

“Factors That Impact Gifted CLD Learners’ Responses to Curriculum and Instruction”

by Tamra Stambaugh and Kimberley L. Chandler

This is an excerpt of a chapter from *Practical Solutions for Underserved Gifted Students: Effective Curriculum for Underserved Populations, A CEC-TAG Educational Resource*, used with permission from Prufrock Press, Inc.

Note: In this book, culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) learners are defined as any learners who may be underserved in a gifted program. Although the term CLD learners may have different meanings in different contexts, it is applied in this book as an all-encompassing term that includes any student whose culture and/or language is different from that of the majority culture in his or her school. Culture describes the values and practices of a given society or group, the culture of poverty, or the culture of an ethnic group in the United States. CLD learners comprise a large group of students who, although very different, also share some common characteristics. However, they differ in these characteristics just as much as they are alike. Additionally, CLD populations may demonstrate these characteristics in different ways from the dominant culture, sometimes in such a way that these characteristics may be perceived as negative. Some common characteristics include: high verbal ability in the native language, strong storytelling ability in the native language, strong critical thinking skills in the primary language, long attention span and ability to concentrate intensely, humor displayed through a unique use of language, and rich-ness of imagery in ideas (New Mexico State Department of Education, 1994).

Although curriculum is important, it is not the end in itself. Other factors also contribute to the success of CLD students. These factors are generally categorized as being external or internal. External factors focus on access: access to individuals or mentors within a discipline and access to special programs or activities that can enhance learning. Internal factors include the psychosocial aspects such as self-concept, efficacy, and motivation. Each are discussed below in more detail.

EXTERNAL FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO CLD STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

ACCESS TO SPECIAL PROGRAMS AND SERVICES BEYOND THE SCHOOL DAY

The use of leisure time is a defining factor in student achievement and career paths during the lifespan (Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde, & Whalen, 1993). Students who talk with adults, read during their spare time, and focus their attention toward educational endeavors and enrichment instead of watching television or working a part-time job are more likely to achieve at high levels during and beyond their school career. Afterschool programs, in particular, are an effective and efficient way for schools to provide enriched and accelerated services to students from disadvantaged groups. Extending the school day for at-risk populations helps these students focus on organizational skills, language building, homework skills, and socialization. Schools benefit by enjoying higher achievement scores; parents can enjoy the benefit of school-based, structured childcare, if needed; and students gain important educational skills. Advancement Via Individual Achievement (AVID) is one example of a structured afterschool program that has shown promising results for at-risk students. Although AVID was not designed for high-ability students, effects for all ability levels involved in the program are reported as positive. Specifically, students who participate in AVID show higher overall achievement than their counterparts and are more likely to enroll in advanced courses in high school and apply to college when compared to the national averages (Gira, 2007).

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From the President

Welcome back to a new school year! With the extremely hot temperatures most of us have been enduring, it doesn't quite seem like fall is arriving shortly! I hope you have found many ways to stay cool and renew you mind, body, and spirit before the start of another exciting school year.

I would like to highlight the new book series that TAG is publishing through Prufrock Press (www.Prufrock.com). The first book, *Response to Intervention for Gifted Students*, was available in November 2010, and two new titles are scheduled for Fall 2011: *Curriculum for Underserved Students* (Dr. Kimberley Chandler and Dr. Tamra Stambaugh) and *Effective Program Practices for Students from Underserved Populations* (Dr. Cheryll Adams and Dr. Cecelia Boswell). All three books are must-haves for your professional library and will provide practical information on each topic.

Our fall board meeting and conference, *Surviving and Thriving with Gifted Children at Home and at School*, will be held in Waco, TX, September 9 and 10, 2011. Susan Johnsen and her committee are finalizing the plans for this exciting event! With three keynotes and thirteen guest speakers there will be plenty of new information to share and lively conversations to be had.

It is not too early to plan to attend the CEC 2012 Convention & Expo to be held April 11-14 in Denver, Colorado. Please mark your calendars and tell your supervisors how important it is for you to attend! Registration opens October 17, 2011. Your TAG Program Chair, Julia Roberts, is busy working to accept as many proposals as possible. We should have a great selection, so you don't want to miss this convention! We will provide more information in the next newsletter.

TAG is a vibrant organization dedicated to supporting the needs of diverse students with gifts and talents from all populations. Please help us get the word out to your colleagues. Encourage them to join TAG and take advantage of the benefits of TAG membership: position papers, research reports, standards, and the latest legislative issues from our website; discounted registration for the CEC convention; the *Journal for the Education of the Gifted (JEG)* our premier journal; our electronic newsletter, *The Update*. All of these benefits keep you informed of the latest research and practice in the field of gifted education.

If you would like to become more involved in any of TAG's activities, e-mail any one of the TAG Board members and visit our website (<http://www.cectag.org>) to keep up to date with our activities.

Cheryll Adams, President
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Factors That Impact Gifted CLD Learners' Responses to Curriculum and Instruction, continued

Talent search models are another effective service provided beyond the school day. Talent searches target high-ability learners and encourage participation in accelerated or enriched opportunities on weekends or during the summer. Out-of-level assessments (e.g., administering the SAT or ACT to seventh graders) are used to identify talented students. However, some programs offer alternative means for CLD students to be identified if they do not have access to out-of-level assessments (e.g., Northwestern Center for Talented Development, Vanderbilt Programs for Talented Youth). Unlike afterschool programs that may be more easily accessible, participation in talent search programs relies upon student application, family provision of transportation, and financial obligations, although need-based scholarships are typically available. Thus, fewer gifted CLD students will or are able to take advantage of such programs. Like general school-based gifted programs, CLD students are underrepresented in summer talent search programs (Olszewski-Kubilius & Lee, 2004). If CLD students do participate in a summer or Saturday accelerated program, they seldom return for a second summer, even if they are quite successful in the program (Worrell, Szarko, & Gabelko, 2001). Woods (2006) studied variables that impact retention in summer enrichment programs, especially for African American and Hispanic populations, and found that students were more likely to return each year if they began attending the program earlier in their school career and possessed advanced reasoning and language skills. Students whose mothers were the head of household were more likely to drop out of such programs.

When gifted CLD students maintain involvement in talent search opportunities, the results are quite positive. These students are more likely to apply to more selective universities (Olszewski-Kubilius, 2006; Sosniak & Gabelko, 2008), develop stronger peer and content mentor relationships (Johnsen, Feuerbacher, & Witte, 2007), and enroll in advanced math and science courses in high school—especially if provided early exposure and ongoing support (Olszewski-Kubilius, 2006).

Targeted counseling also makes a difference in accelerated summer programs. Brewer (2005) studied first-generation CLD college students who attended a summer talent search program. These students were provided educational and career counseling as part of their experience. As a result, they were more likely to enroll in postsecondary opportunities than their nonparticipating counterparts. This evidence suggests that targeted counseling and mentoring is necessary for retention and the future learning trajectory of CLD students.

ACCESS TO KEY INDIVIDUALS

Influential individuals such as teachers, content experts, counselors, clergy, or other key persons can significantly impact the lives of CLD learners (Stambaugh, 2007b). Each of these individuals could be considered a mentor for these students. Teachers, in particular, are the gate-keepers of identification and referral to gifted programs. They also have control over the culture of the classroom and to what extent diverse ideas and opinions are welcomed or shunned. Of course, the quality of instruction also rests with educators. More formal mentors from the community can direct gifted students to career opportunities, model appropriate social roles and responsibilities, and open doors to future opportunities that may not be available otherwise (Hébert, 2002). Mentoring relationships that work best are often serendipitous and not assigned as part of a course placement or forced option.

Families are partners in education and play a significant role in developing the intrapersonal skills of gifted CLD learners. Talent development research suggests that family support directly influences to what extent a raw talent is developed and recognized (Bloom, 1985; Csikszentmihalyi et al., 1993). Family support of educational endeavors will go a long way in optimizing learning experiences and supporting talent (VanTassel-Baska, 1989).

Counselors, both in and out of school, are extremely influential in teaching coping strategies as well as enhancing career opportunities for CLD students. Counselors in schools with high numbers of disadvantaged students may be less equipped to guide college choice or encourage the application to premier universities (Wyner, Bridgeland, & DiIulio, 2007). In many high-poverty schools, counselors are the first to be given added responsibilities or to be released if there are budget cuts, thus minimizing the support needed to help CLD students achieve. Programs such as those sponsored by the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation or the Schuler Family Foundation provide mentoring and career counseling for high-ability CLD students to achieve and have enjoyed high rates of students' application, acceptance, and graduation from major universities as a result.

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Curriculum, instruction, and student internal and external support systems are important to the overall success of the CLD gifted learner and his or her future achievements. How, then, do educators work to develop a curricular program to best meet the intrapersonal, academic, and cultural needs of CLD learners?

INTERNAL FACTORS THAT IMPACT STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Intrapersonal factors and external supports cannot be overlooked, as these also play an important role in the lives of gifted CLD students and contribute to the extent to which they achieve. Borland, Schnur, and Wright (2000) studied five gifted minority students from Harlem and recorded higher student academic achievement when they were identified early and given appropriate academic opportunities. Even though early identification was key, the researchers noted that intrapersonal skills and family support structures also played important roles in student career paths and life choices. Worrell and colleagues (2001) conducted a 9 year national database study and concurred that psychosocial variables were more likely to contribute to CLD learners' participation in ongoing talent development than their grade point average or achievement scores.

Although limited studies have been conducted to determine the specific effects of precollegiate programming on psychosocial and intrapersonal skills of gifted CLD learners (Stambaugh, 2007b), self-concept and efficacy seem to be two important factors that contribute to their overall success. In a study of social support and self-concept of students in a summer gifted program, VanTassel-Baska, Olszewski-Kubilius, and Kulieke (1994) noted minimal differences between ethnic and gender groups, but significant differences between high and low socioeconomic students. Disadvantaged students had a lower academic and social efficacy concept than their wealthier peers (VanTassel-Baska et al., 1994). Other contributing factors included achievement motivation and coping mechanisms of these students (VanTassel-Baska, 1989). Students who are motivated and have the tools to achieve and cope with the adversities of life are more likely to perform better than those of similar backgrounds without the skills. Although there is extensive literature in the psychology field focused on the development of efficacy, motivation, and positive self-concept, there is little research specific to the development of these skills in gifted CLD learners. More research on internal and external factors that impact learning and their relationship to curriculum development is needed.

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Mary Ruth Coleman and Sneha Shah-Coltrane, Authors
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U-STAR~PLUS is centered on the belief that the ability to recognize students' strengths is enhanced when there is an environment that nurtures students intellectually and emotionally and when students are observed systematically. Recognizing a child's strengths, however, is only the first step. Once a child's strengths are recognized, teachers can respond to these strengths by providing advanced learning opportunities tailored to the student's needs. By looking for the strengths in children, our view of them is reframed, thus moving our understanding of them from "at-risk" to "at-potential." If students are viewed as "at potential" versus "at risk", their school experiences can be designed in positive ways by responding to their strengths with increasing levels of challenge. The essence of U-STAR~PLUS is to nurture, recognize, and respond to students, optimizing their learning and helping them thrive in the classroom.

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In this issue and the next two issues, you will be introduced to the CEC-TAG Board of Directors. We begin with the president, past president, vice president, secretary and treasurer.

President



Cheryll Adams

Dr. Adams is the Director of the Center for Gifted Studies and Talent Development at Ball State University. She teaches courses for the licensure in gifted education. She has served on the Board of Directors of the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC), is president of The Association for the Gifted Board (TAG) of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), past president and treasurer of the Indiana Association for the Gifted, past secretary of the American Educational Research Association Special Interest Group Research on Giftedness, Creativity, and Talent and past chair of the Research and Evaluation Network of NAGC. Her research interests are in the identification of gifted students, programming, and curriculum. She received the Early Leader Award from NAGC, the Leadership Award and Outstanding Service Awards from IAG, and the Outstanding Administrative Service Award from Ball State. She has published numerous books, book chapters, and journal articles and is a frequent presenter at state, national, and international conferences.

Past President



Susan K. Johnsen

Dr. Johnsen is a professor in the Department of Educational Psychology at Baylor University. She directs the Ph.D. program and programs related to gifted and talented education. She has written more than 150 articles, monographs, technical reports, and books related to gifted education. She is a frequent presenter at international, national, and state conferences. She is editor of *Gifted Child Today* and serves on the boards of *Gifted Child Quarterly*, *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, and *Roeper Review*. She is the editor of *Identifying Gifted Students: A Practical Guide*, coauthor of the *Independent Study Program*, and coauthor of three tests used in identifying gifted students: Test of Mathematical Abilities for Gifted Students (TOMAGS), Test of Nonverbal Intelligence (TONI-4), and Screening Assessment for Gifted Elementary and Middle School Students (SAGES-2). She is president of The Association for the Gifted, Council for Exceptional Children and past president of the Texas Association for the Gifted and Talented.

Vice President



Julia L. Roberts

Dr. Roberts is the Mahurin Professor of Gifted Studies at Western Kentucky University. She is the Executive Director of The Center for Gifted Studies and the Carol Martin Gatton Academy of Mathematics and Science in Kentucky. Julia is a member of the Executive Committee of the World Council for Gifted and Talented Children and a board member of The Association for the Gifted and the Kentucky Association for Gifted Education. Julia received the first David W. Belin NAGC Award for Advocacy. She is co-author of *Strategies for Differentiating Instruction: Best Practices for the Classroom* and *Assessing Differentiated Student Products: A Protocol for Development and Evaluation, Teacher's Survival Guide: Gifted Education*. Julia directs summer and Saturday programs for children and young people who are gifted and talented.

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Elaine K. Dumas

Ms. Dumas is a retired high school librarian and social studies teacher. She holds a masters degree in library science from the Peabody College at Vanderbilt University. She was a founder of the Arkansans for Gifted and Talented Education (AGATE) and a member of the Advisory Council for the Education of Gifted and Talented Children and Youth that was instrumental in establishing the first Governor's School. She has helped to draft legislation to establish state programs for gifted children.

Secretary



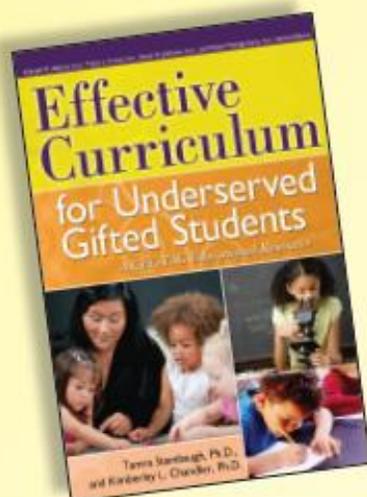
Jennifer L. Jolly

Jennifer L. Jolly received her Ph.D. in educational psychology with a concentrate in gifted education from Baylor University. Currently she is an assistant professor in elementary and gifted education at Louisiana State University. Her research interests include the history of gifted education and parents of gifted children. She also serves as editor of NAGC's Parenting for High Potential.

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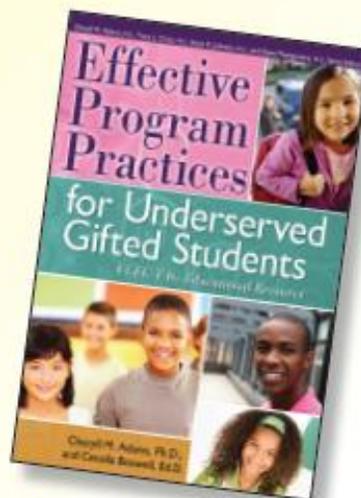


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