

The Role of the School Committee

Finding high potential learners in the primary school takes a team approach. All teachers need to be talent scouts, gathering evidence and searching for talent. A school committee consisting of an administrator, primary teachers, gifted education teacher, guidance counselor, and special area teachers is formed. This committee reviews the evidence and determines if a primary student is a high potential learner. The committee must consider environmental, cultural, and disabling conditions that may mask a child's high potential. The goal is to include the top quartile (25%) of the primary school population in the PTP.

Serving Students in the Primary Talent Pool

Multiple service delivery options must be provided to meet the needs of primary students with high potential. Cluster grouping high potential students into a mixed-ability classroom with a teacher who has received training in how to teach advanced learners is an effective service. Trained teachers use differentiation methods that vary the content, pace, process, and product for students. Acceleration by subject or grade is appropriate for some advanced PTP students. Primary students may move to a higher grade level for a specific subject or subjects. Leadership development activities may be provided by the guidance counselor. The art and music teachers may provide pull-out services to cluster groups of students talented in these areas. The key is for services to be matched to students' needs, interests, and levels of readiness.



Summary

It is imperative that proactive effort be put toward reducing Excellence Gaps through identifying and serving primary students with high ability, especially students from underrepresented groups. This strategy will enable many more students to take challenging and rigorous coursework at higher grade levels, resulting in smaller gaps in AP test scores, college attendance, and college completion.

RESOURCES

Videos (www.wku.edu/gifted/rap/videos.php)

Give Excellence a Chance

Who is Missing? Finding High Potential Students From Underserved Groups

Shrinking Excellence Gaps: Research-Supported Interventions

Response Lessons (www.wku.edu/gifted/rap/responselessons.php)

704 KAR 3:285. Programs for Gifted and Talented
Kentucky's Regulation on Gifted and Talented Education
(www.lrc.gov/kar/704/003/285.pdf)

FINDING AND SERVING PRIMARY STUDENTS WITH HIGH POTENTIAL

The Primary Talent Pool as a Strategy to Reduce Excellence Gaps



Meet Abshir

Seven-year-old Abshir moved to Louisville from Somalia four months ago. In Somalia, Abshir worked on the street as a shoe shiner to help his mother and four siblings; he did not go to school. He lived in a small hut made of boxes and sticks.

Now Abshir is in a second grade classroom at King Elementary School. Although Abshir was initially very quiet and kept to himself, his teacher, Ms. Smith, was pleased to see him begin to interact with the other students as his English vocabulary rapidly increased. Ms. Smith noticed that he was very interested in airplanes and stood in awe every time a plane flew over the playground. She checked several books about airplanes out of the school library, and Abshir poured over these books and drew pictures of airplanes that were so developed that she shared them with the school art teacher.

King Elementary screens all children in K-3 using response lessons. While reading *Math Curse* by Jon Scieszka and Lane Smith to the second graders, his teacher was amazed that Abshir was the only student who had the correct answer to this question: "If there are 24 students in a class, how many fingers would there be?" Abshir worked intently at a math center, Inch by



Inch. Ms. Smith read the Shel Silverstein poem "One-Inch-Tall," and the center task was to draw or write 10 ways your life would be different if you were one inch tall. Abshir drew fourteen detailed pictures of his one-inch-tall life, including living in a shoe and sleeping in a little matchbox.

Although Abshir is not scoring well on the *Measures of Academic Progress* (MAP) reading and math assessments, Ms. Smith gave him a rating of 4 (which indicated he consistently showed certain gifted behaviors) in 3 out of 4 sections of the *Gifted Behaviors Rating Scale* (GBRS). She had observed his persistent, intense focus on topics; readily adapting to his new culture; high-level fluency of thought; and quick language acquisition. In fact, he was already acting as an interpreter for his mother.

Based on Ms. Smith's anecdotal notes and Abshir's work samples, the school Gifted and Talented Committee decided Abshir is a high potential learner and should be in the Primary Talent Pool (PTP). He will receive daily mathematics instruction with a cluster of four other students who have advanced math abilities and will join a cluster group of talented art students who meet monthly with the art teacher. He has taken on the role of chief illustrator for his classroom job.

The PTP offers the ideal strategy for developing potential talent among young learners like Abshir. When children are engaged in ongoing opportunities to learn at advanced levels, they are on the pathway to becoming outstanding students. Please know that the PTP is already in place and ready to be enhanced in order to address the Excellence Gap.



The Concern about Excellence Gaps

Excellence Gaps (i.e., differences in scores at the advanced level among subgroups of students) continue to grow in schools and districts across our Commonwealth and nation. In Kentucky, we do not have large percentages of students scoring at advanced levels in the first place, but of those who do, most are white and middle to upper class. High potential exists in students from poverty as well as from diverse cultural, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds; high potential crosses all demographics.

Start Early – The Primary Talent Pool

In order to close Excellence Gaps, plans to find children with high potential should start early when children first enter school. The PTP is designed to find children with advanced potential from all demographic groups (like Abshir) and provide an educational setting to nurture their potential and prepare them for challenging coursework in upper grades.

Selecting Students for the Primary Talent Pool

In order to find potential, all children must be screened using a multi-dimensional approach. Since potential cannot be determined using any one traditional method, a minimum of three informal measures are used to provide evidence that a student should participate in the PTP. Examples of informal measures are classroom observations, behavior checklists, work samples, conversations, anecdotal notes, and progress reports. Available formal test data such as MAP or STAR may also be used to provide information but not to exclude a child.

Curriculum as the Identifier of Talent – Response Lessons

Response lessons were developed for the Young Scholars Program in the Fairfax County, Virginia Public Schools. Response lessons use rich children's literature to provide opportunities for higher level thinking and are designed to draw out gifted behaviors. The teacher reads a story to the students and leads a discussion with higher order questions. Students are asked to provide a response through writing, drawing, designing, or building. The teacher listens, observes, and takes notes. The *Gifted Behaviors Rating Scale* with culturally responsive indicators is used to analyze student responses. Using local norms, students are compared to other children of similar demographics to see if their responses are exceptional for their background.