be in the situation after speaking with Rebecca? He spoke with Rebecca and supported his principal, and tried to support Rebecca, but will he speak truth to power, 1:1?
- Given the methods of identification in Virginia (or your state), create a proposed identification plan that will more equitably identify students.
- Dig into your school data. What is the representation of gifted students in your school or district? If you do not have a gifted program (or are in high school), you can use AP or Honors data. You can use direct percentages, but if you enjoy statistics, you can use a formula called risk ratio. After looking at your data, what would your next steps be as an administrator?

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