

## Pitfalls to Guard Against

First, users of local norms must recognize that being gifted or advanced within a local comparison may not mean the student is prepared for the rigor of advanced classes. However, providing scaffolding and supports, such as tutoring and after-school and summer programs, make it possible for disadvantaged students to be successful with challenging coursework by giving them the tools they need to reach their potential.

Second, some community members may be concerned that using local norms may harm those who would be identified using national norms. Address this issue by identifying all students who meet the national norms as well as the underrepresented students who meet group-specific norms. This method identifies all the top performing students, regardless of whether or not they belong to a local group.



## Summary

Increasing the identification of students from all racial, cultural, and income groups for advanced educational opportunities is a nationwide goal of gifted education. Utilizing local norms holds promise for finding more proportional numbers of high potential students than have previously been recognized. More students from diverse backgrounds will therefore have their needs met and will be able to develop and use their talents to benefit their communities and our world.

### RESOURCES

- Lohman, D. F. (2006). *Identifying academically talented minority students* (Research Monograph RM05216). Storrs, CT: The National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented, University of Connecticut.
- Peters, S. J., & Gentry M. (2012). Group-specific norms and teacher-rating scales: Implications for underrepresentation. *Journal of Advanced Academics*, 23, 125-144.
- Plucker, J. A., & Peters, S. J. (2016). *Excellence gaps in education: Expanding opportunities for talented youth*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.
- Videos ([www.wku.edu/gifted/rap/videos.php](http://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*
- 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](http://www.lrc.gov/kar/704/003/285.pdf))

# USING LOCAL NORMS

## A Strategy to Reduce Excellence Gaps



***What are Excellence Gaps?***

***What are local norms?***

***Why are local norms important for reducing Excellence Gaps?***

***How can school systems use local norms?***

"In some high poverty schools, using national norms may result in the identification of few or no high ability students, yet talent exists in every zip code. Using local norms helps find these students and sends the implicit message that every school in every neighborhood has talented children."

Plucker, J. A., & Peters, S. J. (2016)



### What are Excellence Gaps?

Excellence gaps are differences in testing scores at the advanced level among subgroups of students. Many communities have populations of students who severely underperform relative to other demographic groups and fail to reveal their potential. Recent studies provide evidence that the gaps are due, at least in part, to debilitating contextual factors, such as poverty, negative peer pressure, bias, and discrimination.

### What are local norms?

Kentucky's Gifted Regulation 704KAR3:285 states that either *national* or *local norms* must be used by a district to identify a student for gifted services.

*National norms* compare a student's performance to peers from the same age or grade from across the United States. *Local norms* compare a student's performance to grade level peers in the same district or school. The more specific the norm group used for comparison, the better. The use of narrowly defined comparison groups, such as race/ethnicity or socioeconomic status, reveals which students, given similar backgrounds and circumstances, are achieving or have the potential to achieve at advanced levels.

Dr. Marcia Gentry, Professor of Educational Studies at Purdue University, defines local norms as a set of scores that compares peers using a local, relevant data sample rather than from national data that may or may not be relative to the local setting.

Student Data	Total School Population in Grades 4-6	Percentage of School Population	Gifted/Talented Numbers Using National Norms	Gifted/Talented Numbers Using Local Norms	Percent of Gifted/Talented Population Using National Norms	Percent of Gifted/Talented Population Using Local Norms
Numbers of Students in Grades 4-6	423	100%	23	35	5%	8%
African American Students	111	26%	4	8	17%	22%
Hispanic Students	90	21%	3	7	13%	20%
Asian Students	41	10%	2	3	9%	9%
Caucasian Students	152	36%	14	17	61%	49%
English Language Learners	131	31%	2	8	9%	22%
Students Eligible for Free/ Reduced Lunch	379	90%	7	19	30%	54%
Students with an IEP	63	15%	0	2	0%	6%

### Why are local norms important for reducing Excellence Gaps?

The chart above compares numbers and percentages of students identified as gifted/talented using both national and local norms. Note how the percentage of gifted/talented students in each comparison group moves closer to matching the total school percentage for that group when local norms are used instead of national norms.

### How to Find Local Norms

Standardized testing scores normally compare students' performances with national norms ranging from the 0-99th percentile. However, it is possible to go beyond these initial data, using three stages.

**STAGE ONE:** Ask test publishers for *district norms*, which gather data for all students in a given district so that students can be compared to others in their district on any given assessment measure.

**STAGE TWO:** Look at *school norms*. Because individual schools within a district are often drawn from disparate communities, comparing student scores across the entire district could result in comparing students of very different backgrounds. In such cases, using school norms gives a clearer picture of students' potentials.



**STAGE THREE:** If a school itself is very diverse, use *local group norms*. For example, if 30% of a school's students are Hispanic, compare the scores within that group rather than with the school as a whole.

Using local group norms allows a better picture of students' advanced abilities to emerge. They create a more representative proportional sample for identifying students for gifted services, thereby helping to close the Excellence Gaps.