Defining the Undefinable:
What Does It Mean to be Gifted?

Kimberely Fletcher Nettleton
Morehead State University, USA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Gifted students come from every socio-economic level and from every background. Identification of gifted students varies widely from school to school, state to state, nation to nation. In the USA, gifted students are identified in the following areas: visual and performing arts, leadership, talent in a specific academic discipline, creativity, and overall high intellect (U.S. Department of Education, 1993). Twice-exceptional students are gifted students with a learning disability or other special need. Defining characteristics, both intellectual and emotional, are integrated into a cohesive picture of a gifted student. Identification of gifted students is the first step towards providing educational services.

SETTING THE STAGE

Who Are the Gifted?

There are many definitions of gifted students. The most often used definition of gifted and talented students is that of the federal definition of giftedness as that of students who have

. . . 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 not ordinarily provided by the schools. (U.S. Department of Education, 1993, p. 26)

The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) estimates that there are over three million children in the US who are gifted. This translates into approximately 6% of a school's population (2014). This is probably a low estimate, as many students are never recognized. Each state has created its own criteria to determine how gifted students will be identified. The lack of uniform identification means that the types of services and identification depends largely on where a student lives (NAGC & Council of State Directors of Programs for the Gifted, 2011).

Identification is made difficult because gifted children are unique. In addition to the gifted population having a wide range of IQ scores, an IQ score cannot measure all areas of giftedness. Renzulli (1982) separates giftedness into two areas: schoolhouse giftedness and creative/productive giftedness. Schoolhouse giftedness is the type most easily adapted to the educational system because students are able to demonstrate their giftedness in the classroom and on tests. These students are fairly easy to identify, as high, standardized test scores are usually used for identification (Van Tassel-Baska, 2008).

Creative/productive giftedness requires a different means of identification. A student with creative giftedness develops new and original ideas (Renzulli,1982). These ideas do not have to be original in the sense that they are totally unique. Ideas only need to be original to the child. For example, in a conversation, a sixth grader explained his theory of black holes, the cosmos, and how the universe worked. Although he did not have the background, mathematical skills, and vocabulary to articulate his theory in an elegant manner, his explanation paralleled Hawking's explanation of the universe. For this child, this was original, creative thought. It does not matter that someone else already thought of it. The creative/productive gifted child is rarely identified through a cognitive ability test or worksheets in the classroom. Thus, it is difficult for many teachers to identify gifted students in this area, but it is crucial that these children are identified (Davis, 2003).

Visual and Performing Arts

Early identification of students gifted in performing or visual arts rarely happens in the classroom. Students gifted in visual and performing arts may be identified by their teachers after their talent has matured, but classroom teachers rarely have

14 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/chapter/defining-the-undefinable/118314

Related Content

Visualization Techniques for Confidence Based Data
Andrew Hamilton-Wrightand Daniel W. Stashuk (2009). *Encyclopedia of Data Warehousing and Mining, Second Edition (pp. 2068-2073).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/visualization-techniques-confidence-based-data/11104

Discovering Knowledge from XML Documents
Richi Nayak (2009). *Encyclopedia of Data Warehousing and Mining, Second Edition (pp. 663-668).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/discovering-knowledge-xml-documents/10891

Bibliomining for Library Decision-Making
Scott Nicholson (2009). *Encyclopedia of Data Warehousing and Mining, Second Edition (pp. 153-159).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/bibliomining-library-decision-making/10813

Fostering Participatory Literacies in English Language Arts Instruction Using Student-Authored Podcasts
Molly Buckley-Marudasand Charles Ellenbogen (2020). *Participatory Literacy Practices for P-12 Classrooms in the Digital Age (pp. 20-39).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/fostering-participatory-literacies-in-english-language-arts-instruction-using-student-authored-podcasts/237411

Dynamical Feature Extraction from Brain Activity Time Series
Chang-Chia Liu, W. Art Chaovalitwongse, Panos M. Pardalosand Basim M. Uthman (2009). *Encyclopedia of Data Warehousing and Mining, Second Edition (pp. 729-735).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/dynamical-feature-extraction-brain-activity/10901