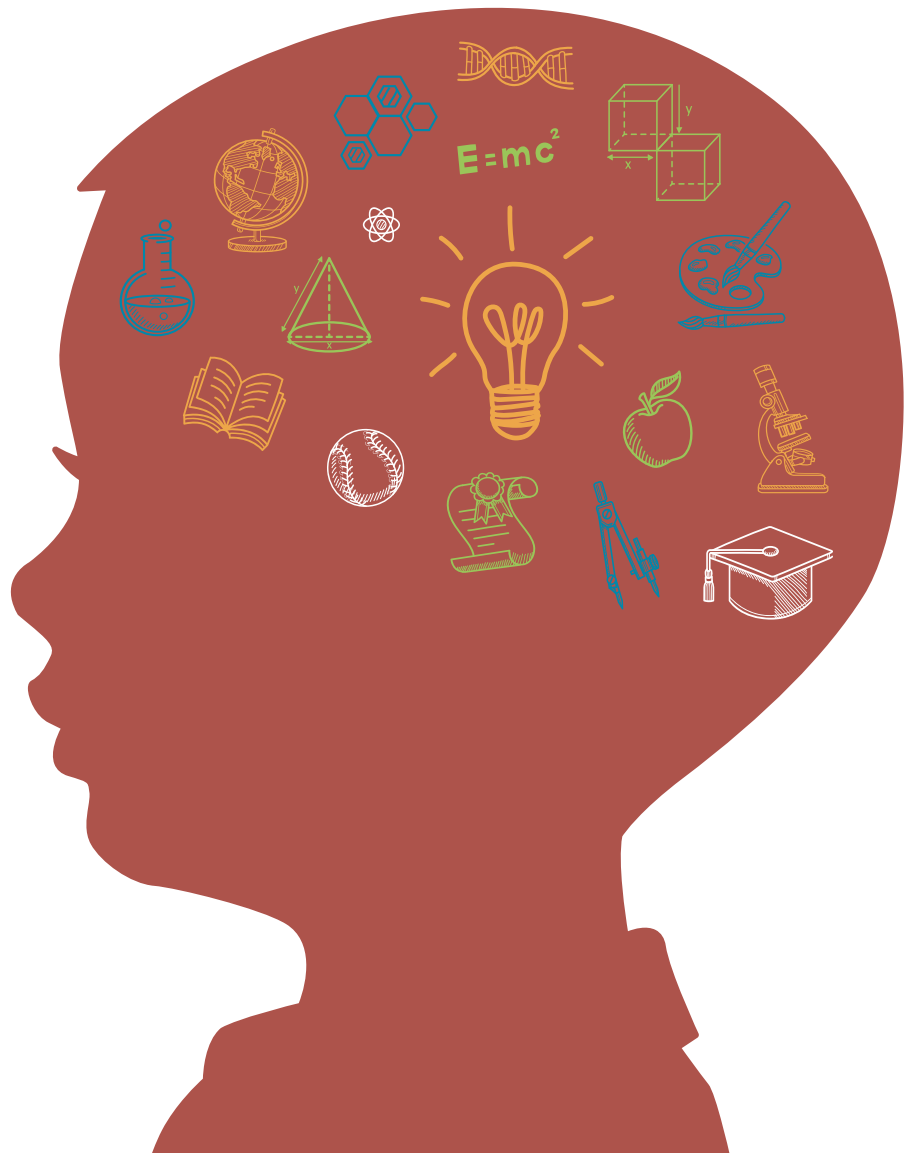


INSTITUTE FOR
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ADVANCEMENT

AMERICANS AGREE: PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARDS GIFTED EDUCATION

MARCH 2019



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MARCH 2019

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INTRODUCTION

The general objects...are to provide education adapted to the years, the capacity, and the condition of everyone, and directed to their freedom and happiness.

—Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*

Jefferson envisioned instruction that was adapted to fit the age, ability, and circumstances of those enrolled, including appropriately advanced instruction for the nation's most able students. This vision of a free and public education, fitted to the needs of individual students, remains an elusive goal.

Since the turn of the 20th century, educators and policymakers have made intermittent progress on behalf of gifted students, yet little effective change has taken hold across the country. According to the Davidson Institute for Talent Development, only 38 states mandate special services for gifted youth, and only four of the states with mandates have fully funded programs. Another 24 of the 38 states with mandates have partially financed gifted programs, and the remaining nine states mandate services but provide no funding. Of the 13 states with no mandate for gifted education, five provide partial money for programs; the other nine provide no funding for gifted students at all ("Support for Gifted Programs," n.d.).

The Institute for Educational Advancement (IEA) approached The Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation with a proposal to fund a symposium as the first phase of a broader public policy initiative to advance programs and services for gifted youth. In November 2015, IEA formed a policy consortium of eleven leaders with expertise in business, technology, education, politics, and innovation to attend this inaugural symposium to try and understand why our educational system continues to fall short for gifted children and what can be done to make effective change.

Two issues emerged during the conversation. The first was that changing the status quo would require a wide array of advocates beyond the field of gifted education. Parents of gifted children and professionals in the field do what they can to

promote programs at the local, state, and national level; however, they comprise a small portion of the American public, far too small to institute and *sustain* lasting policy change. A majority of the American people must be willing to advocate for gifted students to create lasting impact within funding and district policies. Consequently, citizens must understand why it is necessary to invest in the nation's most advanced learners.

Discussion about which groups were already sympathetic to gifted education, and whose sympathies could be cultivated, led to the second consideration: although there are many assumptions in the field about how the American public feels about gifted education, there is little evidence to support those assumptions. It became evident that gathering evidence about American attitudes towards gifted education was the necessary precursor to all other action. The group discussed several areas which required clarification, including: (1) Does the public understand the term "gifted" and its many alternatives? (2) Does the public really believe so-called "myths" about gifted students? (3) What is the level of public concern about gifted education, both singly and relative to other issues in education? (4) Does public support exist for commonly recommended program provisions for gifted students? (5) What is the public response to messages frequently used to advocate for gifted students? (6) Is there public support for funding for gifted education?

With additional support from The Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation, IEA engaged two nationally recognized polling firms, the Benenson Strategy Group and The Winston Group, to gather information regarding public opinion. The firms were selected to ensure the results were bipartisan and to minimize potential bias within gifted education. This report presents findings from the poll.

POLL METHODS AND DATA

IEA engaged The Benenson Strategy Group and The Winston Group to design and conduct the national opinion poll. The Benenson Strategy Group provided guidelines for sample composition, including: (1) a base sample of no fewer than 1,000 randomly selected American citizens, to ensure generalizable results (Gelman, 2004), (2) adequate representation of “Education Influencers,” who are known to impact education policy at the local or national levels, specifically parents of school-aged children and Opinion Elites¹, and (3) oversamples of Black and Hispanic respondents, to ensure poll results represented the perspective of groups traditionally underrepresented in gifted programs.² The recommended minimum sample size for each of these target groups was 150 respondents.

Poll respondents were members of online panel groups associated with companies that collaborate with The Benenson Strategy Group on a regular basis. Individuals who are members of online panel groups “opt-in” to receive invitations to participate in polls through the panel company. The panel company ensures the honesty of panel members and limits the number of polls each panel member completes. Members of panel groups are not informed about poll topics before agreeing to participate, so IEA-P respondents did not know in advance that they would be completing a poll about education issues.

The Benenson Strategy Group screened all potential members of the respondent group. In the process they excluded 493 individuals because they did not meet the screening criteria. Exclusions usually occurred because an individual did not meet the requirements to be part of an oversample. Another

¹ “Opinion Elite” is the term used in public polling to describe citizens who are disproportionately likely to sway public policy. Opinion Elites in the IEA-P were over 30 years old, employed full-time, earned over \$75,000 per year, read the news almost every day, were college educated, and participated in at least two forms of political or community engagement.

² Only 5% of the sample identified as Asian or Pacific Islander, and only 2% as Native American. In each case the sample size was too small to use as a representative group, so they were not included in this analysis.

111 respondents began, but did not complete, the poll.³ The resulting respondent group consisted of 1414 registered voters, aged 18 and older. Around 22% of the respondent pool reported having gifted children, although some of those children were adults. Demographic characteristics of the full respondent group and targeted subgroups are in Table 1.1; additional demographic data describing poll respondents is available in Appendix B, Table B1.

1. Poll Design

IEA and the symposium participants worked with The Benenson Strategy Group to design a pilot poll. This pilot poll was comprised of 24 open-ended items and was used to conduct in-depth online conversations using the iModerate™ software with six parents, six educators, and eight Opinion Elites. The pilot group’s answers to these questions determined the language, critical issues, and messaging themes for the more extensive poll. The Benenson Strategy Group, The Winston Group, and additional contributors went through several revisions before the Benenson Group created a final draft which was reviewed by The Winston Group to ensure item validity and political neutrality.

The result was a 76-item poll, which is included in Appendix A. The first 17 items gathered demographic information used to create analysis groups, and the final 11 questions gathered demographic information typically solicited in Benenson Strategy Group polls. The remaining 48 questions comprised the core content of the poll, although several items were divided into several parts.⁴ Consequently, the entire sample answered 25 identical questions and another 23 questions with variations in split samples. The

³ According to The Benenson Strategy Group, 111 non-completions is a relatively small proportion for a poll of this size.

⁴ Split sample methodology was developed to increase response rate and decrease response burden on poll respondents (Raghu-nathan & Grizzle, 1995). The IEA-P made use of split-samples using two two-way (A/B and X/Y) and two three-way (C/D/E and J/K/L) split samples.

Table I

Demographic Distribution of IEA-P Respondents

	Race/Ethnicity				Race/Ethnicity x Income						Education Influencers	
	Total	White	Hisp.	Black	White		Hispanic		Black		OE	Parents
					<\$50	\$50k+	<\$50	\$50k+	<\$50	\$50k+		
Weighted n:	1414	1004	156	176	395	580	75	73	96	74	42	424
Unweighted n:	1414	815	281	261	246	554	97	182	128	126	246	690

Note. Hisp. = Hispanic, OE= Opinion Elites. <\$50 = annual income under \$50,000/year, \$50k+ = annual income \$50,000 and above. Race/Ethnicity does not include respondents who selected more than one race. Race/Ethnicity x Income does not include respondents who selected "Prefer Not to Indicate."

distribution of questions across split samples is in Appendix B, Table B2.

2. Poll Procedure

The Benenson Strategy Group conducted 1414 25-minute online interviews using the iModerate™ software between December 19, 2016 and January 6, 2017. Where necessary, items were presented in random order to minimize order effects (i.e., when asking for definitions of terms or grades for different aspects of public education) (See Appendix A). Upon completion of the poll, IEA-P respondents received "points," which could be redeemed at a number of online merchants, consistent with the policies of the online panel companies.⁵

3. Data Analysis

The aim of this poll was to identify response trends in the American public and to target promising avenues for advocacy. Data were weighted to reflect the demographic make up of the United States, rebalancing the proportions of the oversamples into numerically representative groups. After weighting the data to reflect the demographic makeup of the US, the Benenson Strategy Group prepared a summary based on the weighted data for each question in the poll for the entire respondent group and cross-tabulated by racial/ethnic groups (Black, Hispanic, and White) and Education Influencers (Opinion Elites⁶ and Parents).

⁵ Typically, the respondents receive points valued at \$1.00-\$5.00 for a single poll.

⁶ After weighting the data, the size of the Opinion Elites subsample was reduced from unweighted n = 246 to weighted n = 42. Although they comprised a small proportion of the respondent

They also provided standard error of measure at the 95% confidence interval for the full respondent group which is ±2.51%. It is ±6.21% among Opinion Elites, ±3.73% among Parents, ±6.03% among Blacks, ±5.81% among Hispanics, and ±3.33 among Whites. Standard error of measure for split samples, and target subgroups are in Appendix B, Table B3.

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group after the data were weighted, their results are reported here because the impact of Opinion Elites on public policy outstrips their numerical size.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since the turn of the 20th century, educators and policymakers have made intermittent progress on creating and implementing effective initiatives to support gifted students, yet little systemic change has taken hold across the country. In 2015, the Institute for Educational Advancement (IEA), a non-profit organization dedicated to the intellectual, creative and personal growth of our nations gifted youth, asked the question, Why? Before a real impact on educational policy relating to gifted education could occur it was important to take a fresh look at why little has changed over the years. IEA engaged a group of eleven individuals with backgrounds in business, technology, education, politics, and innovation to come together to consider possible action, which led to the question, “What does America think?”

With the support from The Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation, IEA undertook a national public opinion poll to assess the general public’s understanding of and attitudes towards gifted education. IEA engaged the Benenson Strategy Group and The Winston Group to collaborate with the IEA policy consortium to create a 76-item poll, which was completed by a random sample of 1414 registered voters, including oversamples of Opinion Elites, Blacks, and Hispanics, between December 19, 2016, and January 6, 2017.

Findings from the poll present an optimistic landscape and directions for action to improve services for gifted young people in our country. Data in this report presents detail around six major findings:

1. Americans can Define “Gifted” and Distinguish Between “Gifted” and “High-Ability” Students

Results of an open-ended question eliciting descriptions from respondents revealed consistent interpretations around the meaning of the term “gifted.” The public thinks of students who are “gifted,” “gifted and talented,” “genius,” or “advanced” as having advanced cognitive ability, primarily defined by a high IQ or a capacity to learn quickly. None of the descriptors suggested that the word “gifted”

was tainted by negative connotation. While most descriptors of “gifted” students were cognitive, most descriptors of “high-achieving” or “highly-able” evoked the behaviors of successful school achievers: they were described as hardworking, motivated, and determined.

The public also rejected many of the “myths” believed to be associated with gifted students: nearly 70% reported that giftedness is rare, that gifted students require specialized programs, and that gifted students come from all economic backgrounds. The only “myth” believed by a majority was that gifted students tend to be at the top of their class.

2. America Is Not Aware of the Status of Gifted Education Programming Across the Nation

The public seems mostly unaware of both the disparity in gifted education policies across states and the inadequate funding for gifted education nationwide. Over half of the public, 56%, awarded public schools an A or a B for addressing the needs of gifted children, but only 22% awarded similar grades for addressing the needs of all students, 17% for addressing the needs of low-income students, and 24% for addressing the needs of students with learning disabilities.

Similarly, only 56% of respondents indicated concern about resources provided to gifted students, as compared to over 70% who expressed concern over funding for high-quality teachers, STEM education, low-income schools and students with learning disabilities. Respondents seemed unaware that federal funding, and often state funding, per capita, for gifted students is lower than for any of these groups.

3. America Supports Gifted Education

A majority of respondents answered in favor of gifted education on all but two poll questions, despite their seemingly inflated sense of programs and services currently available for gifted children. The number of respondents who supported gifted education exceeded the number of parents of gifted students,

the number of parents of school-aged children, the number of Opinion Elites, or the number of college graduates in the poll. High proportions of Hispanic, Black, and low-income respondents were in support of gifted education throughout the poll.

- **56%** of Americans believe that inadequate resources for gifted students represents a problem for public schools, and 57% think remedying this problem is one of the most important priorities for education to address.
- **70%** of respondents indicated concern for many common problems challenging gifted education, including identifying low-income and minority gifted students, the disproportionate availability of gifted programs in high-income areas, inadequate preparation for teachers to work with gifted students, and the absence of acceleration and ability grouping. Poll respondents want gifted programs expanded and improved.
- **Over 70%** of respondents indicated support for program provisions commonly recommended for gifted students, including allowing gifted students to accelerate, mandating teacher education for teachers of gifted students, and providing for the identification of and education for gifted students in underserved areas.

4. America Supports Specific Initiatives to Improve Gifted Education

The current assessment of public attitudes towards gifted education exists in a broader context defined by a general dissatisfaction with public education. The public's concern and support for gifted education were highest where gifted education intersected with areas of dissatisfaction in general education, including (1) improving low-income schools, (2) increasing the availability of high-quality teachers, and (3) allowing acceleration and ability grouping for gifted students.

Providing Gifted Education Programs in Underserved Areas. Far from condemning gifted education as elitist, or calling for gifted education to end, the public

was clear about its aspirations for gifted education to be both accessible and equitable so that all advanced learners can benefit.

- Among all IEA-P respondents, **84%** expressed concern that low-income and minority gifted students go unnoticed, and **81%** were concerned that gifted programs were more frequently limited to high-income areas.
- **86%** of respondents favored providing funding for gifted education programs in underserved areas.

Requiring Teacher Education for Any Instructor Working with Gifted Students. The American public consistently expressed their desire for high-quality teachers in public school classrooms, including classrooms with gifted students.

- **80%** of respondents reported that funding for high-quality teachers was a problem for public education, suggesting a crisis of confidence in the very foundation of education.
- **82%** of respondents reported concern that teachers are not adequately trained to meet the needs of gifted students.
- **86%** of respondents supported requiring teacher education for any instructor working with gifted students.

Allowing Acceleration and Ability Grouping for Gifted Students. The American public understands the benefits of allowing all students to learn at their own pace, including overwhelming endorsement of both acceleration and ability grouping.

- **Over 80%** of the respondent group supported acceleration for gifted students, including over 80% of each analysis subgroup.
- **77%** of the respondent group expressed concern that students were grouped by age instead of ability.

5. America Supports Increased Funding for Gifted Education

Establishing and maintaining quality programs for gifted students hinges on public funds and, contrary

to expectations, the public seems ready for increased funding for gifted education. Support for increased state and federal funding for gifted education increased nearly 20 percentage points between the start and the end of the poll.

- Early in the poll, 63% of respondents supported increases in federal funding for gifted students, and 64% supported increases in state funding.
- Substantial increases in support emerged when the questions were asked again at the end of the poll: 81% supported an increase in federal funding, and 80% supported an increase in state funding for gifted education.
- Over 80% of each analysis subgroup endorsed an increase in state or federal funding at the end of the poll, including 88% of influential Opinion Elites. The *degree* of support also changed, with 13-22% of each analysis subgroup thinking funding for gifted education should increase “A Lot.”
- Respondents supported funding for gifted students at the same level as for students with learning disabilities, marking a change in attitude from the 1980s and 1990s. However, while the public favors increased spending for gifted education, they do not want those funds re-allocated from other public school programs.

6. America is Persuaded by Advocacy Messages that Either Emphasize the Societal Benefits of Educating Gifted Youth or Address Broken Systems that Prevent Gifted Students from Receiving the Services they Need.

Advocacy messages are designed to open the door to conversation about an issue; effective messages immediately capture sympathy for a cause. The poll tested numerous advocacy messages to distinguish between those that work and those that don't, either on their own or when paired with a counterargument.

- *Money for Prisons, Not for Gifted* was the only message that was highly effective with the entire respondent group and with every analysis subgroup. Two others were highly effective with most poll respondents: *International Competitiveness* and *Disadvantaged by ZIP Code*.

- Three advocacy messages represented commonly used arguments in favor of gifted education. These messages, *Falling Achievement*, *Right to Fulfill Potential*, and *Disadvantaged Gifted Overlooked*, were either ineffective or modestly effective as phrased for the poll.
- Messages which focused exclusively on gifted students—their social-emotional needs, their right to fulfill their potential, or their capacity to innovate—were ineffective or only modestly effective, often failing to convince even half of a supportive public.
- When presented with contrasting advocacy messages for or against gifted education, respondents consistently preferred messages supporting gifted education. The public rejected claims that gifted students are already equipped for success, and that funding gifted education would put an undue burden on the federal government.

Moving Forward

The overwhelming support for gifted education among the American public suggests that the time is right for a change. The public seems particularly invested in a stronger infrastructure for gifted education nationwide, especially: (1) to **ensure** that programs are available to all qualified students, regardless of their ZIP code, (2) to **require** that any teacher who works with gifted students receives appropriate training, and (3) to **guarantee** that programs include provisions which allow gifted students to learn at their own pace with like-ability peers. The public is ready for states and the nation to allocate resources to this end. America agrees: what benefits gifted youth benefits the nation.



CHAPTER 1 GIFTEDNESS MEANING AND MYTH

What makes a child gifted and talented may not always be good grades in school, but a different way of looking at the world and learning.

– Senator Chuck Grassley, 2005

For decades, advocates for gifted education have believed that society has a “love-hate” relationship with gifted students (J. Gallagher, 1988). The “love” in this equation represents the public’s appreciation for the benefits reaped from the inventions and insights of creative, productive individuals; the “hate” is the envy some feel towards others who seem to have an easier path to higher achievement and its rewards.

However, the belief in the society’s ambivalent attitude has taken root in the absence of substantial data that it actually exists. Although

research reports the mixed feelings that some teachers and parents hold towards gifted students (McCoach & Siegle, 2007; Troxclair, 2013), assessment of public attitudes rarely extends beyond a few questions.

In fact, there is little evidence indicating that the public understands what the word “gifted” means. Assessing public understanding is a crucial early step in any advocacy plan. A mismatch between an advocate’s *assumptions* about the public’s beliefs and the public’s *actual* beliefs is sure to lead to misdirected efforts. Specifically, efforts to gain support go awry if advocates and their audience do not agree on: (1) the meaning of important terms, (2) the conditions needing change, or (3) the potential impact of change—or the consequences of failing to change.

The way the public interprets the word “gifted,” both through literal definition and indirect interpretation, affects every conversation about policy and practice; therefore, the first set of items on the IEA-P

was designed to discover how the public defines giftedness and related terms.

Public Definitions of “Gifted” and Related Terms: What Does “Gifted” Mean?

Merely asking the meaning of the word “gifted” does not adequately measure public understanding of the concept because so many avoid that specific word. An array of alternative terms act as workarounds for the word “gifted” based on the assumption that monikers like “high-ability” are more inclusive or

palatable. This practice begs the question of whether the public actually has a negative response to the term “gifted,” and whether they think common alternates such as “advanced” or “highly-able” are synonymous with “gifted.” To answer these questions, IEA-P

Respondents in the IEA-P believe that “gifted” students have an inherent capacity to learn more or faster than other students.

respondents answered the open-ended query, “*When you think about ‘x’ students, what words, images, or types of students come to mind?*” The eight terms included in this question included: (1) Gifted, (2) Gifted and Talented, (3) Genius, (4) Advanced Learner, (5) High-Potential, (6) High-Achieving, (7) High-Performing, and (8) Highly-Able¹. The descriptors offered by respondents for each term were sorted into thematic categories according to common

¹ The IEA-P respondent group was randomly assigned to one of three groups for this question; each group responded to either two or three terms (split samples C/D/E). Each group was presented with one term explicitly mentioning giftedness or genius and one or two terms designed to suggest advanced ability through the use of “High-x.” Split Sample C = Gifted, Highly-Able, High-Potential; Split Sample D = Gifted and Talented, High-Achieving; Split Sample E = Genius, High-Performing, Advanced Learners.

Past Public Polling About Gifted Education

The most consistent polling about public attitudes toward gifted education was comprised of one or two questions embedded into the annual Phi Delta Kappan/Gallup *Poll of the Public's Attitudes Towards Public Schools*. The PDK/Gallup poll has gathered public opinion about a variety of public education issues every year since the mid-1970s. In the 1980s, the poll occasionally included a couple of questions about gifted education. Three times during the 1980s the PDK poll included a question asking the public whether funding for gifted education should increase, stay the same, or decrease. Each year the majority of respondents responded that funding should stay the same, although support for improving gifted education funding increased overall between 1982 and 1988, with a peak in support in 1985 (Gallup, 1985; Gallup & Elam, 1982; Gallup & Elam, 1988). Only a small proportion of the public favored spending less on gifted students in any year. In a different question on the 1980 poll, 25% of the public selected gifted education as one of its top priorities for federal education spending (G. H. Gallup, 1980). The Gallup poll stopped asking the question about gifted education funding in the *Phi Delta Kappan* poll at the end of the 1980s and has only asked about gifted students once or twice since then.

In 1992, Gallup conducted a brief public opinion poll about gifted education with a random sample of 1000 members of the general public and an oversample of parents of gifted students (Larsen, Griffin, & Larsen, 1994). The primary focus on this poll was to determine the support for gifted education from the public in general as opposed to the support from parents of gifted students. Relevant results from that poll are integrated into the current report.

meaning. A single respondent could provide several descriptors, each coded into different categories, but individual descriptors were coded only once. The resulting global categories represented either: (1) relevant descriptions of students who excel (i.e., intrinsic ability, quick learning, achievement, creativity), or (2) stereotypic descriptions of giftedness (i.e., affluent, nerd, socially awkward).

For most respondents, the terms "Gifted," "Gifted and Talented," "Genius," or "Advanced Learner," elicited words or images associated with intrinsic ability or an innate capacity to learn quickly (Table 1.1). Eighty-three percent of the descriptors offered for the word "Genius" related to intrinsic ability or rapid learning, as were 82% of the descriptors for "Gifted," 73% for "Advanced," and 67% for "Gifted and Talented." Fewer than 25% of the words or images offered to describe the terms "Gifted," "Gifted and Talented," or "Genius" were related to school achievement, an indication

that respondents did not immediately link giftedness with school success.

The responses also suggest that poll respondents distinguish between students who excel because of *superior ability* and students who excel because of *hard work*. Descriptors offered for prompts beginning with "High-x" or "Highly-x" were more varied, but in general they portrayed successful students with Guts, Resilience, Initiative and Tenacity (GRIT) (Duckworth, 2016): they are described as hardworking, motivated, and determined. This was true even when "High-" was paired with "Potential." Fifty-five percent of descriptors offered for students who were "High-Achieving," "High-Potential," or "High-Performing" were associated with achievement, as were 40% of descriptors for the term "Highly-Able," evoking Renzulli's definition of "schoolhouse gifted" (Renzulli, 1982).

Across the board, the terms elicited very few words or images associated with creativity. Descriptors

Table 1.1

Percentage of Responses to: “When You Think About ‘x’ Students, What Words, Images, or Types of Students Come to Mind?” (Q23-30)

Term	Split ^a sample	Relevant Descriptors				Stereotypic Descriptors		
		Intrinsic Ability %	Fast Learner %	School Achiever %	Creative/ Artistic %	Affluent %	Awkward %	Nerds %
Genius	E	47	36	17	6	4	4	3
Gifted and Talented	D	42	25	20	14	6	2	3
Gifted	C	38	44	18	8	5	2	3
Advanced Learners	E	22	51	23	1	2	1	1
High-Achieving	D	25	12	55	1	5	1	3
High-Potential	C	20	9	55	1	2	0	4
Highly-Able	C	21	15	40	1	5	2	1
High-Performing	E	20	14	55	2	4	0	1

Note. Relevant Descriptors: *Intrinsic Ability* = smart, above average, high IQ, gifted/talented, genius, leaders. *Fast Learner* = advanced learner, ahead of peers, skips grades, fast learner. *School Achiever* = hard-working, independent, focused, competitive, high- or over-achiever, good grades. *Creative* = creative, artistic. Stereotypic Descriptors: *Affluent* = rich, wealthy, well off. *Awkward* = awkward, social problems. *Nerd* = glasses, nerd.

^aSplit samples C and D: n= 471 each, split sample E: n = 472. See Appendix B table B3 for standard error of measure.

related to creativity were offered most often for the term “Gifted and Talented” (14%), followed by “Gifted” (8%), and “Genius” (6%). Terms beginning with “High-” almost never evoked words or images associated with creativity.

Respondents offered few stereotypic descriptions and no words or images that suggested dislike for children with advanced ability (Table 1.1). Only 5-6% of respondents used descriptors associated with wealth, and these were primarily associated with the terms “Gifted,” “High-Achieving,” “Highly-Able,” and “Gifted and Talented.” “Genius” students were most likely to be described as awkward (4%), and students with “High-Potential” were most likely to be described as nerds (4%). None of the eight terms elicited references to underachievement or failure to fulfill potential. Descriptors associated with different personality attributes were also notably absent, aside from those related to GRIT; there were no suggestions of curiosity, inquisitiveness, intensity, or

intuition. In their descriptions of giftedness and ability, respondents generally kept a narrow focus on the capacity to learn.

Public Beliefs about Giftedness: Assessing Myth and Reality

Support for gifted programs often hinges on accurate public understanding of more than just a definition; society must also realize that gifted students come from all racial and economic groups, that giftedness occurs on an ability continuum, and that all gifted students require specialized services to work towards their potential. Garnering support for gifted students is more difficult if the public holds mistaken beliefs, or “myths,” about gifted children (e.g., gifted students will be fine without special programs). Identifying what the public does and does not believe about gifted students helps determine where to target advocacy efforts.

Table 1.2

Percentage of Respondents who Agree or Disagree: “Gifted Students are Rare—Comprising a Very Small Percentage of the Total Student Population.” (Q37R6)

Group	Weighted n	Total		Degree of Agreement				
		Agree %	Disagree %	Strongly Agree %	Somewhat Agree %	Somewhat Disagree %	Strongly Disagree %	
Education Influencers								
Opinion Elites	42	77	23	28	49	22	1	
Parents	424	72	28	21	51	25	3	
Race/Ethnicity								
Black	176	74	26	27	47	22	4	
Hispanic	156	80	20	26	53	16	4	
White	1004	73	27	19	54	25	2	
Race/Ethnicity x Income								
Black	Below 50K	96	75	25	22	53	22	3
Black	Above 50K	74	71	29	33	39	24	4
Hispanic	Below 50K	75	83	17	32	50	15	3
Hispanic	Above 50K	73	74	26	22	52	19	7
White	Below 50K	395	76	24	18	59	20	3
White	Above 50K	580	71	29	20	51	28	1
Total		1414	74	26	20	54	23	3

Notes. At the 95% confidence level the standard error of measure for the entire sample is $\pm 2.51\%$. It is $\pm 6.21\%$ among Opinion Elites, $\pm 3.73\%$ among Parents, $\pm 6.03\%$ among Blacks, $\pm 5.81\%$ among Hispanics, and ± 3.33 among Whites. Race/Ethnicity does not include respondents who selected more than one race. Race/Ethnicity x Income does not include respondents who selected “Prefer Not to Indicate.”

The poll assessed whether the public could distinguish between accurate and inaccurate claims made about gifted students. Many of the statements presented in these questions represent mistaken, but presumably widely held, convictions about giftedness, including that: (1) giftedness is common, (2) gifted students do not need special services, (3) gifted students are always at the top of their class, and (4) gifted students are wealthy. Respondents also answered questions asking whether they thought gifted students receive more resources than either average students or students with learning disabilities, and whether they thought if gifted students should receive resources at the same

level as students with learning disabilities. Answers offered by IEA-P respondents, summarized in Tables 1.2 to 1.5², indicate that Americans are capable of distinguishing between myth and reality regarding the nature of giftedness.

Is everyone gifted, or are gifted children rare?

The question of whether respondents believed all students are gifted was addressed indirectly by asking if they agreed that gifted students comprised a small subset of the student population. Three of every four respondents (74%) agreed that

² For responses disaggregated by race/ethnicity x income, see Appendix C, Table C1.

gifted students are rare (Figure 1.1). Only 3% of the respondent group strongly disagreed with the statement that gifted children are rare (Table 1.2).

Education Influencers. Over 70% of Opinion Elites and Parents agreed that gifted students are rare, with Opinion Elites somewhat more inclined to strongly agree (28% Opinion Elites, 21% Parents).

Racial/Ethnic Groups. Over 70% of each racial/ethnic group agreed that gifted students are rare, led by 80% of Hispanics. Close to 20% of each subgroup *strongly*

agreed, led by one-third of higher-income Black and lower-income Hispanic respondents (33% and 32%, respectively).

Are gifted kids so smart they don't need special programs? A majority of the American public understands that gifted students need specialized services to fulfill their potential (Figure 1.2). Sixty-eight percent disagreed with the statement “*Gifted students are so smart, they do just fine without special programs.*” Between 60-70% of respondents disagreed with the statement regardless of income or race/ethnicity (Table 1.3).

Table 1.3

Percentage of Respondents Who Agree or Disagree That, “Because Gifted Kids are so Smart, They do Just Fine With or Without Special Programs Designed for Them.” (Q37R2)

Group	Weighted n	Total		Degree of Agreement				
		Agree %	Disagree %	Strongly Agree %	Somewhat Agree %	Somewhat Disagree %	Strongly Disagree %	
Education Influencers								
Opinion Elites	42	38	62	12	26	34	28	
Parents	424	29	71	8	21	48	23	
Race/Ethnicity								
Black	176	38	62	7	30	40	22	
Hispanic	156	33	67	8	25	42	25	
White	1004	30	70	4	25	48	22	
Race/Ethnicity x Income								
Black	Below \$50K	96	39	61	6	33	42	19
Black	Above 50K	74	33	67	8	25	39	28
Hispanic	Below \$50K	75	34	66	12	21	47	19
Hispanic	Above 50K	73	25	75	4	21	41	34
White	Below \$50K	395	33	67	5	27	46	22
White	Above 50K	580	27	73	4	24	50	23
Total		1414	32	68	5	26	46	22

Notes. For standard error of measure see Appendix B, Table B3. At the 95% confidence level the standard error of measure for the entire sample is ±2.51%. It is ±6.21% among Opinion Elites, ±3.73% among Parents, ±6.03% among Blacks, ±5.81% among Hispanics, and ±3.33 among Whites. Race/Ethnicity does not include respondents who selected more than one race. Race/Ethnicity x Income does not include respondents who selected “Prefer Not to Indicate.”

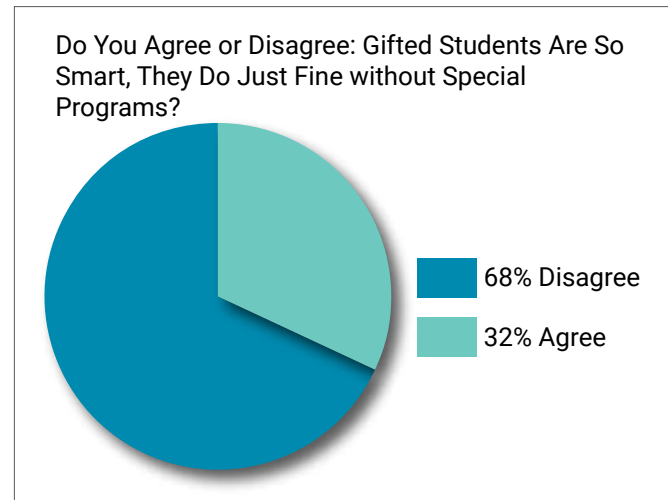
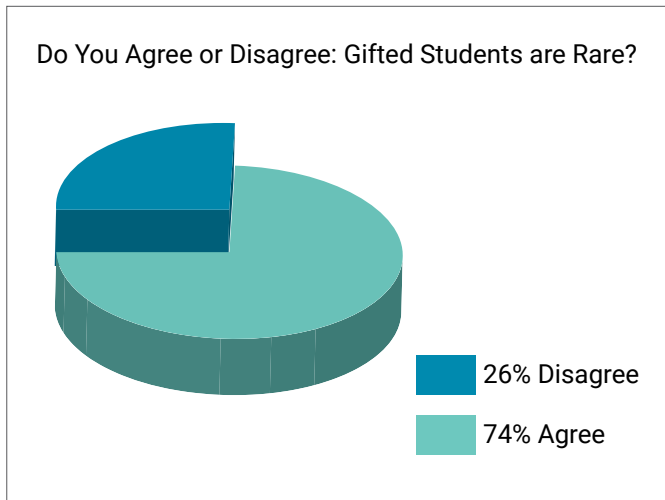


Figure 1.1. Percentage of respondents who agreed or disagreed that “Gifted students are rare—comprising a very small percentage of the total student population.”

Figure 1.2. Percentage of respondents who agreed or disagreed with “Gifted students are so smart, they do just fine without special programs.”

Education Influencers. Only 29% of Parents and 38% of Opinion Elites agreed that gifted students did not need special programs. Of those who agreed that special programs were *not necessary*, only 12% of Opinion Elites and 8% of Parents strongly agreed.

Education Influencers. Parents were nearly equally split between those who agreed (52%) or disagreed (48%) that gifted students were at the top of their class. Opinion Elites were among the least likely to agree that gifted students were always at the top of their class; 36% agreed with the statement, and only 13% strongly agreed.

Racial/Ethnic Groups. Between 30-40% of respondents agreed with the statement that gifted students do not need special programs regardless of income or racial/ethnic group. The number of respondents from each group who “strongly disagreed,” was at least three times higher than the number who “strongly agreed.”

Racial/Ethnic Groups. Black respondents were most likely to agree overall (67%) and to strongly agree (22%) that gifted students were always at the top of their class. Just over half of White respondents agreed overall (52%), and they were least likely to strongly agree (13%). Among racial/ethnic x income groups, lower-income Blacks were most likely to agree overall (72%), followed by higher-income Blacks (60%).

The American public has a clear understanding that gifted students come from all income groups.

Do gifted students generally come from well-off families? The American public has a clear understanding that gifted students come from all income groups (Figure 1.4). Of the IEA-P respondents, 71% rejected the notion that gifted students come from well-off families. More than one in four (29%) strongly disagreed that gifted students were affluent (Table 1.5), while only a few strongly agreed (7%).

Are gifted students typically at the top of their class? When asked to describe gifted students, IEA-P respondents did not volunteer words or images associated with achievement. However, when asked directly if gifted students were generally at the top of their class, a slight majority (55%) thought they were (Figure 1.3, Table 1.4).

Education Influencers. Of the Opinion Elites, 39% agreed that gifted students generally come from well-

Table 1.4

Percent of Respondents who Agree or Disagree that, "Gifted Students are Always at the Top of Their Class Academically." (Q37R1)

Group	Weighted n	Total		Degree of Agreement				
		Agree %	Disagree %	Strongly Agree %	Somewhat Agree %	Somewhat Disagree %	Strongly Disagree %	
Education Influencers								
Opinion Elites	42	49	51	13	36	41	10	
Parents	424	52	48	15	37	38	9	
Race/Ethnicity								
Black	176	67	33	22	45	25	8	
Hispanic	156	56	44	18	39	31	13	
White	1004	52	48	13	39	38	10	
Race/Ethnicity x Income								
Black	Below \$50K	96	72	28	22	50	22	6
Black	Above \$50K	74	60	40	21	38	31	10
Hispanic	Below \$50K	75	56	44	23	32	30	14
Hispanic	Above \$50K	73	53	47	14	39	36	11
White	Below \$50K	395	57	43	15	42	34	9
White	Above \$50K	580	49	51	12	37	40	11
Total		1414	55	45	15	40	35	10

Notes. At the 95% confidence level the standard error of measure for the entire sample is $\pm 2.51\%$. It is $\pm 6.21\%$ among Opinion Elites, $\pm 3.73\%$ among Parents, $\pm 6.03\%$ among Blacks, $\pm 5.81\%$ among Hispanics, and $\pm 3.33\%$ among Whites. Race/Ethnicity does not include respondents who selected more than one race. Race/Ethnicity x Income does not include respondents who selected "Prefer Not to Indicate."

off families and 11% strongly agreed. The number of Opinion Elites agreeing with the statement was substantially higher than most other groups including Parents, only 25% of whom agreed overall, and only 6% of whom strongly agreed.

Racial/Ethnic Groups. Among the three racial/ethnic groups, Blacks were least likely to agree that gifted students are from well-off families (24%). While Hispanic respondents were more likely than White or Black respondents to believe that gifted students come from well-off families, a majority (68%) thought

they were not, and 36% "strongly disagreed." Lower-income respondents within each racial/ethnic group were more likely to think that gifted students were affluent, compared to their higher-income counterparts. The greatest within group discrepancy was between higher- and lower-income Hispanics (38% and 20% who agree, respectively).

Do gifted kids need just as much funding and support as students with learning disabilities? The American public believes the gifted students need funding and support at levels equal to students with learning

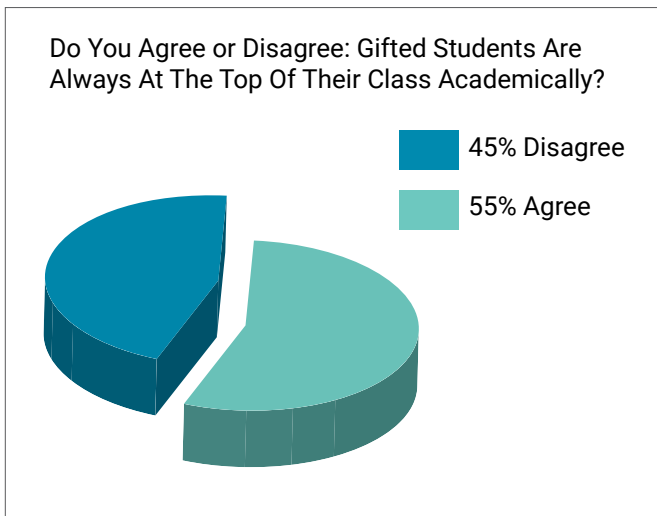


Figure 1.3. Percentage of respondents who agreed or disagreed with “Gifted students are always at the top of their class academically.”

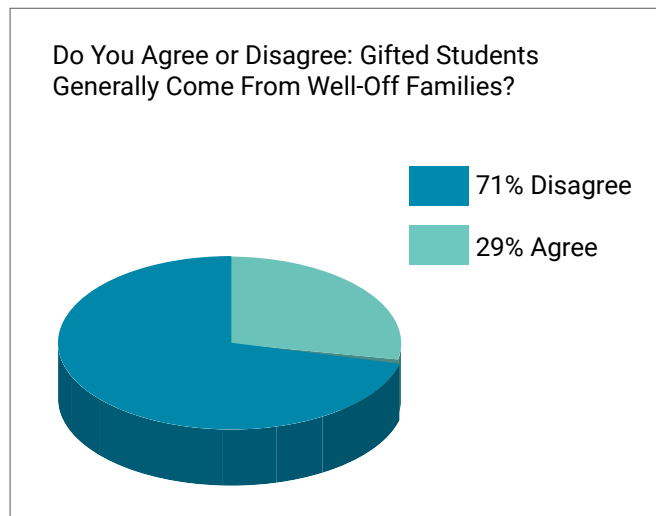


Figure 1.4. Percentage of respondents who agreed or disagreed that “Gifted students generally come from well-off families.”

disabilities. Nearly three of every four respondents agreed with this statement (73%), and 29% were in strong agreement (Figure 1.5).

Education Influencers. Seventy-five percent of Opinion Elites agreed that gifted students should receive funding and support equivalent to students with learning disabilities, with a nearly even split between those who strongly agree (36%) and somewhat agree (38%). A slightly higher proportion of Parents (79%) agreed that gifted students and students with learning disabilities should receive similar levels of funding. The proportion of Parents who strongly agreed was similar to the Opinion Elites (35%).

Racial/Ethnic Groups. Among racial/ethnic groups, Hispanics were most likely to agree that gifted students need funding and support similar to that of students with learning disabilities (84%), followed by Blacks (76%), and Whites (70%). Black respondents were most likely to *strongly* agree (39% Black, 31% Hispanic, 27% White). Of higher-income Black respondents, 42% strongly agreed that gifted students needed as much funding and support as students with learning disabilities, compared to only 29% of higher-income Hispanic or White respondents (Table 1.6).

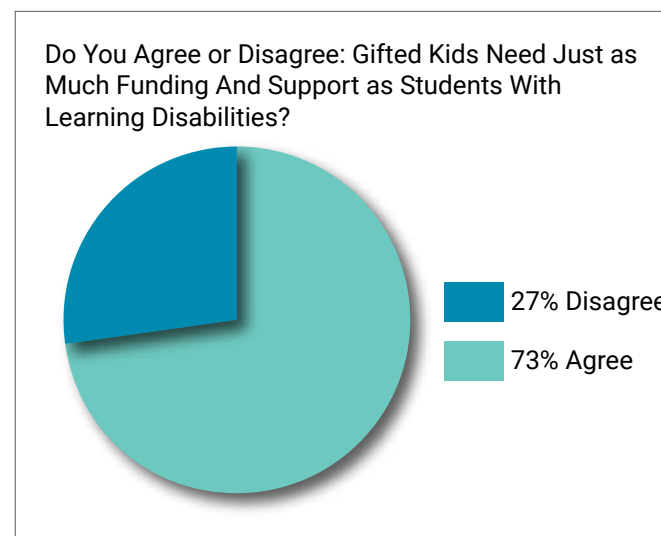


Figure 1.5. Percentage of respondents who agreed or disagreed that “Gifted kids need just as much funding and support as students with learning disabilities.”

Do gifted students receive more resources than average students? Many IEA-P respondents (38%) believed that gifted and average students receive equivalent resources; and about equal numbers believed that either gifted students (31%) or average students (32%) received more resources (Table 1.7).

Table 1.5

Percentage of Respondents who Agree or Disagree that, "Gifted Students Generally Come from Well-off Families." (Q37R3)

Group	Weighted n	Total		Degree of Agreement				
		Agree %	Disagree %	Strongly Agree %	Somewhat Agree %	Somewhat Disagree %	Strongly Disagree %	
Education Influencers								
Opinion Elites	42	39	61	11	28	35	26	
Parents	424	25	75	6	19	45	30	
Race/Ethnicity								
Black	176	24	76	8	16	37	39	
Hispanic	156	32	68	7	26	32	36	
White	1004	28	72	7	22	47	25	
Race/Ethnicity x Income								
Black	Below \$50K	96	25	75	7	18	44	31
Black	Above \$50K	74	21	79	8	13	28	51
Hispanic	Below \$50K	75	38	62	9	29	33	29
Hispanic	Above \$50K	73	20	80	5	16	34	46
White	Below \$50K	395	29	71	9	20	44	27
White	Above \$50K	580	27	73	5	22	49	24
Total		1414	29	71	7	22	43	28

Notes. At the 95% confidence level the standard error of measure for the entire sample is $\pm 2.51\%$. It is $\pm 6.21\%$ among Opinion Elites, $\pm 3.73\%$ among Parents, $\pm 6.03\%$ among Blacks, $\pm 5.81\%$ among Hispanics, and $\pm 3.33\%$ among Whites. Race/Ethnicity does not include respondents who selected more than one race. Race/Ethnicity x Income does not include respondents who selected "Prefer Not to Indicate."

Education Influencers. Opinion Elites are nearly equally likely to think that average students and gifted students received more resources (33% average, 31% gifted). Parents were slightly more likely to think average students received more resources (36% average, 29% gifted).

Racial/Ethnic Groups. Over one-third of each racial/ethnic group believed that gifted and average students received similar levels of resources; however, White respondents were more likely than Black or Hispanic respondents to think that average students

received more resources than gifted students (34% White, 29% Hispanic, 24% Black). Black respondents were most likely to think that gifted students received more resources than average students (43%), followed by Hispanics (36%) and Whites (28%). In each racial/ethnic group, lower-income respondents were more likely than higher-income respondents to think that gifted students receive more resources than average students.

Do gifted students receive more resources than learning-disabled students? For the most part, the

Table 1.6

Percentage of Respondents who Agree or Disagree that, "Gifted Kids Need Just as Much Funding and Support as Students with Learning Disabilities." (Q37R5)

Group	Weighted n	Total		Degree of Agreement				
		Agree %	Disagree %	Strongly Agree %	Somewhat Agree %	Somewhat Disagree %	Strongly Disagree %	
Education Influencers								
Opinion Elites	42	74	26	36	38	23	4	
Parents	424	79	21	35	44	17	4	
Race/Ethnicity								
Black	176	76	24	39	37	19	5	
Hispanic	156	84	16	31	53	11	5	
White	1004	70	30	27	43	25	5	
Race/Ethnicity x Income								
Black	Below \$50K	96	72	28	37	35	20	8
Black	Above \$50K	74	81	19	42	38	17	2
Hispanic	Below \$50K	75	80	20	35	45	10	10
Hispanic	Above \$50K	73	85	15	29	57	13	1
White	Below \$50K	395	70	30	25	45	25	5
White	Above \$50K	580	70	30	29	41	26	4
Total		1414	73	27	29	43	23	5

Notes. At the 95% confidence level the standard error of measure for the entire sample is $\pm 2.51\%$. It is $\pm 6.21\%$ among Opinion Elites, $\pm 3.73\%$ among Parents, $\pm 6.03\%$ among Blacks, $\pm 5.81\%$ among Hispanics, and $\pm 3.33\%$ among Whites. Race/Ethnicity does not include respondents who selected more than one race. Race/Ethnicity x Income does not include respondents who selected "Prefer Not to Indicate."

public believed that students with learning disabilities received more resources than gifted students (Figure 1.7). Fifty-eight percent of the overall sample thought students with learning disabilities received more resources, while 23% believed gifted students received more, and 19% believed the two groups received the same amount (Table 1.7).

Education Influencers. Opinion Elites and Parents were equally likely to think that students with learning disabilities received more resources than gifted students, with 62% of each group believing that

students with learning disabilities receive more. These two groups were the least likely to think that gifted students receive more resources, with 19% of Opinion Elites and 17% of Parents believing gifted students receive more resources than students with learning disabilities.

Racial/Ethnic Groups. Among the three racial/ethnic groups, White respondents were the most likely to say that students with learning disabilities receive more resources (63%). Black respondents were least likely to say that students with learning disabilities received

more resources than gifted students, and most likely to report that gifted students received more resources than students with learning disabilities; 34% of Black respondents answered that gifted students receive more resources compared to 27% of Hispanics and 20% of White respondents.

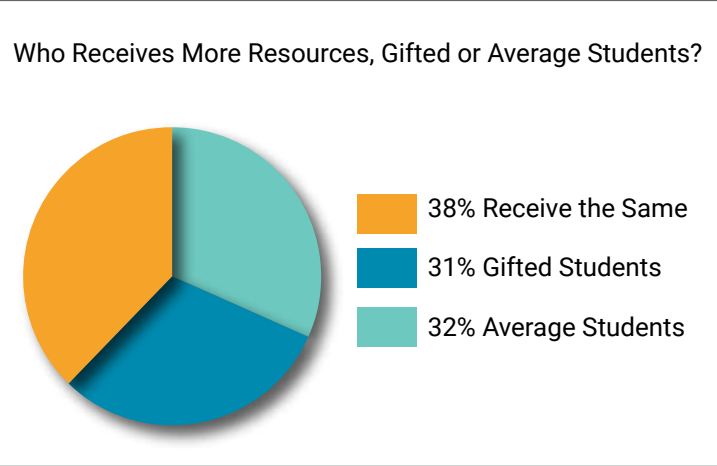


Figure 1.6. Percentage of responses to “Who receives more resources, gifted, or average students?”

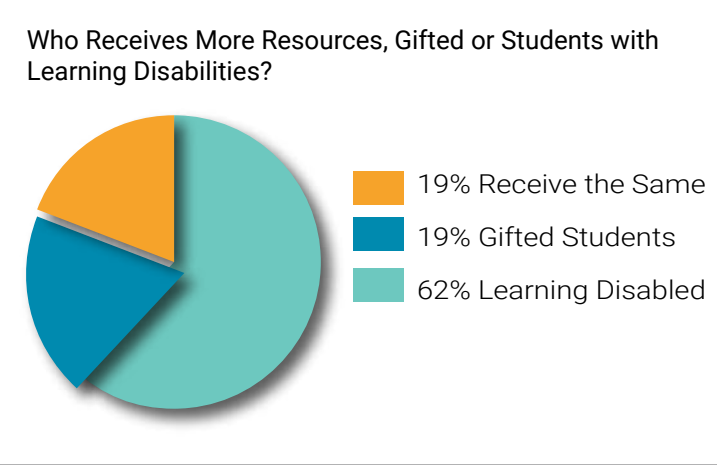


Figure 1.7. Percentage of responses to “Who receives more resources, gifted, or learning-disabled students?”

Then & Now

The 1982 *Phi Delta Kappan/Gallup Poll of the Public’s Attitudes Toward Public Schools* included questions asking respondents whether they thought special funding for students with “learning problems” and students who are gifted and talented should increase. Among all poll respondents, 42% supported increases in funding for students with “learning problems” but only 19% supported a funding increase for gifted and talented students (Gallup & Elam, 1982). These findings were replicated in the 1992 Gallup poll, when 45% of the public supported increases in funds for students with learning problems and 16% supported increases in support for gifted and talented students (Larsen, Griffin, & Larsen, 1994).

In 2016, 73% of IEA-P respondents agreed that gifted students require just as much funding and support as students with learning disabilities.

Table 1.7

Percentage of Responses: "Under the Current System, Who Would You Say Tends to get More Resources, Gifted Students or (Average/Learning Disabled) Students?" (Q38-39)

Group	Weighted n	Average v. Gifted			Learning Disabled v. Gifted			
		Average Students %	Gifted Students %	Same Amount %	Students w/LD %	Gifted Students %	Same Amount %	
Education Influencers								
Opinion Elites	42	33	31	36	62	19	19	
Parents	424	36	29	35	62	17	21	
Race/Ethnicity								
Black	176	24	43	32	43	34	22	
Hispanic	156	29	36	35	54	27	19	
White	1004	34	28	38	63	20	17	
Race/Ethnicity x Income								
Black	Below \$50K	96	19	45	35	40	34	26
Black	Above \$50K	74	30	41	29	47	36	17
Hispanic	Below \$50K	75	30	32	38	56	18	25
Hispanic	Above \$50K	73	30	35	35	56	28	15
White	Below \$50K	395	32	33	36	55	25	21
White	Above \$50K	580	35	25	40	68	17	15
Total		1414	32	31	38	58	23	19

Notes. LD = learning disabilities. At the 95% confidence level the standard error of measure for the entire sample is $\pm 2.51\%$. It is $\pm 6.21\%$ among Opinion Elites, $\pm 3.73\%$ among Parents, $\pm 6.03\%$ among Blacks, $\pm 5.81\%$ among Hispanics, and ± 3.33 among Whites. Race/Ethnicity does not include respondents who selected more than one race. Race/Ethnicity x Income does not include respondents who selected "Prefer Not to Indicate."

Synopsis

The Public's Understanding of "Gifted" and Related Terms

A common understanding of terminology is the baseline for effective advocacy. Using language that the public intuitively understands is crucial to sending a clear message.

- Results from the IEA-P suggest that the public has a basic understanding of the word "Gifted" which

is consistent with most experts in the field: gifted children have an intrinsic ability to learn quickly.

- The public distinguished between "Gifted" children and children with "High-Ability." In the minds of the public, gifted children have an inherent ability to learn faster, while "High-Ability" children achieve through determination, persistence, and hard work. The public rarely used words associated with high IQ or quick learning when describing students with "High-Ability." **Advocates should avoid using the word "Gifted" and "High-Ability" interchangeably, because the public associates**

the two terms with different groups of students.

- The public rarely included creativity in their descriptions of giftedness or high ability. When words associated with creativity were invoked, they were in response to the terms “Gifted and Talented,” “Gifted,” and “Genius.”
- When asked to volunteer descriptions of gifted or high-ability children, the public rarely offered terms invoking common stereotypes suggestive of maladjustment. They also never mentioned personality attributes as an integral part of giftedness. Instead, they focused narrowly on attributes related to the capacity to learn.
- **Of the terms tested in the IEA-P, “Gifted and Talented” and “Gifted” had the largest shared understanding between experts and the lay public.**

Public Beliefs about Giftedness

The literal definition of a word is different from its cultural interpretation. Misconceptions about a group of people can lead to false assumptions about their needs. However, according to the responses in the IEA-P, the public does not subscribe to many of the so-called “myths” about gifted students.

- **76% of IEA-P respondents think that gifted children are rare, comprising a small proportion of the student population.** It may be that in everyday conversation someone will say “all children are gifted,” meaning that all children have intrinsic value or something to contribute. However, when the question is presented in context, the public does not believe in the Lake Wobegone effect that “all children are above average.”
- **The public believes that, though rare, gifted students come from all walks of life. 71% disagreed that gifted students are from well-off families,** including over 70% of most analysis groups. Both in open-ended questions and in response to forced-choice items, the public made it clear that they believe gifted students live in neighborhoods in every corner of the country.

- The public understands that gifted students require special services to cultivate their abilities. **70% of the public believed that gifted students need special services, and the same number felt that gifted students should receive resources at the same level as students with learning disabilities.** They held this attitude even though 55% also believed that gifted students are already at the top of their class. This result marks a shift in thinking from 40 years ago when providing services for students with learning differences had much more support than providing services for gifted students.

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Advocates should not use terms associated with “giftedness” interchangeably with terms related to “high-ability,” because the public believes they refer to different groups of students.



CHAPTER 2 GIFTED EDUCATION AMONG THE PUBLIC'S EDUCATION PRIORITIES

By that part of our plan which prescribes the selection of the youths of genius from among the classes of the poor, we hope to avail the state of those talents which nature has sown as liberally among the poor as the rich, but which perish without use, if not sought for and cultivated.

—Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*

A majority of the public shares a common understanding that a gifted child has advanced potential to learn, but not necessarily demonstrated achievement. The public also understands that educating a gifted child to achieve her full potential requires extra educational resources. Yet gifted education is one part of a multifaceted education system, and while all the parts of the system should work together, limited resources often force them into competition. To be effective, public policy initiatives require an understanding of the public's sense of urgency around particular issues both singly and in relation to each other. The public supports gifted education when presented as an isolated issue, but where does it fall among priorities for education, when all of public education is overwhelmed with needs and chronically underfunded?

Gifted Education in Context: Grading K-12 Public Schools.

A series of questions on the IEA-P sought to determine where gifted education stands relative to other issues in education. The first questions in this section of the poll asked IEA-P respondents to grade public schools on a scale from A to F on their effectiveness meeting the needs of (1) all students, (2) low-income students, (3) students with learning disabilities, and (4) gifted students.

Grades for public education's effectiveness in addressing the needs of all students, low-income students, and students with learning disabilities. IEA-P respondents' grades reflect a generally bleak view of public education in America; they parallel the answers to a similar question posed to respondents in the 2016 PDK/Gallup poll (Table 2.1). Only 5%

of IEA-P respondents gave an A to public schools for addressing the needs of students with learning disabilities, 3% gave an A for addressing the needs of low-income students and 2% awarded an A for addressing the needs of all students. Far higher proportions of respondents gave a B for services provided to each group of students, and even more awarded a C.

Fewer than 25% gave the public schools an A or B combined for addressing the needs of all students and for students with learning disabilities, and only 17% awarded an A or B combined for addressing the needs of low-income students. For each of these three groups, the proportion of respondents who awarded a D or F combined equaled or exceeded the proportion who awarded an A or B combined.

Grades for addressing the needs of gifted students. Grades awarded to public schools for how well they addressed the needs of gifted children were consistently far better than the grades awarded for addressing the needs of other groups of children. Among all respondents, 21% awarded an A to public schools for their effectiveness in meeting the needs of gifted students, regardless of the term used, five times the rate that A grades were assigned to public education overall. Fifty-six percent awarded either an A or B, combined (Figure 2.1), and only 15% awarded a D or F grade.

Impact of varying terminology. The public was most likely to give the public schools an A when asked about addressing the needs of "Gifted" students (21%), followed by "High-Achieving" and "High-Potential" students (16% each). The public was least likely to award an A when asked to grade the public school's success in serving "Highly-Able"

Table 2.1

Percentage of Responses to: "Generally Speaking, How Good of a Job Do You Think America's K-12 Public Schools Are Doing Addressing the Needs of 'x' Students?" (Q18-19)

Grade	PDK/Gallup 2016 ^a	IEA-P			
		All Students	Low-Income	Learning Disabilities	Gifted ^b
	%	%	%	%	%
A&B	24	22	17	24	56
A	4	2	3	5	21
B	20	20	14	19	35
C	41	53	36	38	28
D	20	19	31	28	11
F/Fail	7	6	16	9	5
Don't know	8	N/A			

Notes. Respondent n = 1414 for All Students, Low-Income Students, and Students with Learning Disabilities. At the 95% confidence level the standard error of measure for the entire sample is $\pm 2.51\%$. It is $\pm 6.21\%$ among Opinion Elites, $\pm 3.73\%$ among Parents, $\pm 6.03\%$ among Blacks, $\pm 5.81\%$ among Hispanics, and ± 3.33 among Whites

^aPDK=*Phi Delta Kappan*. PDK/Gallup Poll respondents answered the question "What grade would you give the public schools nationally?" Starr (2016), n=1221

^bGifted = Split Sample C, n= 471. At the 95% confidence level the standard error of measure for Split Sample C is ± 4.52 .

students (12%), but even this was twice the number of A grades awarded for services to students with learning disabilities (5%) (Table 2.1).

Consistent with their grading patterns for other groups of students, IEA-P respondents were much more likely to award a B instead of an A to public schools, regardless of the term used. While services for "Gifted" students were most likely to receive an A grade (21%), services for "Highly-Able" students received the most B grades (44%).

Over half of the sample awarded an A or a B combined to public schools for addressing the needs of students who are "Gifted," "Highly-Able," or "High-Achieving" (56% each), "Gifted and Talented" or "High-Potential" (53% each), or "High-Performing" (51%). The public was least likely to award an A or a B, separately or combined, for addressing the needs of "Genius" students (14% A, 32% B, 46% combined).

IEA-P respondents believed that the public schools were doing a better job addressing the needs of gifted students than the needs of all students, low-income students, or students with learning disabilities. These findings suggest that the public is relatively unaware of the status of gifted programs around the country and operates under the misconception that, while gifted students may not have all the resources they require, public schools are doing a much better job addressing their needs, compared with other groups.

Education Influencers. Opinion Elites were most likely to award an A or a B to public schools for addressing the needs of "High-Achieving" (68%) and "High-Performing" (63%) students and least likely to award them for addressing the needs of "Gifted" (56%) or "High-Potential" (51%) students. Parents gave schools high grades for gifted education compared to services for students with learning disabilities or

How Well are America's K-12 Public Schools Doing Addressing the Needs of These Students?

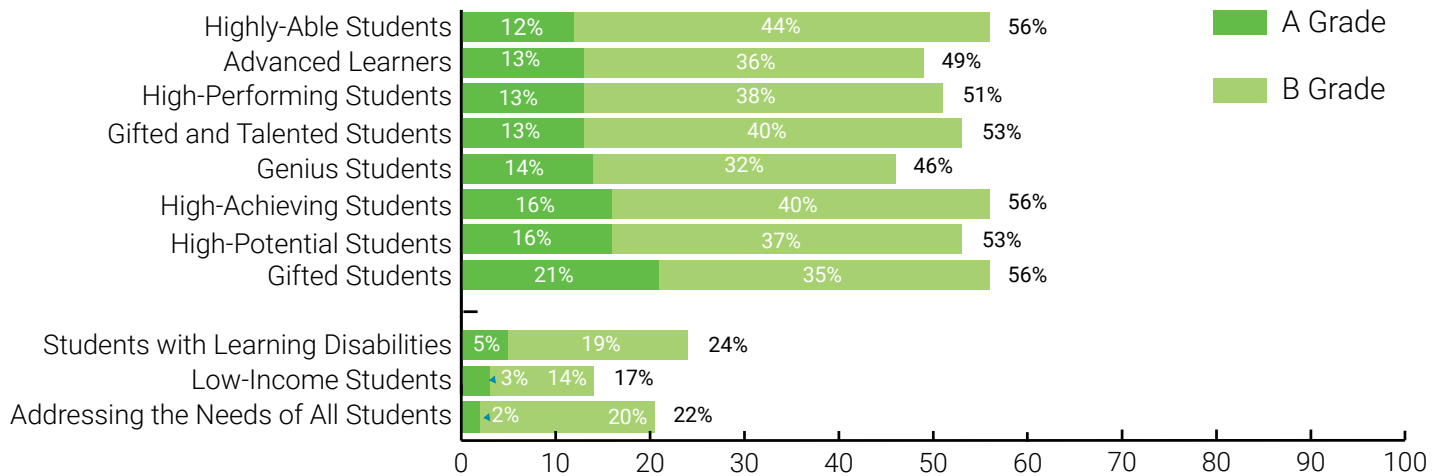


Figure 2.1. Percentage of A and B grades awarded to public schools for meeting the needs of all students, low-income students, students with learning disabilities, and gifted students (described by varied terms).

low-income students; however, they were less likely to award an A or a B for gifted education than other analysis groups. Only two terms received an A or a B combined from 50% of Parents, “High-Performing” (57%) and “Advanced Learner” (53%). Parents were least likely to award an A or a B to schools for services provided to students with “High-Potential” (42%).

Racial/Ethnic Groups. Black, Hispanic, and White respondents answered differently to the various terms when assigning grades (Table 2.2). In general, schools were more likely to receive a B instead of an A, but there were some exceptions.

These findings suggest that the public is relatively unaware of the status of gifted programs around the country and operates under the misconception that, while gifted students may not have all the resources they require, public schools are doing a better job addressing their needs than the needs of other students.

“A” grades awarded by racial/ethnic group. In general, Black respondents were the most likely to award an A, regardless of term:

- Between 25-36% of Black respondents awarded an A to public schools with respect to all terms except “Highly-Able,” and “High-Potential”;
- The only time 25% of Hispanics gave an A to schools was for the term “High-Achieving.” Only 9% of Hispanics awarded an A for schools for serving “Highly-Able” students;
- Schools received an A from 20% of White respondents for the term “Gifted” (20%). Fewer White respondents awarded an A for every other term, with only 10-12% awarding an A for most terms.

Across terms and groups, the schools were least likely to receive an A from Hispanic respondents with reference to “Highly-Able” students (9%), and most likely to receive an A from Black respondents with reference to “Gifted” students (36%).

Above average grades awarded by racial/ethnic group. Markedly different patterns emerged among racial/

Table 2.2

Percentage of IEA-P Respondents Awarding A, B, and A&B Combined to Services to Gifted Students by Race/Ethnicity, Race/Ethnicity x Income, and Education Influencers (Q19)

Term		Race/Ethnicity			Race/Ethnicity x Income						Education Influencers		
		Total	White	Hisp	Black	White		Hispanic		Black		OE	Parents
						<\$50	\$50k+	<\$50	\$50k+	<\$50	\$50k+	%	%
	Weighted n:	471	329	52	59	142	182	23	28	26	31	14	141
	Unweighted n:	471	275	98	76	89	182	38	60	36	38	82	241
		%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Gifted													
	A	21	20	10	36	27	16	8	12	37	34	23	15
	B	35	41	25	22	33	47	23	28	21	24	33	33
	A&B	56	61	35	58	60	63	31	40	58	58	56	48
Highly-Able Students													
	A	12	12	9	17	14	9	9	10	13	18	14	8
	B	44	46	35	43	39	52	38	33	31	56	46	37
	A&B	56	58	44	60	53	61	47	43	44	74	60	45
High-Potential													
	A	16	16	12	16	16	15	15	9	26	8	15	12
	B	37	39	36	38	38	41	40	33	27	50	36	30
	A&B	53	55	48	54	54	56	55	42	53	58	51	42
Gifted and Talented													
	A	13	10	17	26	10	11	19	15	32	21	23	10
	B	40	39	43	31	37	41	29	53	23	37	39	35
	A&B	53	49	60	57	47	52	48	68	55	58	62	45
High-Achieving Students													
	A	16	12	25	29	14	12	32	20	29	33	30	14
	B	40	41	40	33	40	42	25	51	32	32	38	37
	A&B	56	53	65	62	54	54	57	71	61	65	68	51
Genius													
	A	14	11	18	30	11	10	26	13	30	31	23	13
	B	32	31	33	30	32	30	31	37	27	33	33	34
	A&B	46	42	51	60	43	40	57	50	57	64	56	47
High-Performing													
	A	13	11	14	26	9	12	16	14	25	30	27	13
	B	38	37	47	30	29	42	40	53	35	26	36	44
	A&B	51	48	61	56	38	54	56	67	60	56	63	57
Advanced Learners													
	A	13	11	15	25	10	11	18	14	22	29	21	13
	B	36	34	45	42	33	36	56	38	41	44	38	40
	A&B	49	45	60	67	43	47	74	52	63	73	59	53

Notes. Hisp = Hispanics, OE= Opinion Elites. The IEA-P respondent group was randomly assigned to one of three groups; each group responded to either two or three terms (n = 471 for split samples C and D, n=472 for split sample E. See Appendix B, Table B3 for measurement error). Each group was presented with one term explicitly mentioning giftedness or genius and one or two terms designed to suggest advanced ability through the use of "High-x." Split Sample C = Gifted, Highly-Able, High-Potential; Split Sample D = Gifted and Talented, High-Achieving; Split Sample E = Genius, High-Performing, Advanced Learners. Race/Ethnicity does not include respondents who selected more than one race. Race/Ethnicity x Income does not include respondents who selected "Prefer Not to Indicate."

A Deeper Look

IEA-P results reveal a broadly held misconception among the public that the K-12 public schools are doing an above-average job providing an appropriate education for America's best and brightest. Advocates for gifted students who are familiar with the patchwork quilt of policies across the nation will recognize this as grade inflation, especially relative to grades awarded for other areas of education. Only four states have a fully funded mandate to serve gifted students. At least 10 states still have no mandate for gifted education services. Some states with mandates for gifted education provide little or no funding to districts, making it difficult to provide high-quality programs (NAGC, 2015). Consequently, geography is a pivotal factor determining whether or not a gifted child has access to services. Gifted children who live in states with a funded mandate are most likely to receive services, while children who live in states without a mandate or funding are more likely to have their needs overlooked. Unlike the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Title 1 program, federal dollars for gifted education provided through the Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Act fund a national center and a handful of research and development projects. Although the center and projects produce useful research and materials, no federal money for gifted education goes directly to school districts or to state governments to distribute to school districts.

ethnic groups when looking at patterns of awarding "above average" A and B combined. For some terms, more Hispanic and Black respondents awarded high grades:

- "Advanced Learners": Over 60% of Black and Hispanic respondents awarded an A or a B to schools compared to 45% of White respondents;
- "High-Achieving": Over 65% of Hispanic and 62% of Black respondents awarded an A or a B to schools compared to 53% of White respondents;
- "Gifted and Talented": 60% of Hispanic and 57% of Black respondents awarded an A or a B to schools, compared to 49% of White respondents.

The American public expressed a deep desire for strong public schools, and nothing was more important to them than high-quality teachers.

For other terms, Hispanics were the least likely to award above average grades:

- "Gifted": 61% of White and 58% of Black respondents awarded an A or a B to schools compared to 35% of Hispanic respondents; and
- "Highly-Able": 60% of Black and 58% of White respondents awarded an A or a B to schools compared to 44% of Hispanic respondents.

Across terms and groups, the schools were least likely to receive an A or a B from Hispanic respondents with reference to "Gifted" students (35%), and most likely to receive an A or a B from Black respondents with reference to "Advanced Learners" (67%).

One Among Many: Concern for Gifted Education in Relation to Other Education Issues

Public schools receive relatively good grades for addressing the needs of gifted students, at least compared to the grades they receive for addressing the needs of other students. These grades suggest

Table 2.3

Percentage of IEA-P Respondents who Consider Specific Educational Issues “A Problem, but Not the Biggest Problem” or “One of the Biggest Problems in Education,” Combined (Q20)

Group	Weighted n	Inadequate Funding: High Quality Teachers %	Not Enough Spending: STEM %	Inadequate Spending: Low-Income %	Inadequate Spending: Learning Disabled %	Too Much Testing %	Not Enough Spending: Arts Education %	Inadequate Resources for Gifted Students %	
Education Influencers									
Opinion Elites	42	82	82	78	74	69	64	66	
Parents	424	85	71	75	78	70	67	64	
Race/Ethnicity									
Black	176	90	79	88	85	69	71	60	
Hispanic	156	92	72	84	75	65	60	65	
White	1004	78	77	72	73	66	58	54	
Race/Ethnicity x Income									
Black	Below \$50K	96	88	79	85	82	73	76	65
Black	Above \$50K	74	94	78	92	88	63	63	51
Hispanic	Below \$50K	75	92	67	82	74	65	66	68
Hispanic	Above \$50K	73	90	74	84	75	62	50	58
White	Below \$50K	395	77	76	73	76	62	61	52
White	Above \$50K	580	78	76	70	71	67	56	55
Total	1414	81	77	75	75	66	60	56	

Notes. At the 95% confidence level the standard error of measure for the entire sample is $\pm 2.51\%$. It is $\pm 6.21\%$ among Opinion Elites, $\pm 3.73\%$ among Parents, $\pm 6.03\%$ among Blacks, $\pm 5.81\%$ among Hispanics, and $\pm 3.33\%$ among Whites. Race/Ethnicity does not include respondents who selected more than one race. Race/Ethnicity x Income does not include respondents who selected “Prefer Not to Indicate.”

that gifted education might not rise to the level of a significant issue when juxtaposed with other pressing needs facing schools. To assess whether this was the case, all IEA-P respondents answered a series of questions which assessed their level of concern about gifted education relative to other educational issues. The other issues included in this question were selected based on their prominence in national media and among education professionals: (1) inadequate funding to hire qualified teachers, (2) inadequate funding for schools in low-income areas, (3) inadequate funding for students with learning disabilities, (4) inadequate spending on

STEM or on (5) arts education, and (6) time spent on accountability tests. For each item, respondents were asked to respond on a four-point scale ranging from “Not a Problem at All” to “One of the Biggest Problems in Education.” Respondents answered each item individually rather than rank-ordering the seven issues; item order was randomized to minimize response bias.

Public concern over high profile issues in education. The American public expressed a deep desire for strong public schools, and nothing was more important to them than high-quality teachers.

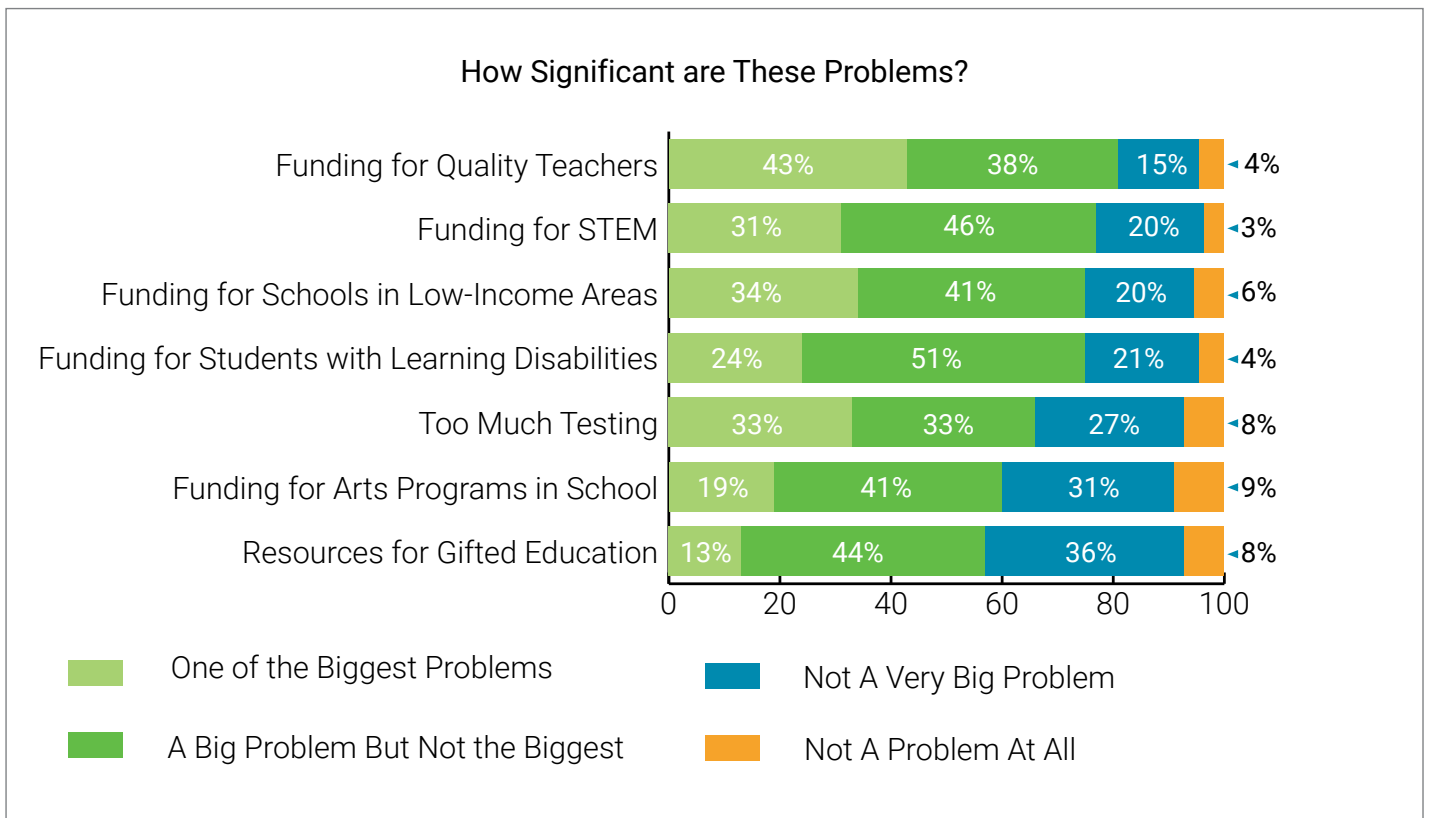


Figure 2.2. Percentage of responses to “How big of a problem for our education system is (x)?”

Fully 80% of respondents considered inadequate funding to hire high-quality teachers a problem, and 43% believed it was one of the biggest problems facing public education (Figure 2.2, Table 2.3).

Inadequate funding for STEM education also provoked concern, with 77% of respondents indicating that it was either “A Big Problem” or “One of the Biggest Problems” facing public schools. A similar percentage (75%) reported that inadequate funding for low-income schools and students with learning disabilities was a problem, and accountability testing was considered excessive by 66% of respondents. Six in ten respondents believed that inadequate funding for arts education was either a big problem or one of the biggest problems facing education.

Public concern over resources for gifted education.

Despite the relatively high grades public schools received for addressing the needs of gifted students, 57% of IEA-P respondents indicated that

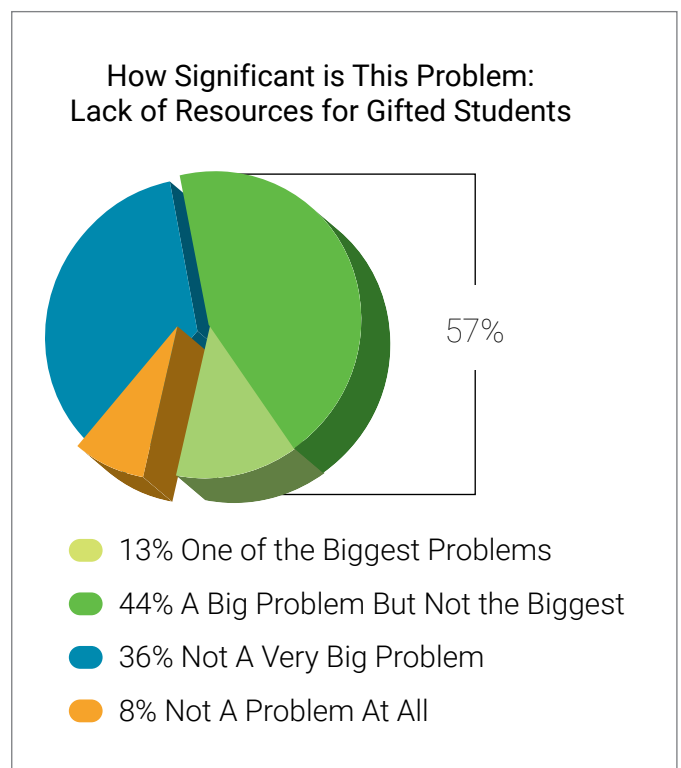


Figure 2.3. Percentage of concern in response to “How big a problem to education is inadequate resources for gifted students?”

inadequate resources for gifted students were a problem. The number of people who thought that the lack of gifted education resources was a sizable problem exceeded the number of parents of gifted students, the number of parents with school-aged children, and even the number college graduates polled. Thirteen percent of the overall respondent group reported that lack of resources for gifted education was one of the most significant problems in education (Figure 2.3).

Education Influencers. Approximately two-thirds of Opinion Elites and Parents reported that a lack of resources in gifted education was a problem (Figure 2.4).

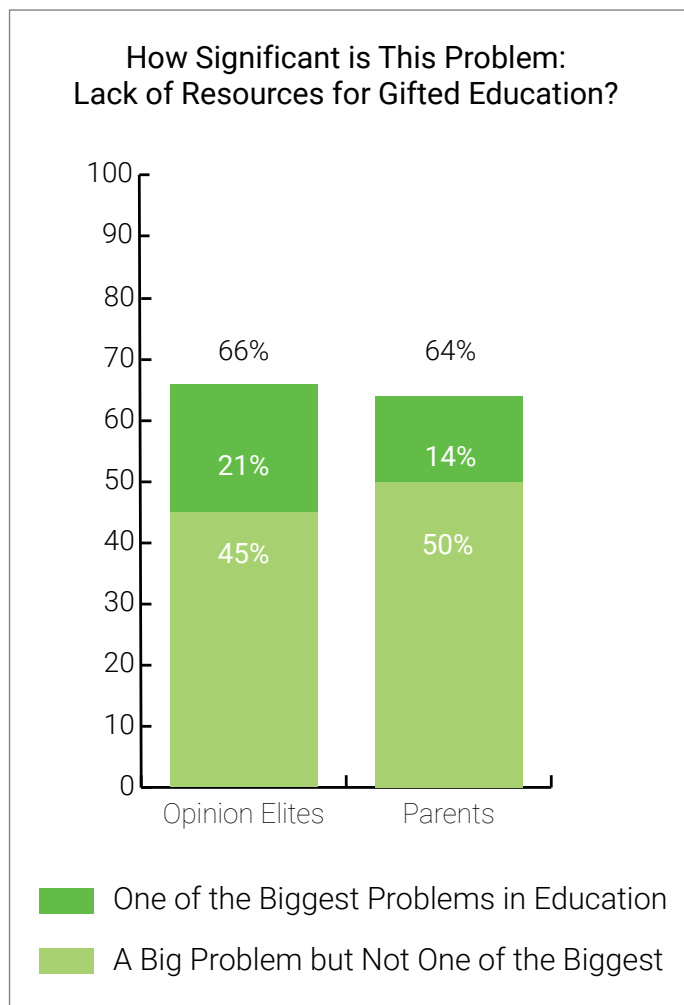


Figure 2.4. Percentage of Opinion Elites and Parents who reported that lack of resources for gifted is a big problem or one of the biggest problems in education.

Racial/Ethnic Groups. Black and Hispanic respondents were much more likely than White respondents to think that inadequate resources for gifted students was a problem, including 60% of Black respondents and 65% of Hispanics.

Over 50% of each race/ethnicity-by-income demographic group agreed that inadequate gifted education resources were either a “A Big Problem” or “One of the Biggest Problems” facing public education. Only 7% of higher-income White respondents, but 26% of higher-income Black respondents considered resources for gifted education “One of the Biggest Problems” in education (Figure 2.5). Between 64-68% of Opinion Elites, Parents, and lower-income Black and Hispanic respondents reported that inadequate resources for gifted students were one of the biggest problems facing public education.

Hispanics were especially concerned about funding for gifted education compared to other issues. Similar numbers of lower-income Hispanics reported concern about funding for STEM (67%), the arts (66%), excessive accountability testing (65%) and inadequate funding for gifted education (68%). More higher-income Hispanics were concerned about funding for gifted education (58%) than for arts education (50%). Higher-income White respondents were also equally likely to report concern about arts funding (56%) and gifted education funding (55%) (Table 2.3).

America Agrees: Inadequate Resources for Gifted Education IS a Problem. Is Remedying the Problem a Public Priority?

Although concern over funding for gifted education did not rise to the same levels of concern as high-profile issues like teacher quality or STEM education, a majority of Americans think that inadequate funding for gifted education is a problem for public schools. Some groups believe that funding gifted education is as pressing an issue as funding for the arts or STEM. The next question addressed by the IEA-P was whether they thought the problem was significant enough to take priority over other issues

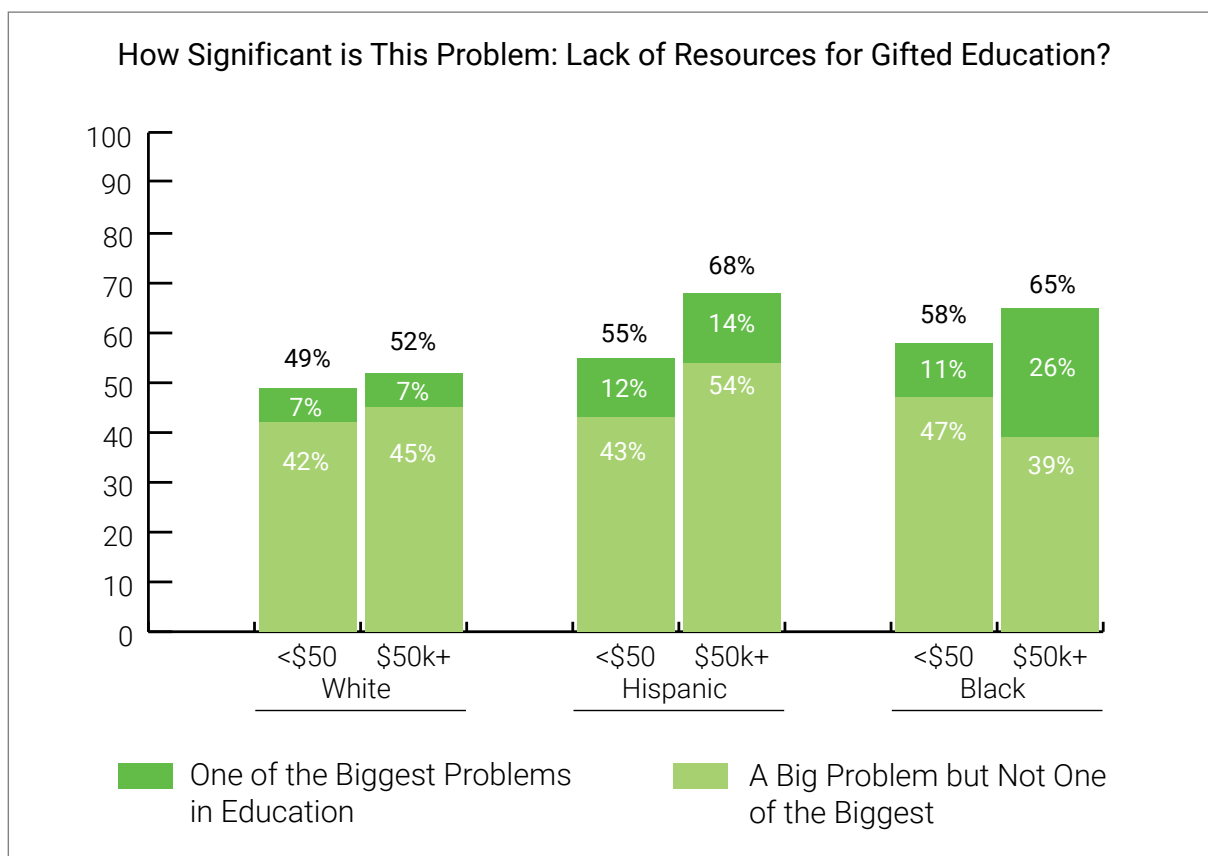


Figure 2.5. Percentage of responses indicating lack of resources for gifted education is a big problem or one of the biggest problems, by race/ethnicity and income.

with the question, “Compared to other priorities in education, how big of a priority should it be to ensure that (x) students have the resources they need?” This question also included a second assessment of the impact of terminology on respondent answers.¹

Does the public think providing resources for “gifted” students is a priority compared to other needs? Fifty-eight percent of the split sample who answered the question with respect to “Gifted” students responded that ensuring appropriate resources was either “One of a Few Very Important Priorities” or the “Single Most Important” priority in education. Another 39% indicated that it was

¹ The question was posed to split-halves X/Y with 707 respondents each (see Appendix B, Table B2). Half of the sample responded to the question with reference to “Gifted,” “Highly-Able,” “High-Potential,” and “Gifted and Talented.” The remainder responded to the question with reference to students who were “Advanced,” “High-Achieving,” “Genius,” and “High-Performing.”

important, although not one of the most important priorities (Figure 2.6). Only 4% of respondents answered that ensuring appropriate resources for gifted students was “Not Very Important” and almost no one thought that resources for gifted students was “Not Important at All.”

Education Influencers. Sixty-four percent of Opinion Elites and 59% of Parents thought that ensuring gifted students have appropriate resources was an important issue for public education. Fewer than five percent of either group reported that the problem was “Not Very Important” (Table 2.4).

Racial/Ethnic Groups. Once again, over 50% of each racial/ethnic and income group gave answers supportive of gifted education, responding that K-12 schools should place a priority on providing gifted students with the resources they need.

Table 2.4

Percentage of Responses to “*Compared to Other Priorities in Education, How Big of a Priority Should be to Ensure That Gifted Students Have the Resources They Need?*” (Q31R1)

Group	Weighted n	Total		Degree of Importance				
		Very Important %	Not Important %	Single Most Important %	One of a Few Very Important %	Important but Not Most %	Not Very Important %	Not at all Important %
Education Influencers								
Opinion Elites	21	64	3	16	48	33	3	.
Parents	212	59	3	9	50	38	2	1
Race/ethnicity								
Black	86	67	7	18	49	26	7	0
Hispanic	78	56	6	12	44	38	6	.
White	513	55	3	6	49	41	3	0
Race/Ethnicity x Income								
Black Below \$50K	48	74	6	23	51	20	6	.
Black Above \$50K	37	57	8	12	46	34	7	1
Hisp. Below \$50K	33	59	7	8	51	34	7	.
Hisp. Above \$50K	45	53	6	15	39	41	6	.
White Below \$50K	192	53	6	7	46	41	6	1
White Above \$50K	312	57	1	4	52	42	1	.
Total	707	57	4	8	49	39	4	0

Notes. Split Sample X. At the 95% confidence level the standard error of measure for the entire sample is $\pm 2.51\%$. It is $\pm 6.21\%$ among Opinion Elites, $\pm 3.73\%$ among Parents, $\pm 6.03\%$ among Blacks, $\pm 5.81\%$ among Hispanics, and $\pm 3.33\%$ among Whites. Hisp. = Hispanic. "." = too small to calculate. Race/Ethnicity does not include respondents who selected more than one race. Race/Ethnicity x Income does not include respondents who selected "Prefer Not to Indicate."

Gifted education was most likely to be considered important among low-income Black respondents, 74% of whom reported that gifted education was a priority, and 24% of whom considered providing resources for gifted education the "Single Most Important Priority" for public education.

Investment in gifted education went far beyond an intellectual or social "elite"; over 60% of both the higher- and lower- income groups indicated support for providing resources for gifted children. Fewer than 10% of each group reported that providing

resources for gifted education was "Not Very Important." Only a handful of respondents believed that providing gifted students with resources they need was "Not at All Important" as an educational priority.

The impact of terminology on priorities. Public support for providing resources for gifted students was high regardless of the term used, although the terms "High-Potential," "Gifted and Talented," and "Gifted" elicited the highest level of support (Table 2.5). Across terms, 7-9% of the public reported that

How Much of a Priority is it to Ensure Gifted Students Have the Resources They Need?

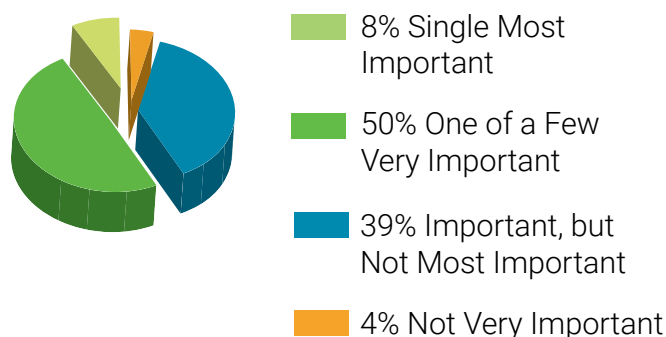


Figure 2.6. Percent of respondents who consider resources for gifted students a priority, relative to other concerns.

providing resources for gifted students was the “Single Most Important” priority in education, and between 51-58% of the public thought it was either the “Single Most Important Priority” or “One of a Few Very Important Priorities.” As illustrated in Figure 2.7, the public supports providing services to both gifted and high-achieving students, even though many associate the two terms with different groups of children.

Investment in gifted education went far beyond an intellectual or social “elite”; over 60% of both the higher- and lower- income groups indicated support for providing resources for gifted children.

Education Influencers. Between 63-65% of Opinion Elites believed that providing resources for “Gifted,” “Gifted and Talented,” “Highly-Able,” or “High-Potential” students was either the single most important or one of the few important priorities in public education. They responded much more favorably to these four terms than to “High-Achieving,” “Genius,” “High-Performing,” or

“Advanced,” none of which received support from more than 60% of the subgroup. Parents were most likely to respond that schools should place a priority on providing “High-Potential” or “Gifted and Talented” students with the resources they need.

Racial/Ethnic Groups. A majority of respondents thought that providing resources for gifted students was an important priority; however, the overall results masked sizable differences among demographic groups. Black respondents were most likely to consider gifted education a priority. Over 60% of Black respondents said gifted education was either the single most important priority or one of a few important priorities for all terms except one, “Genius” (58%). Seventy-two percent of Black respondents reported that ensuring resources for “High-Potential” students was an important priority.

Regardless of the term used, a majority of Hispanics considered ensuring resources for gifted students a priority, with especially high rates of support for “High-Potential” and “Advanced” students (66% each) as well as for “Genius” students (64%).

The proportion of White respondents in support of ensuring services for gifted students ranged from 47-60%, and was consistently lower than the percent of Black respondents in support, regardless of the term used to describe gifted students. The proportion of White respondents in support of ensuring services for gifted students only reached 60% once, for “High-Potential” students.

Lower-income Black respondents voiced strong support for ensuring resources for gifted students, often at margins far beyond White, Hispanic, or higher-income Black respondents. Over 70% of lower-income Black respondents believed that providing resources for gifted students was an important priority across a majority of terms. The only two terms that did not prompt support from more than 70% of lower-income Black respondents were “Genius” at 68%, and “Advanced” at 64%. In many cases the proportion of lower-income Black respondents in support was 15-20% higher than other groups.

Table 2.5

Percentage Responding to “Single Most Important Priority” and “One of A Few Important Priorities” Combined: “Compared to Other Priorities in Education, How Big of a Priority Should it be to Ensure That (x) Have the Resources They Need?” (Q31)

Group	Split Sample A (n=707)				Split Sample B (n=707)				
	Gifted %	Highly-Able %	High-Potential %	Gifted/Talented %	High-Achieving %	Genius %	High-Performing %	Advanced %	
Education Influencers									
Opinion Elites	64	64	63	65	55	47	55	59	
Parents	59	53	64	61	54	52	54	58	
Race/Ethnicity									
Black	67	63	72	66	68	58	65	63	
Hispanic	56	51	66	55	59	64	59	66	
White	55	54	60	58	49	47	51	52	
Race/Ethnicity x Income									
Black	Below \$50K	74	71	80	73	72	68	69	64
	Above \$50K	57	51	59	57	62	51	59	62
Hispanic	Below \$50K	59	51	69	59	68	71	63	69
	Above \$50K	53	51	64	52	52	59	57	65
White	Below \$50K	53	56	57	60	45	44	50	49
	Above \$50K	57	53	62	56	50	49	51	53
Total		57	55	62	59	53	51	55	56

Notes. For subsample standard error of measure see Appendix B, Table B3. Race/Ethnicity does not include respondents who selected more than one race. Race/Ethnicity x Income does not include respondents who selected “Prefer Not to Indicate.”

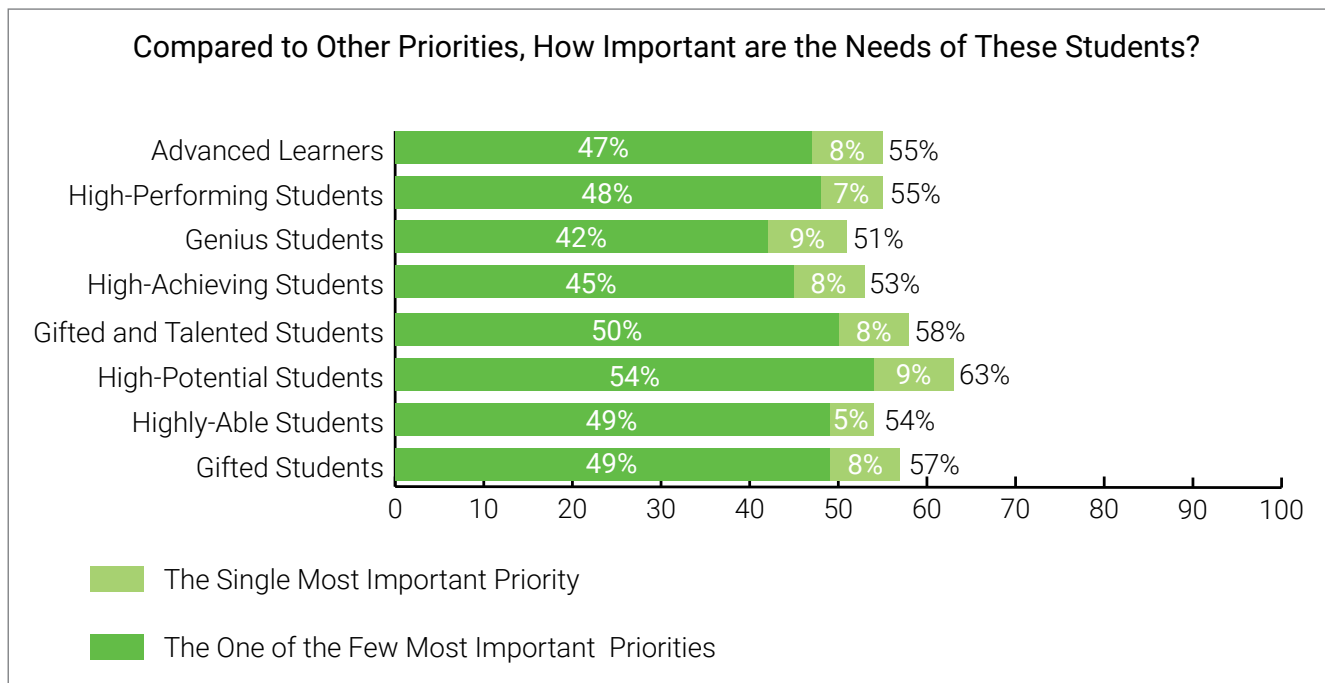


Figure 2.7. Percentage of those who consider gifted education “The Single Most Important” or “One of the Few Most Important” priorities, by term.¹

¹ Differences in totals with Table 2.5 are due to rounding.

Synopsis

How the Public Grades K-12 Schools

The American public does not subscribe to many of the so-called “myths” of gifted education, however, one myth that still seems prevalent is that gifted education programs already possess the resources they need to educate the nation’s brightest students. Well over half of the individuals polled believed that gifted education is necessary and voiced support for providing resources for gifted students. However, when grading the K-12 schools, the public also reported thinking that schools are already doing a good job meeting the needs of gifted students, relative to other groups.

- **IEA-P respondents’ grades of K-12 schools reflect a generally dim view of public education in America.** Only 5% of IEA-P respondents gave an A to public schools for addressing the needs of students with learning disabilities, 3% gave As for addressing the needs of low-income students and 2% awarded As for addressing the needs of all students.
- **IEA-P respondents generally believed that the public schools were doing a better job addressing the needs of gifted students than needs of all students, low-income students, or students with learning disabilities.** The American public was more generous in awarding either an A or a B for services to gifted students, regardless of the term used for giftedness. The term “Gifted” received the highest number of As (21%), and “Highly-Able” the lowest (12%).
- **Americans think that services for gifted students are adequate, even robust, awarding them an A or a B grade; here, public perception diverges with reality.** The public seems uninformed about the absence of gifted programs in many states and inadequate funding nationwide. Correcting the public’s misconceptions about the availability of gifted programs is a necessary first step to advocacy to fill in the nation’s patchwork quilt of programs and policies for gifted students.

The Lack of Resources for Gifted Education is a Problem

Respondents’ answers to benchmark questions reveal substantial concern about the state of K-12 public education. They responded with trepidation about every issue presented in the poll, but nothing was more important to the public than the absence of funding for high-quality teachers. Concern about this issue was high among all respondents but particularly high among Black and Hispanic respondents, 90% of whom reported that lack of funding for high-quality teachers was either “A Big Problem” or “One of the Biggest Problems” in education.

- Teacher quality, STEM education, and educational equity for low-income students are common topics in national education news, so it is natural that the public responds to them with heightened concern. Moreover, issues such as teacher quality, STEM, the arts, and testing directly affect all students, regardless of ability, while the state of gifted education directly affects only a subset of students. Even so, 57% of the public believed that providing resources for gifted education was either “A Big Problem” or “One of the Biggest Problems” in education. This was both less concern than was expressed about more salient educational issues, and more concern than might be expected given the lack of exposure the public has to information about challenges in funding gifted education programs around the country.



The terms most likely to evoke support for ensuring resources, overall and within analysis subgroups, were:

“Gifted,” “Gifted and Talented,” and “High-Potential,”

- **The public awarded relatively high grades to schools for addressing gifted students' needs. Even so, the number of people who were concerned about the lack of gifted education resources and thought it was a sizable problem exceeded the number of parents of gifted students, the number of parents with school-aged children, and even the number college graduates polled.**

Improving Gifted Education is a Priority

Judging from the responses of IEA-P respondents, the concern voiced by the American public translates into support for change. Many believe that providing gifted students with appropriate resources should be among the nation's education priorities.

- Support was reported from over 50% of poll respondents regardless of the term used to describe giftedness and despite their differing interpretations of terms such as "Gifted" and "High-Achieving." **The terms most likely to evoke support for ensuring resources, overall and within analysis subgroups, were "Gifted," "Gifted and Talented," and "High-Potential."**
- **A majority of every income and racial/ethnic group believed that lack of resources for gifted education was a problem and placed a high priority on addressing the problem.** Over 50% of each race/ethnicity-by-income group agreed that inadequate gifted education resources were either a "Big Problem" or "One of the Biggest Problems" facing public education, indicating support for providing resources for gifted children that extends far beyond an elitist minority.

References

National Association for Gifted Children (2015). *2014-2015 State of the states in gifted education*. Washington, DC: Author.



CHAPTER 3
PUBLIC CONCERN OVER COMMON PROBLEMS IN GIFTED EDUCATION

Education must be increasingly concerned about the fullest development of all children and youth, and it will be the responsibility of the schools to seek learning conditions which will enable each individual to reach the highest level of learning possible.

—Benjamin Bloom, 1971

Change in public policy is the result of public concern over the status quo, accompanied by public support for an idea that resolves the concern. Changes in policies to improve education services for gifted students are unlikely without both public concern and support. For this reason, the next set of questions in the IEA-P assessed the extent of public concern over commonly cited problems within gifted education, and the extent of public support for specific recommendations which could resolve the problems. This series of questions also presented an opportunity to assess public opinion about specific elements of gifted education, as opposed to addressing “gifted education” as a whole. Results from questions about the public’s concerns are presented in this chapter; public support for specific program provisions is addressed in Chapter 5.

Public Concern over Common Problems in Gifted Education.

IEA-P respondents were asked to rate their level of concern about eight issues commonly cited as problems for gifted education (Figure 3.1). The eight topics were collapsed into four problem areas: (1) access for gifted students to high-quality gifted education programs, including inequitable identification and location of gifted programs; (2) teacher preparation in gifted education; (3) availability of program provisions for gifted students, including ability grouping, acceleration, schools for the gifted, and mentorship opportunities; and (4) inadvertent negative impacts of gifted education on other students (Figure 3.1). While a majority of respondents expressed concern about each topic, their answers clustered into three tiers: equal access to quality programs and teacher preparation evoked the most concern, followed by availability of program provisions, and then the impact gifted programs had on other students (Table 3.1, Figure 3.2).

Program Feature	Concerns
Access to high-quality gifted programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inequitable identification practices • Gifted programs primarily in high-income areas
Teacher preparation in gifted education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers are inadequately trained to meet the needs of gifted students
Gifted education program provisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No opportunity to accelerate • Grouping by age instead of ability • Insufficient number of schools serving gifted students • Inadequate number of mentorship programs
Inadvertent negative impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying some children as gifted inherently disadvantages students who are not identified.

Figure 3.1. Program features, and associated concerns addressed in the IEA-P.

Access to high-quality gifted education programs. Equal access to quality programs was the issue most likely to arouse concern among IEA-P respondents. Taken as a whole, similar proportions of the American public were concerned about equitable identification practices and the disproportionate location of gifted education programs in higher-income neighborhoods.

Eighty-four percent of IEA-P respondents reported concern about the under-identification of low-income and minority gifted students, and 42% of the group

Table 3.1

Percentage of Response to: "Please Indicate how Much Each of the Following Concerns You Personally, If at All." (Q42)

Concern		Race/Ethnicity				Race/Ethnicity x Income						Education Influencers	
		Total	White	Hisp.	Black	White		Hispanic		Black		OE	Parent
		Weighted n: Unweighted n: %	1004 815 %	156 281 %	176 261 %	<\$50 246 %	\$50k+ 554 %	<\$50 97 %	\$50k+ 182 %	<\$50 128 %	\$50k+ 126 %	42 246 %	424 690 %
Minority and low-income gifted students often aren't identified when they should be	A Great Deal of Concern	42	37	49	66	40	35	48	54	63	71	42	36
	Somewhat Concerned	42	45	39	26	43	46	39	34	25	27	43	48
	Not Very Concerned	13	15	7	6	15	15	9	7	8	2	12	13
	Not at All Concerned	3	3	4	3	2	4	4	5	4	0	3	3
	Total Concern	84	82	88	92	83	80	87	88	87	97	85	84
Gifted programs are only in high income areas	A Great Deal of Concern	36	35	31	50	40	32	26	40	47	53	41	35
	Somewhat Concerned	45	46	51	37	44	46	58	38	36	39	43	48
	Not Very Concerned	15	16	16	9	14	17	11	22	11	7	13	15
	Not at All Concerned	4	4	3	4	3	4	5	1	6	1	3	2
	Total Concern	81	80	81	87	83	78	84	77	83	92	84	83
Teachers are not sufficiently trained to meet the needs of gifted students	A Great Deal of Concern	30	29	33	40	30	28	22	48	37	43	35	32
	Somewhat Concerned	52	52	52	44	50	53	61	38	46	42	45	53
	Not Very Concerned	15	16	13	13	17	16	15	13	14	10	17	14
	Not at All Concerned	3	3	1	4	3	2	1	2	3	5	3	2
	Total Concern	82	81	85	84	80	82	84	86	83	85	80	84
Students identified as gifted often cannot accelerate	A Great Deal of Concern	25	23	35	32	23	23	37	35	33	32	25	26
	Somewhat Concerned	51	52	48	47	49	53	46	45	41	53	54	51
	Not Very Concerned	21	23	11	16	26	21	12	12	19	12	19	20
	Not at All Concerned	3	3	6	5	2	3	6	7	7	3	2	4
	Total Concern	76	75	83	79	71	76	83	81	74	85	79	76
Students are grouped into classes by age, not ability	A Great Deal of Concern	36	36	35	37	40	34	39	35	32	45	37	35
	Somewhat Concerned	42	41	47	40	41	40	39	49	39	39	40	44
	Not Very Concerned	19	20	15	19	17	22	19	12	23	12	18	17
	Not at All Concerned	3	3	3	5	3	3	2	4	6	3	5	4
	Total Concern	77	77	82	77	80	74	78	84	71	84	77	79
There are few mentor programs for gifted students	A Great Deal of Concern	27	25	35	35	24	25	36	38	36	32	38	30
	Somewhat Concerned	51	50	51	45	51	51	47	51	42	50	43	51
	Not Very Concerned	19	21	11	15	21	20	13	11	17	11	14	16
	Not at All Concerned	4	4	2	6	4	4	4	0	5	6	4	3
	Total Concern	77	75	87	80	75	76	83	89	78	82	82	81
There are relatively few schools that serve gifted students	A Great Deal of Concern	24	23	25	29	25	22	27	27	30	27	32	24
	Somewhat Concerned	53	53	56	48	53	53	53	53	44	54	48	56
	Not Very Concerned	20	21	16	19	20	22	19	15	22	16	18	18
	Not at All Concerned	3	3	3	4	3	3	1	5	4	3	2	2
	Total Concern	77	76	81	77	78	75	80	80	74	81	80	80
Identifying certain kids as "gifted" unfairly limits the potential of other children.	A Great Deal of Concern	14	11	17	24	14	10	22	14	29	18	17	14
	Somewhat Concerned	40	38	48	44	42	35	43	48	45	42	32	37
	Not Very Concerned	32	37	20	19	31	39	19	23	12	27	28	34
	Not at All Concerned	15	14	15	13	13	16	16	15	14	12	23	15
	Total Concern	54	49	65	68	56	45	65	62	74	60	49	51

Notes. <\$50 = Income under \$50,000/year, \$50k+ = Income \$50,000 and above, OE = Opinion Elite, Hisp = Hispanics, Total Concern = the sum of A Great Deal of Concern plus Somewhat Concerned, "." = too few observations to calculate. At the 95% confidence level the standard error of measure for the entire sample is ±2.51%. It is ±6.21% among Opinion Elites, ±3.73% among Parents, ±6.03% among Blacks, ±5.81% among Hispanics, and ±3.33 among Whites. Race/Ethnicity does not include respondents who selected more than one race. Race/Ethnicity x Income does not include respondents who selected "Prefer Not to Indicate."

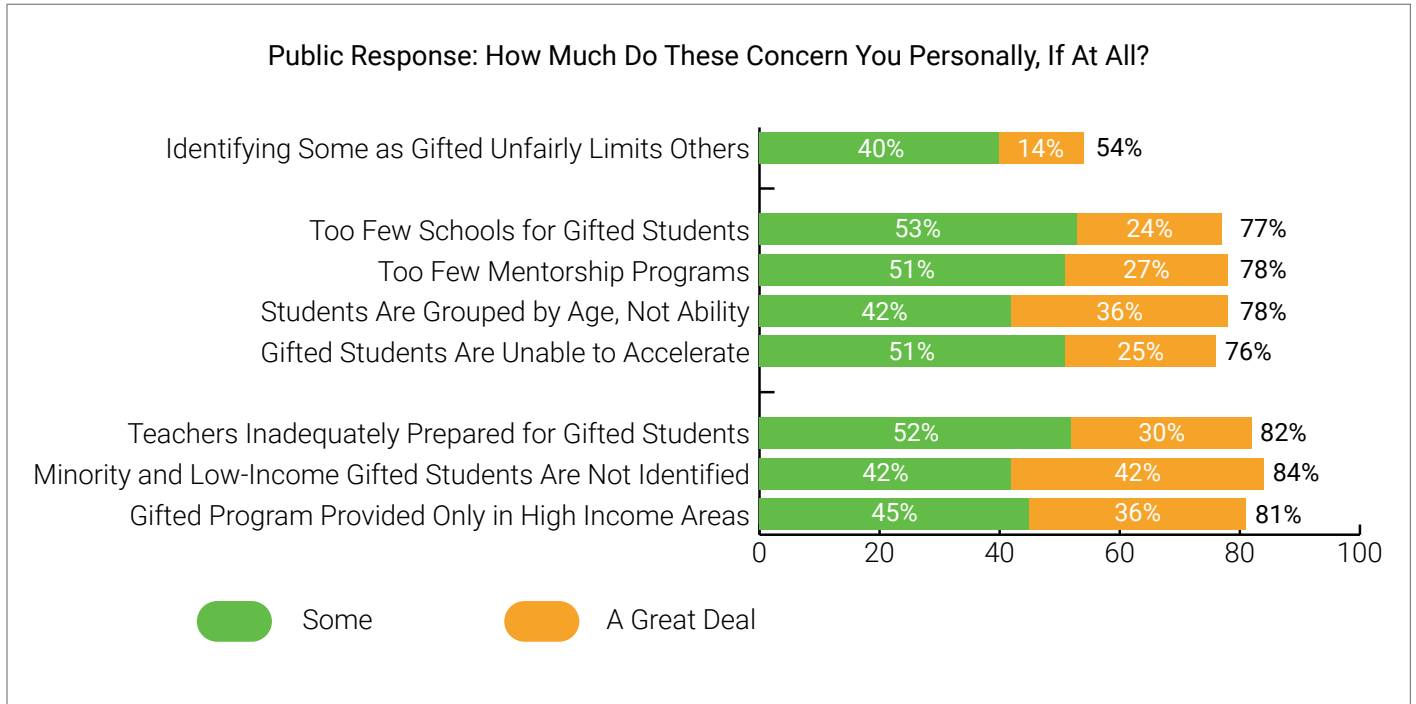


Figure 3.2. Percentage of respondents who reported “Some” or “A Great Deal” of concern about common problems in gifted education (Q42).

reported that this issue concerned them “A Great Deal.” The public was also concerned that gifted programs were typically found in higher-income areas with 81% of the respondent group expressing either “Some” or “A Great Deal” of concern (Table 3.1).

Education Influencers. Similar percentages of Opinion Elites and Parents indicated concern about under-identification of minority and low-income gifted students (85% of Opinion Elites and 84% of Parents), and the absence of gifted programs in low-income areas (84% of Opinion Elites and 83% of Parents). Opinion Elites were slightly more likely to report “A Great Deal” of concern about both issues: 42% of Opinion Elites and 36% of Parents indicated a great deal of concern about under-identification, and 41% of Opinion Elites and 35% of Parents reported a great deal of concern about the absence of gifted programs in low-income areas.

Racial/Ethnic Groups. At least 80% of each racial/ethnic subgroup expressed either some concern or

In the Poll...

75% indicated general concern over lack of funding for educating all low-income students.

81% reported concern about the tendency to put gifted programs in high income areas.

84% reported concern about underidentification of low-income and minority gifted students.

a great deal of concern about under-identification of minority and low-income gifted students (Figure 4.3). This concern was most frequently reported by Black respondents, 92% of whom expressed concern, followed by 88% of Hispanic and 82% of White respondents (Table 4.1). Hispanic and Black respondents were also most likely to report “A Great Deal of Concern” over identification practices, including 66% of Blacks and 49% of Hispanics, compared to 37% of White respondents. Higher-income Black respondents expressed almost unanimous concern (97%) over the failure to identify low-income and minority students.

Black and Hispanic respondents were more concerned about identification than they were about disproportionate location of gifted programs in higher-income areas. Among Black respondents, 66% were “A Great Deal” concerned about equitable identification while 50% were

similarly concerned about program access. Among Hispanic respondents, 49% were “A Great Deal” concerned about identification and while 31% were very concerned about program access. White respondents reported equivalent levels of concern for identification and gifted program location; 82% reported concern about identification and 80% about program access (37% and 35% a great deal of concern, respectively) (Table 3.1).

Concern about adequate teacher preparation in gifted education. Early in the IEA-P, respondents voiced their desire for *all* classrooms to be led by well-qualified teachers (Chapter 3). In this section of the poll they indicated that preparation to teach gifted students is equally important.

When asked if they were concerned that “teachers are not sufficiently trained to meet the needs of gifted students,” 82% of the public said they were, including 30% who said they had “A Great Deal of Concern.” Only 3% of respondents were “Not at All Concerned” about the teacher preparation in gifted education.

Education Influencers. Parents were among the most likely to report concern over the training teachers receive to work with gifted students (85% “Some” and “A Great Deal” of concern combined). Opinion Elites were somewhat more likely than Parents to report “A Great Deal” of concern over teacher preparation in gifted education (37% Opinion Elites, 32% Parents).

Racial/Ethnic Groups. Concern about teacher preparation in gifted education exceeded 80% and varied by only a few percentage points regardless of race/ethnicity, or race/ethnicity-by-income group. Higher-income Hispanic respondents were most likely to report concern (86%).

Discrepancies were observed in the magnitude of concern about teacher preparation in gifted education by racial/ethnic x income group. Black respondents were substantially more likely than Hispanic or White respondents to report a great deal of concern (40% Black, 33% Hispanic, 29% White). However, the largest within-group disparity was

In the Poll...

81% of the public reported concern over whether *ALL* schools had adequate funding to hire high-quality teachers.

82% indicated concern over teacher preparation to work with gifted students specifically.

86% support *requiring* training for teachers who work with gifted students.

observed among Hispanics, with 48% of higher-income Hispanics but only 22% of lower-income Hispanics reporting a great deal of concern about teacher preparation in gifted education.

Concern over availability of recommended gifted program provisions. The American public was slightly more concerned about equitable access to quality gifted programs and teacher preparation to work with gifted students than they were about the availability of the specific gifted program provisions included in this poll. Even so, clear majorities of over 70% indicated concern over opportunities for students to be grouped by ability or accelerated, over the absence of specialized schools for gifted students, and over a lack of mentorship opportunities (see Figure 3.1, Table 3.1).

Ability grouping and acceleration. Among the four program provisions, the absence of ability grouping evoked the most concern, with 36% expressing a great deal of concern and another

42% reporting some concern that schools group students according to age instead of ability (Table 3.1). Concern over the absence of ability grouping, expressed by 78% of respondents, outstripped concern over any possible negative social-emotional impact of grouping, reported by 45% (Figure 3.3).

The absence of opportunities to accelerate evoked a similar concern. Seventy-five percent of the total respondent group indicating they had “A Great Deal” or “Some Concern” that gifted students were not allowed to accelerate (Table 3.1).

Education Influencers. Opinion Elites and Parents had similar response patterns when answering questions about program provisions. Opinion Elites and Parents were each marginally more likely to be concerned about access to mentorship programs and ability grouping than they were about opportunities for acceleration. Opinion Elites were somewhat more likely than Parents to report “A Great Deal of Concern” over the availability of mentorships (38%

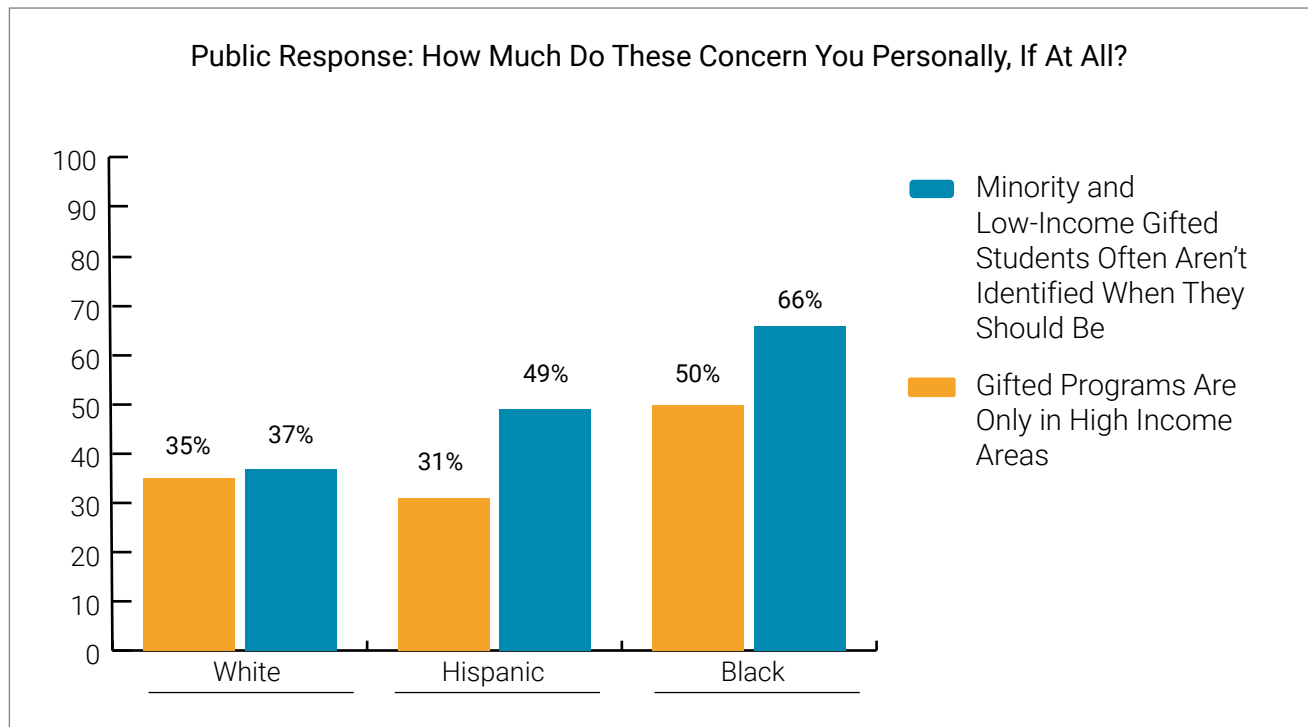


Figure 3.3. Percentage of respondents who reported “A Great Deal of Concern” over under-identification and lack of access to programs by racial/ethnic group.

Opinion Elites, 30% Parents) and the availability of schools for the gifted (32% Opinion Elites, 24% Parents).

Racial/Ethnic Groups. Concern that students were grouped by age instead of ability was high among racial/ethnic groups, led by higher-income Blacks and Hispanics (84% each), and lower-income Whites (80%). Higher-income Black respondents were mostly likely to report “A Great Deal” of concern (45%), and lower-income Blacks were least likely (32%).

Over 80% of Hispanics reported concern over gifted students’ ability to accelerate (83% higher-income and 81% lower-income) and were more likely than White respondents to report a great deal of concern (37% higher-income and 35% lower-income Hispanics, compared to 23% each for lower- and higher-income Whites). Among lower-income White

Only a handful of respondents claimed that they were “Not at All Concerned” about the issues presented in this section of the poll—well under 10% of respondents, regardless of the question.

respondents 71% reported concern that gifted students were unable to accelerate; this was lower than other subgroups but still nearly three-quarters of the subgroup.

Hispanic and Black respondents were more likely than White respondents to express concern over a lack of mentorship programs. Hispanics were most likely to be concerned, especially higher-income Hispanics, 89% of whom reported being either

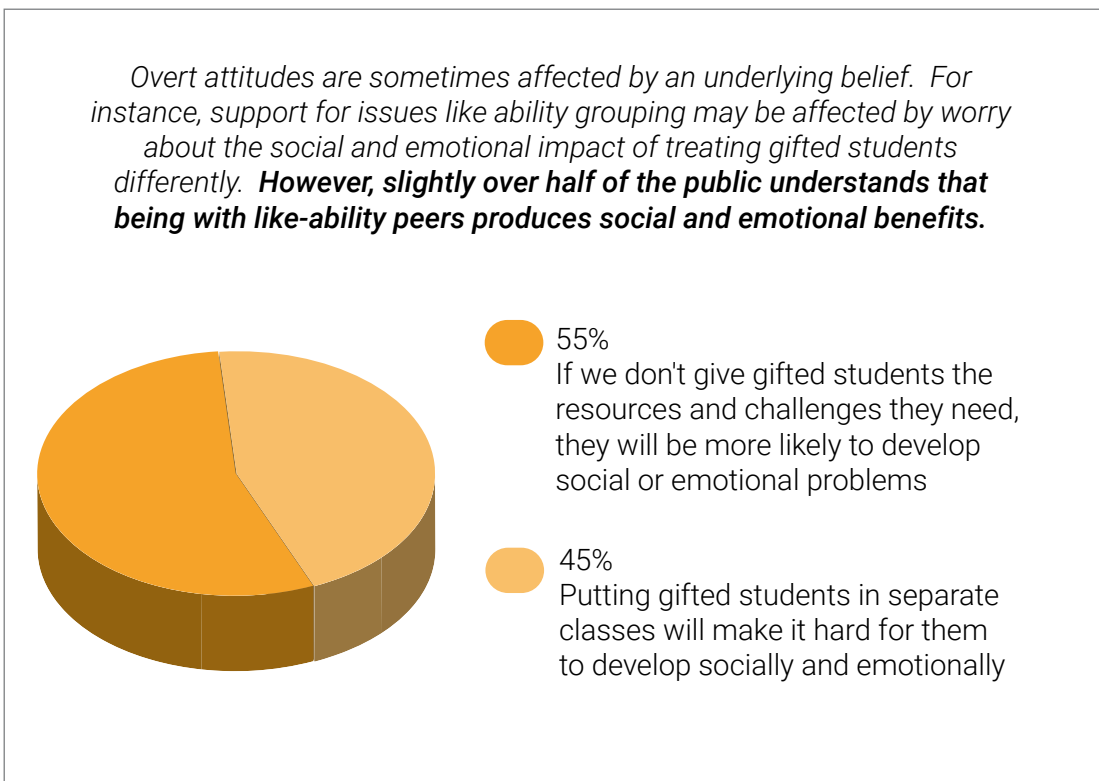


Figure 3.3. Percentage of response to “When it comes to accelerating gifted children (in special programs, or by advancing them to a higher-grade level), which concerns you more?”

“Somewhat” or “A Great Deal” concerned. Eighty percent of Black respondents and 75% of White respondents were concerned over the absence of mentorship opportunities.

Response patterns were repeated with respect to the availability of schools for the gifted. Concern over this issue was marginally higher among Hispanics, 81% of whom reported concern, than it was for White or Black respondents (76% and 77%, respectively). Among lower-income Black respondents, 30% were most likely to report “A Great Deal” of concern, while higher-income White respondents were least likely (22%).

Inadvertent negative impact on students in general education. Compared to the level of concern expressed over other issues in this section of the poll, IEA-P respondents were not overly concerned about whether identifying some students as gifted is unfair to students who are not identified. Although 54% were worried that identifying some students as gifted created unfair distinctions among students, the concern was comparatively modest. Only 14% were concerned “A Great Deal” about gifted education being unfair to others, far below the proportion who were “A Great Deal” concerned about equitable access to gifted programs (32%) or under-identification of minority and low-income gifted students (42%). Lower-income Hispanics and lower-income Blacks were most likely to express a great deal of concern about the impact of identifying some students as gifted and others not, but even these respondents were twice as likely to express concern over equitable identification and program access (Table 3.1).

Concern over re-allocation of funds from other programs to support gifted education. Earlier in the poll, respondents made it clear that they had a general dislike of spending trade-offs in education, with 80% regretting the need to choose among different groups of students (see Chapter 2). There was aversion to the fact that funding one program often requires diverting funds from another equally worthy program. However, different constituent groups are likely to favor different kinds of trade-

offs. IEA-P respondents were asked two questions which assessed public concern over funding gifted education *instead of other programs*. The first question assessed concern that gifted education would draw funds away from students with learning disabilities, and the second question assessed concern that gifted education would divert funds from efforts to improve low-income schools.

These were the only questions on the IEA-P where public support for gifted education faltered. In each instance between 60-75% of respondents indicated some level of concern that funds spent on gifted education would take money away from other priorities. Concern tended to be higher for the question which referenced improving low-income schools (Table 3.2).

Education Influencers. Opinion Elites and Parents had nearly identical responses to each question. Among Opinion Elites, 64% indicated concern that funding for gifted programs would be drawn from low-income schools, and 60% indicated concern that funds would be reallocated from programs for students with learning disabilities. Among Parents, 67% expressed concern that funding would be moved from low-income schools, and 65% that it would be moved from students with learning disabilities.

Racial/Ethnic Groups. Nearly three quarters of Hispanic respondents, 74%, indicated concern over the impact of gifted education on funding for low-income schools, and 63% were concerned that gifted education programming would take funds away from students with learning disabilities. Black respondents were far more likely than White or Hispanic respondents to report “A Great Deal” of concern that gifted education would take funds from improvements to low-income schools (35% Black, 18% White, and 20% Hispanic).

While these findings provide a useful reality check on the context of the public’s support for gifted education, it is worth noting that public concern over teacher preparation for teachers of the gifted (82% concerned), over failure to identify minority and low-income students (84% concerned), and over


Table 3.2

Percentage of Respondents' Concern About Gifted Education Siphoning Funds from Other Programs: Comparing Funds Drawn from Low-Income Schools or from Students with Learning Disabilities (Q42, R9-10).

Concern		Race/Ethnicity				Race/Ethnicity x Income						Education Influencers	
		Total	White	Hisp	Black	White		Hispanic		Black		OE	Parent
						<\$50	\$50k+	<\$50	\$50k+	<\$50	\$50k+		
	Weighted n:	1414	1004	156	176	395	580	75	73	96	74	42	424
	Unweighted n:	1414	815	281	261	246	554	97	182	128	126	246	690
		%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
How concerned are you that funding programs for gifted students will take away funding from more important priorities, like <u>improving low income schools?</u>	A Great Deal Concerned	21	18	20	35	24	15	20	21	37	33	26	19
	Somewhat Concerned	46	47	54	37	44	48	50	53	39	33	38	48
	Not very Concerned	25	28	19	20	25	29	21	18	14	28	29	24
	Not at All Concerned	8	8	8	8	7	8	9	7	10	6	6	9
	Total Concerned	67	65	74	72	68	63	70	74	75	66	64	67
How concerned are you that programs for gifted students will take away funding from more important priorities, like <u>programs for students with disabilities?</u>	A Great Deal Concerned	20	18	23	33	19	18	26	23	35	29	21	19
	Somewhat Concerned	43	43	40	41	44	42	39	35	37	44	39	46
	Not very Concerned	28	30	26	16	27	32	22	32	15	20	32	25
	Not at All Concerned	9	9	11	10	11	8	13	10	14	7	8	9
	Total Concerned	63	61	63	73	62	60	65	58	72	74	60	65

Notes. <\$50 = Income under \$50,000/year, \$50k+ = Income \$50,000 and up, OE = Opinion Elite, Hisp = Hispanics, Total Concern = the sum of A Great Deal of Concern plus Somewhat Concerned. At the 95% confidence level the standard error of measure for the entire sample is ±2.51%. It is ±6.21% among Opinion Elites, ±3.73% among Parents, ±6.03% among Blacks, ±5.81% among Hispanics, and ±3.33 among Whites. Race/Ethnicity does not include respondents who selected more than one race. Race/Ethnicity x Income does not include respondents who selected "Prefer Not to Indicate."

the absence of gifted programs in low-income areas (81% concerned) far exceeded public concern that gifted programs would cause redirection of funds from high-need students (67% over siphoning from low-income students and 63% from students with learning disabilities). Concern over providing specific improvements in gifted education may override concern over funding distribution across programs if the initial improvements to gifted education target teacher preparation, equitable identification, and program access, so the emphasis is on building capacity, not losing resources.



Win-Win

The public wants no reductions in funding for improvements to low-income schools, and at the same time more funds allocated for gifted programs in high-need areas. Combined, these preferences point to a win-win of opportunity: Building gifted education programs in low-income areas simultaneously increases resources for low-income schools and provides more support for a chronically neglected population of gifted, low-income students.

Synopsis

- **Overall, the public was more likely to express concern over specific issues in gifted education than over gifted education generally.** While 57% of the public voiced concern over gifted education, 82% were concerned about the availability of quality teachers for gifted students, 84% were concerned about equitable identification of gifted students, and 76% were concerned that gifted students could not accelerate. ***Advocates may achieve more success if they promote specific program elements in addition to an omnibus "gifted program."***
- The number of people concerned about teacher preparation for teachers of the gifted, about the failure to identify minority and low-income students, and about the absence of gifted programs in low-income areas exceeded the number of people concerned that gifted programs would cause redirection of funds away from other students.
- **Concern that teachers are not sufficiently trained to work with gifted students was voiced by 81% of IEA-P respondents.** The rate of concern was over 80% for Opinion Elites, Parents, and all racial/ethnic x income groups.
- **77% of the public was concerned that students are grouped in classrooms by age rather than academic ability.** The magnitude of the response suggests that even people whose children would not qualify for an advanced class support some form of ability grouping.
- A majority of respondents reported concern over equitable identification and program access. Concern over identification and program access was especially high among Black and Hispanic respondents. **However, Black and Hispanic respondents were somewhat more likely to express concern over identification compared to program access. 97% of higher-income Black respondents expressed "A Great Deal" of concern over equitable identification.** The reason for the heightened concern about identification

is unclear; however, it stands to reason that even nearby programs are inaccessible to some qualified candidates if the identification process is not equitable.

- **Concern over availability of schools for gifted students was reported by 77% of IEA-P respondents.** Consistent with the public's support for ability grouping and acceleration, Americans support allowing gifted students to learn with like-minded peers.

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Public Perception and Professional Practice

Teacher Education is Pivotal to High Quality Gifted Education

The American public intuitively understands what research consistently demonstrates: Teacher preparation is vital to a quality education. This is as true for gifted education as it is for general or special education. Unfortunately, opportunities for pre-service teachers to learn about gifted students are rare. Currently, neither federal nor state requirements for pre-service teacher preparation include learning about gifted students.

After a general education teacher leaves the university, what she learns is a function of personal choice and district priorities; there is no guarantee that she will ever learn how to meet the needs of her gifted students. Some states require general education teachers to receive some form of professional development in gifted education once they are in the classroom, but this requirement is articulated differently from state to state and often from district to district (NAGC, 2015). Archambault et al. (1993) polled almost 4,000 third- and fourth-grade teachers nationwide; 61% of these teachers reported receiving no professional development related to gifted education. In a separate nationwide poll, 1,231 districts reported allocating only 4% of professional development dollars towards topics related to gifted education (Westberg, et al., 1998). Professional development experiences were reported more frequently by school districts in states that had a mandate for gifted education, indicating that policy has an impact on teacher knowledge, and ultimately, on classroom practice.

These statistics suggest that the public is right to be concerned about the absence of teacher preparation to work with gifted students nationwide. The absence of pre-service or in-service teacher education perpetuates common problems gifted students face in the regular classroom, first and foremost, the absence of appropriately challenging differentiation (Reis et al., 2004; Reis, Westberg, Kulikowich, & Purcell, 1998).

Accurate, evidence-based information is crucial to dispelling misconceptions about gifted students and gifted education services; pre-service or in-service education is a primary venue for providing information to educators. When offered, professional development about gifted students and their educational needs has multiple benefits. Lassig (2009) found that teachers' attitudes towards gifted students were more positive in schools which provided professional development, a finding that echoes an earlier finding that classroom climate and teaching skills both improved after professional development in gifted education (Hansen & Feldhusen, 1994). Dixon and colleagues found that teachers' sense of self-efficacy increased with the number of hours in professional development related to curriculum differentiation for gifted students (Dixon, Yssel, McConnell, & Hardin, 2014).

The absence of pre-service or in-service teacher education perpetuates common problems gifted students face in the regular classroom.

Because referral for gifted programming often comes from a teacher who has no education about gifted students, it leads to errors and inequities in identification (Elhoweris, 2008; McBee, 2006; Siegle & Powell, 2004). Teacher education is a remedy to this problem. Bianco and Leech (2010) found that twice-exceptional students were more likely to be referred for identification by teachers who had participated in professional development. In separate studies focused on gifted students in low-income settings, Gallagher and Gallagher (2013) and Swanson (2006) each found that providing general education teachers training in gifted child characteristics and advanced teaching methods led to increased identification of students traditionally underrepresented in gifted programs.

Teacher education that is supported by standards and structure tends to yield the best results. For instance, Westberg and Daoust (2003) investigated the efficacy of teacher preparation delivered in-school, in-district, and at university. They found that all teachers were more likely to modify instruction following professional development, but only university study reliably led to significant improvement in teachers' classroom practices compared to teachers with no training in gifted education. Results of the Westberg and Daoust study suggest that teachers with college or university credentials in gifted education are significantly more likely than teachers with little or no professional development to show improvement making instructional choices for both gifted and general education, in addition to acquiring skills in curriculum modification for the gifted.

Students in both gifted and general education would benefit from a system similar to special education, where: (1) all pre-service teachers learn the fundamentals of gifted education, (2) motivated teachers pursue a specialist license or degree in preparation for more intensive settings (e.g., honors classes, self-contained classrooms), and (3) ongoing in-service professional development provides opportunities for teachers to enhance their skills. Pre-service or in-service education for district and school administrators is also essential, as administrators are often the gatekeepers for programmatic change.

Results of the IEA-P suggest that promoting teacher preparation in gifted education is a viable path for positive change on behalf of gifted students. An overwhelming majority of the American public voiced a desire for quality teachers with the knowledge and skills to work with all their students, including students who are gifted.

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CHAPTER 4
PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR SPECIFIC PROGRAM PROVISIONS IN GIFTED EDUCATION

I was reading and writing complete sentences when I started kindergarten. I remember how hard it was to sit through ABC lessons. I often found myself being sent out of the room for being disruptive. All I wanted to do was to read books.

—6th Grade Student

Concern heightens interest, but support propels change. Several questions on the IEA-P assessed whether the public’s concern over gifted education was strong enough to translate into active support for specific program provisions, including: (1) creating programs in areas traditionally underserved by gifted education, (2) allowing gifted students to accelerate, (3) creating separate schools for gifted students, (4) creating online schools for the gifted, and (5) requiring training for teachers who work with gifted students.

Public Support for Specific Provisions in Gifted Education

The public’s concern over gifted education was strong enough to translate into active support for specific program provisions. IEA-P respondents reported overwhelming support for each program provision included in the poll (Table 4.1, Figure 4.1). Providing gifted programs in underserved areas, requiring professional development for teachers who work with gifted students, and allowing gifted students to accelerate received almost identical

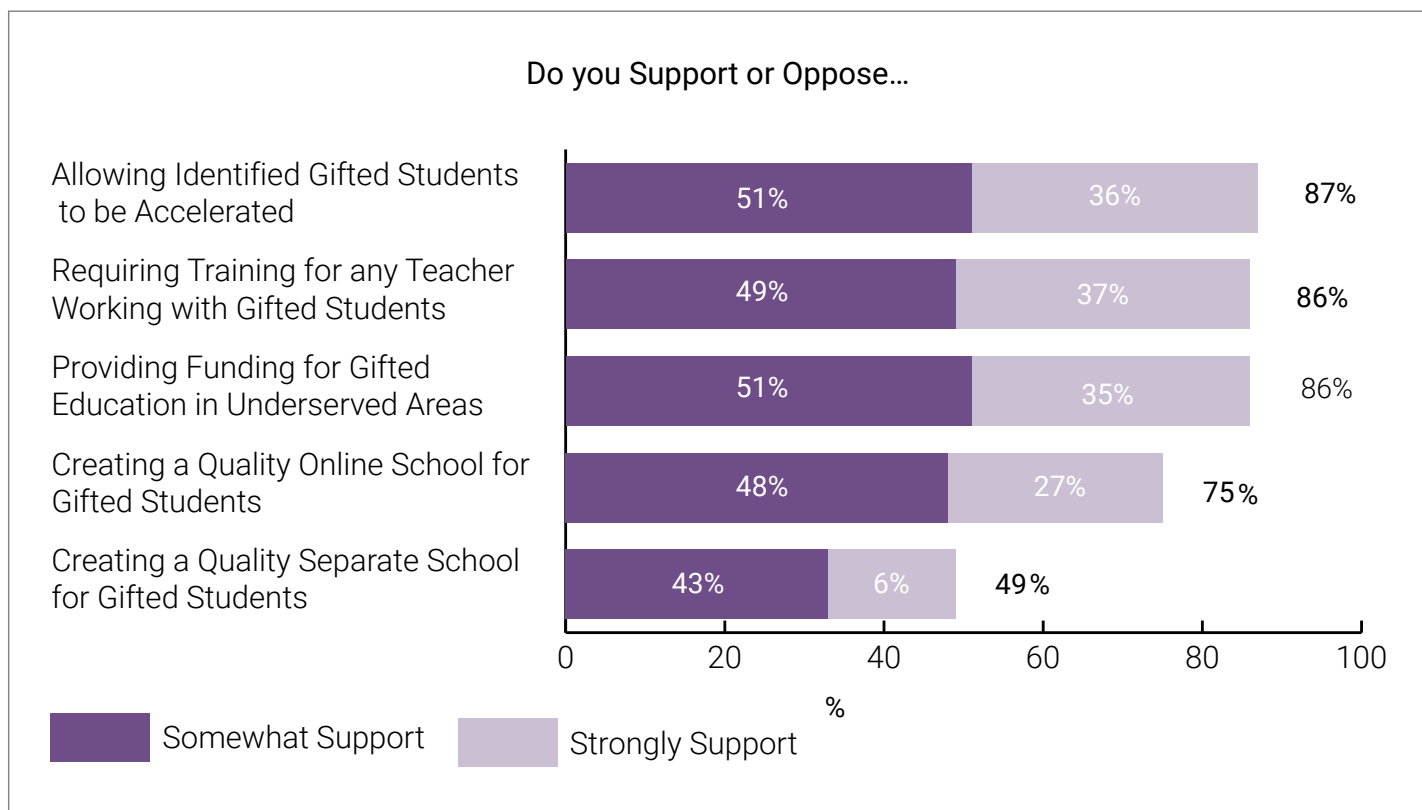


Figure 4.1. Percentage of respondents who reported support for commonly recommended provisions for gifted students.

Table 4.1

Percentage of Responses in Support for Program Provisions to Improve Gifted Education (Q36)

Program Provisions		Race/Ethnicity				Race/Ethnicity x Income						Education Influencers	
		Total	White	Hisp	Black	White		Hispanic		Black		OE	Parent
		Weighted n: Unweighted n:	1004 815	156 281	176 261	<\$50 246	\$50k+ 554	<\$50 97	\$50k+ 182	<\$50 128	\$50k+ 126	42 246	424 690
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
Providing Funding for Gifted Education in Underserved Areas	Strongly Support	35	31	45	51	32	30	47	47	51	51	48	39
	Somewhat Support	51	55	45	38	56	54	40	46	34	41	40	52
	Somewhat Oppose	11	13	5	9	10	14	6	4	12	5	9	8
	Strongly Oppose	2	2	5	3	1	2	7	3	3	3	3	2
	Total Support	86	86	90	88	88	84	87	92	85	92	87	90
Allowing identified gifted students to be accelerated	Strongly Support	36	34	39	41	32	37	40	42	41	40	45	39
	Somewhat Support	51	52	47	46	52	50	49	39	45	48	47	48
	Somewhat Oppose	11	12	12	11	14	11	5	19	9	13	6	12
	Strongly Oppose	2	2	3	2	2	2	6	.	4	.	2	1
	Total Support	87	86	86	87	84	87	89	81	87	87	92	87
Creating a quality online school for gifted	Strongly Support	27	24	31	28	28	22	28	38	32	24	26	32
	Somewhat Support	48	49	47	46	46	51	48	40	41	50	51	49
	Somewhat Oppose	20	21	15	20	20	22	15	17	20	20	18	15
	Strongly Oppose	5	5	7	6	6	5	9	5	7	6	5	5
	Total Support	75	74	78	74	74	73	76	78	73	74	77	80
Creating a quality separate school for gifted	Strongly Support	16	14	19	25	18	12	23	17	30	19	21	21
	Somewhat Support	33	32	31	29	33	32	26	29	25	32	32	35
	Somewhat Oppose	40	42	37	37	33	46	42	37	37	38	37	35
	Strongly Oppose	11	12	12	9	15	10	9	17	8	11	10	9
	Total Support	49	46	50	54	51	44	49	47	55	51	53	56
Requiring that any teacher serving gifted children receive special training	Strongly Support	37	35	42	43	35	35	41	46	43	44	41	41
	Somewhat Support	49	50	46	45	51	50	41	45	43	45	46	46
	Somewhat Oppose	12	13	9	9	12	13	11	8	12	6	10	11
	Strongly Oppose	2	2	3	3	2	2	6	.	2	5	3	2
	Total Support	86	85	88	88	86	85	82	92	86	89	87	87

Notes. <\$50 = Income under \$50,000/year, \$50k+ = Income \$50,000 and up, OE = Opinion Elite, Hisp = Hispanics, Total Support = the sum of Strongly Support plus Somewhat Support, "." = too few observations to calculate. At the 95% confidence level the standard error of measure for the entire sample is ±2.51%. It is ±6.21% among Opinion Elites, ±3.73% among Parents, ±6.03% among Blacks, ±5.81% among Hispanics, and ±3.33 among Whites. Race/Ethnicity does not include respondents who selected more than one race. Race/Ethnicity x Income does not include respondents who selected "Prefer Not to Indicate."

levels of support, with 86-87% of respondents in favor of each option.

Providing funding for programs in underserved areas. An overwhelming majority of the American public supports providing funding for gifted programs in underserved areas. Fully 86% of IEA-P respondents gave support at some level, and 35% strongly support providing programs in underserved areas.

Education Influencers. Among Parents, 92% voiced support for providing programs for gifted students in underserved areas, as did 87% of Opinion Elites.

"Strong" support was also high among Opinion Elites and Parents (48% and 42%, respectively).

Racial/Ethnic Groups. The level of support for providing programs in underserved areas ranged from 84% among higher-income White respondents to 92% among higher-income Hispanic and Black respondents (Figure 4.5). More disparity was observed in the number of respondents in each group who "Strongly" supported the idea. Consistent with previous poll questions, Black and Hispanic respondents were more likely to give strong support for establishing programs in underserved areas. Nearly half of Hispanic respondents (47%) and

Black respondents (51%) offered strong support for establishing programs in underserved areas, regardless of income, compared to 31% of White respondents.

Allowing gifted students to accelerate. A vast majority of IEA-P respondents supported acceleration for gifted students, whether by grade skipping, ability grouping, or through other means. Overall, 87% expressed some level of support, and 36% strongly supported allowing gifted students to move ahead based on readiness rather than remaining in a lock-stepped age-based grade progression.

Education Influencers. Opinion Elites responded in favor of acceleration more frequently than any other group with 45% indicating strong support and 92% overall support. Support from Parents matched other subgroups, with 39% offering strong support and 48% responding they “Somewhat Support” acceleration.

Racial/Ethnic Groups. At least 80% of all subgroups supported acceleration for gifted students, and more than 32% gave strong support. The highest level of strong support came from Black and Hispanic respondents, 40-50% of whom indicated strong support regardless of income level. Lower-income White respondents were least likely to lend strong support (32%) but most likely to “Somewhat Support” (52%).

Establishing schools for the gifted. Among all IEA-P respondents, 75% responded favorably to establishing online schools for the gifted, and 27% offered strong support. The concept of establishing separate brick-and-mortar schools for gifted students received a tepid response relative to other program options, with support from just half of respondents (49%). The rate of support was at least 25% lower than the other four program provisions and 30% lower than acceleration.

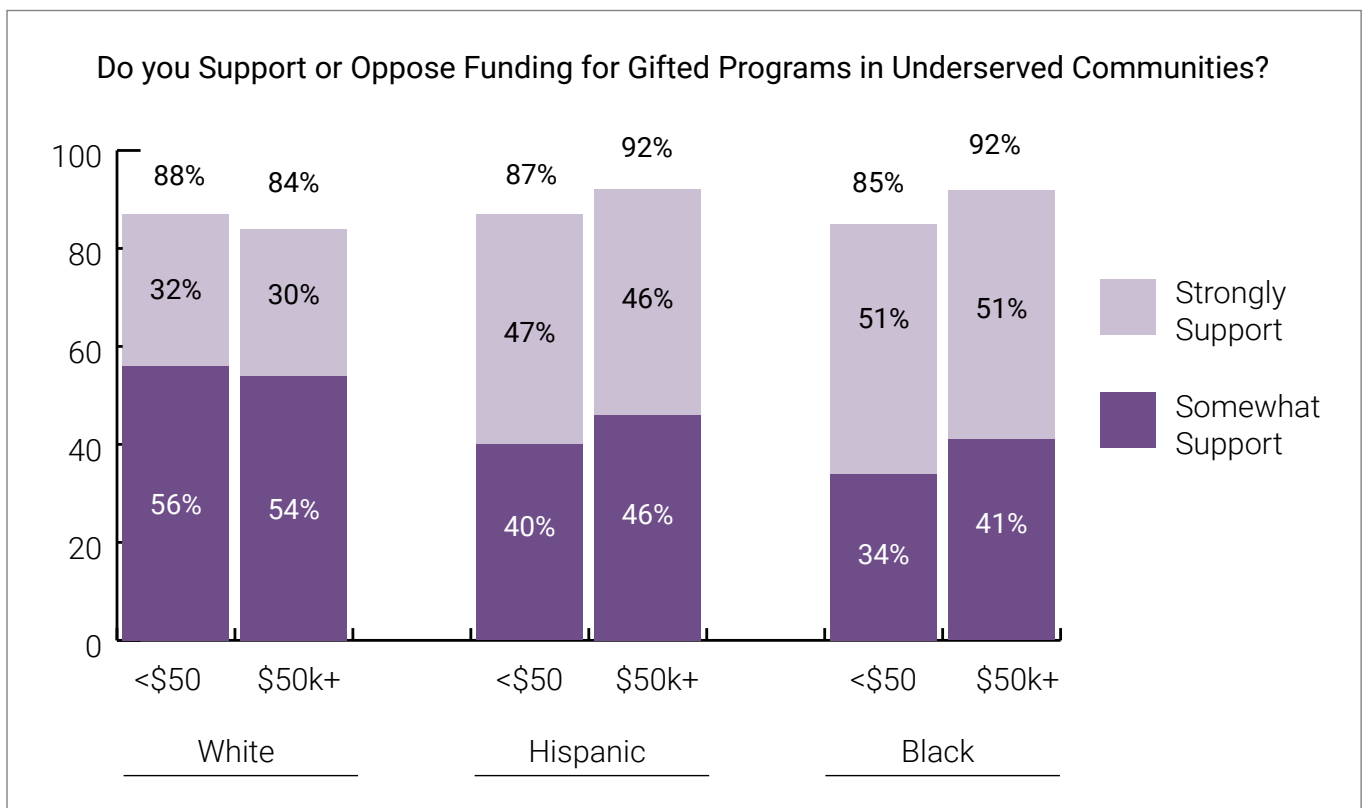


Figure 4.2. Percentage of respondents in support of providing funding for gifted programs in underserved communities, by race/ethnicity x income.

Education Influencers. Support for the concept of an online school for the gifted was equally high among Opinion Elites and Parents (77% and 80%, respectively). Fewer supported a brick-and-mortar school, consistent with the overall trend in the data. Only 53% of Opinion Elites and 56% of Parents supported the creation of a separate school for the gifted. Parents were far more likely to offer strong support for an online school (32%) than they were for a separate school for the gifted (21%).

Racial/Ethnic Groups. Higher-income Hispanic and lower-income Black respondents were enthusiastic about an online school, with 38% and 32%, respectively, giving the idea strong support. Higher-income White and Black respondents were least likely to offer strong support for an online school (22% and 24%, respectively).

Although they were the least popular in general, brick-and-mortar schools were not universally rejected. Black respondents were more likely to support online schools overall (74% total support for an online school versus 54% for brick-and-mortar), but similar percentages “Strongly Support” online (28%) and brick-and-mortar (25%) schools for the gifted. Lower-income Blacks in particular were equally likely to offer strong support to brick-and-mortar schools and to online schools (32% and 30% strong support).

Requiring specialized training for teachers who instruct gifted children. Over 8 in 10 Americans supported a requirement for teachers who work with gifted students to receive special training (86% total support, 37% strongly support, Table 4.1).

Education Influencers. Opinion Elites and Parents were equally likely to support required professional development for teachers working with gifted students. In each group, 87% reported they “Somewhat” or “Strongly” support the idea and 41% offered “Strong Support.”

Racial/Ethnic Groups. Well over 80% of all three racial/ethnic groups supported requiring specialized training for teachers who work with gifted children, including 85% of White respondents and 88% of

Black and Hispanic respondents. Strong support was highest among higher-income Black (44%) and Hispanic (46%) respondents; strong support was somewhat lower among White respondents but still accounted for one-third of the subsample (35%).

The Impact of Words and Concepts on Public Support for Program Provisions

Two questions in this section of the poll tested the public’s sensitivity to words and concepts important to gifted education. Questions in this section assessed the public’s response to (1) the concept of identification, and (2) the difference between referring to programs or children when considering funding for gifted students.

The effect of the word “identification” on public support to fund professional development in gifted education. When respondents were asked if they supported requiring specialized training for teachers who work with gifted students, the answer was a resounding “yes.” A follow-up question asked respondents to consider if they would support improved funding for the required teacher education. To assess the impact of the sometimes controversial concept of “identification” on respondents’ support for funding, the follow-up question was presented in alternate forms to randomized split-samples. The primary difference between the two variations was the inclusion of the word ‘identification’ in the second question:

Question A: Do you support improved funding to help train teachers who are educating gifted children?

Question B: Do you support improved funding to help train teachers who identify and serve gifted children?

The two questions elicited the similarly high levels of overall support, with at least 84% of each split sample in favor of improving funding to help train teachers who work with gifted children (Table 4.2). However, the level of strong support was different across subgroups (Figure 4.3).

Table 4.2

Percentage of Respondent Support for Professional Development: Comparing Presence or Absence of the Word "Identification" in Poll Question (Q36, R8-R9)

Poll Question		Race/Ethnicity				Race/Ethnicity x Income						Education Influencers	
		Total	White	Hisp.	Black	White		Hispanic		Black		OE	Parent
		<\$50	\$50k+	<\$50	\$50k+	<\$50	\$50k+	<\$50	\$50k+	%	%	%	%
	Weighted n:	707	513	78	86	192	312	33	45	48	37	21	212
	Unweighted n:	707	415	134	128	122	286	46	87	66	60	116	333
		%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
[Do you support or oppose] improved funding to help train teachers <u>who are educating</u> gifted children?	Strongly Support	34	30	54	46	30	28	54	55	58	32	48	42
	Somewhat Support	55	59	36	47	60	60	34	36	34	61	38	47
	Somewhat Oppose	10	10	10	7	10	11	12	8	8	7	13	10
	Strongly Oppose	1	1	.	.	0	2	2	1
	Total Support	89	89	90	93	90	88	88	92	92	93	85	89
[Do you support or oppose] improved funding to help train teachers who <u>identify and serve</u> gifted children?	Strongly Support	37	35	40	47	40	33	38	42	42	55	43	42
	Somewhat Support	53	55	45	47	53	56	49	42	53	38	47	50
	Somewhat Oppose	8	8	12	4	7	8	6	16	1	7	9	6
	Strongly Oppose	2	2	3	2	0	3	7	0	4	0	1	2
	Total Support	90	90	85	94	92	88	86	84	95	93	91	92

Notes. <\$50 = Income under \$50,000/year, \$50k+ = Income \$50,000 and up, OE = Opinion Elite, Hisp = Hispanics, Total Support = the sum of Strongly Support plus Somewhat Support, "." = to few observations to calculate. Split half samples X (*are educating*) and Y (*identify and serve*) were used for this item. See Appendix B, Table B3 for standard error of measure. Race/Ethnicity does not include respondents who selected more than one race. Race/Ethnicity x Income does not include respondents who selected "Prefer Not to Indicate."

Education Influencers. Opinion Elites and Parents were more likely to give support when the question included identification (Total Support 91% of Opinion Elites, 92% of Parents). The difference in response to the two questions was six or seven percentage points, and always favored the question that included identification.

Racial/Ethnic Groups. When the question excluded identification, a majority of lower-income Blacks (58%), lower-income Hispanics (54%) and higher-income Hispanics (55%) indicated Strong Support. For each group, between 10% and 15% fewer respondents offered strong support when the question included identification. Conversely, lower-income White, higher-income White, and higher-income Black respondents were more likely to indicate Strong Support when the question included identification (40%, 33%, and 55%, respectively) (Figure 4.3).

Emphasizing programs or students. A similar method determined whether the public was more likely to rally around *establishing gifted programs* or *supporting gifted students*. The two questions presented to split samples asked whether funding for gifted education should match funding for students with learning disabilities; one half of respondents received the program-centered question, and the other half the student-centered question:

Program-Centered: Please indicate if you support or oppose this proposal—guaranteeing that programs for gifted students receive the same level of funding as programs for students with learning disabilities.

Student-Centered: Please indicate if you support or oppose this proposal—guaranteeing that gifted students receive the same level of funding as students with learning disabilities.

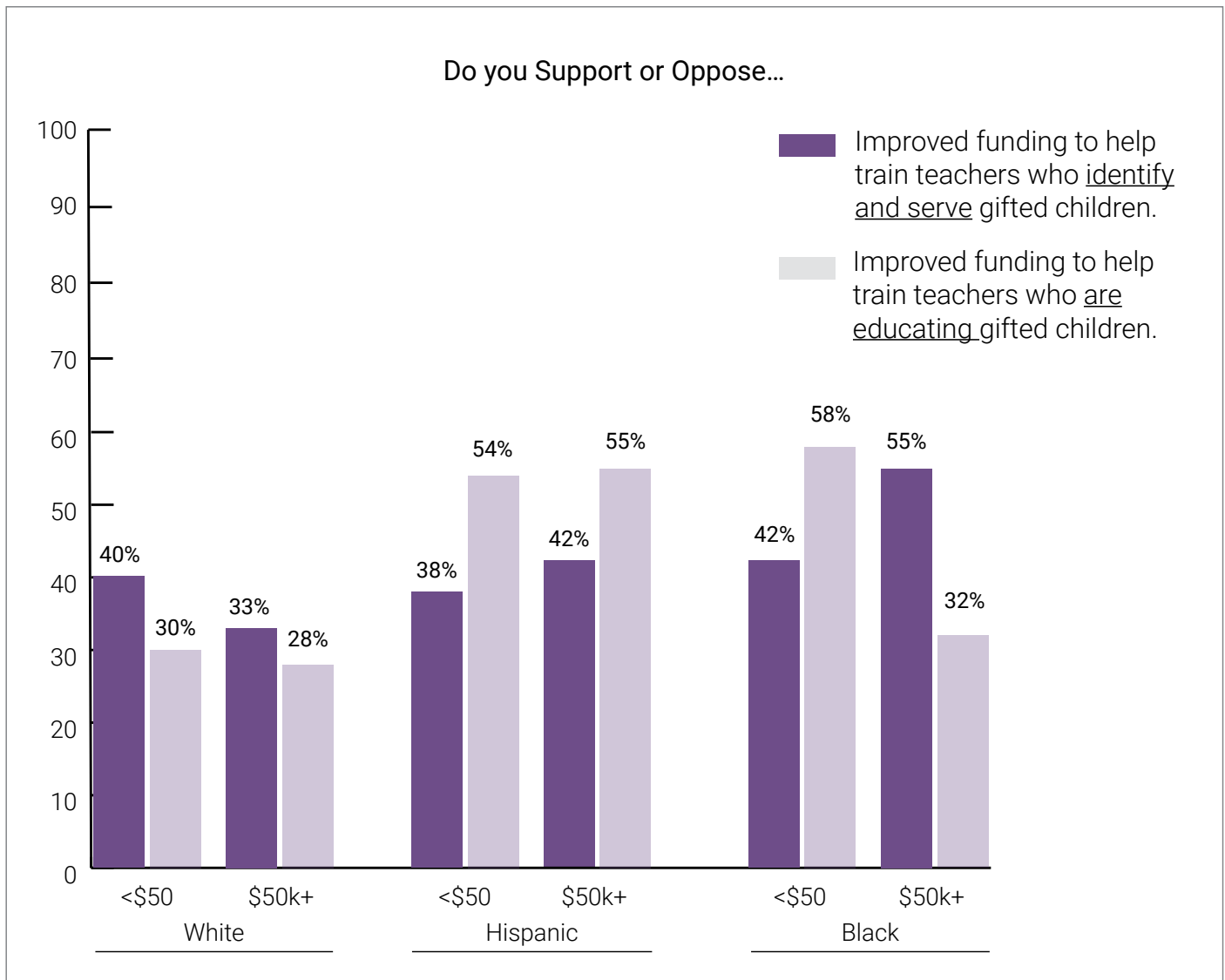


Figure 4.3. Percentage of respondents reporting "Strong Support" for professional development with and without mention of identification, by race/ethnicity and income.

Total support was high for both student-centered and program-centered funding questions. A total of 83% supported the question with program-centered phrasing, and 81% supported the question with student-centered phrasing (Table 4.3).

Education Influencers. Opinion Elites were more likely to respond with support for the program-centered question (88% support for program-centered and 78% for child-centered). Parent response was nearly identical for each question, including the same level of overall support (85% for program-centered and 86% for child-centered) and strong support (41% for program-centered and 40% for child-centered).

Racial/Ethnic Groups. Despite their generally positive responses overall, the three racial/ethnic analysis groups had different responses to the two questions. White respondents were more likely to offer support for programs (84% program-centered, 79% student-centered); this was true regardless of income level. Equal numbers of Hispanic respondents supported each version of the question (86% student-centered, 87% program-centered); however, many more higher-income Hispanic respondents offered strong support when the question was student-centered (31% program-centered, 43% student-centered). Black respondents were more likely to offer support when the question was student-centered (77% program-

centered, 86% student-centered). Lower- and higher-income Black respondents differed when offering “Strong Support”; lower-income Black respondents were more likely to offer strong support for the student-centered question (41% program-centered, 58% student-centered), but higher-income Black respondents were more likely to give strong support when the question was program-centered (48% program-centered, 36% student-centered) (Table 4.3.).

Synopsis

American’s investment in gifted education rises above concern that something is wrong with respect to schooling for gifted students. The public also actively supports, and sometimes strongly supports, many commonly recommended program provisions for gifted students.

- **86% of IEA-P respondents supported required training for teachers who work with gifted children.** The public wants assurance that teachers are prepared to work with *all* the

students in their classrooms. **Their concern over teacher preparation specific to gifted students also provides an indirect indicator that the public understands that educating gifted children requires knowledge and skills that go beyond preparation for the general education classroom.**

- **76% of IEA-P respondents indicated concern that gifted students do not have opportunities to accelerate. Support for accelerating gifted students was reported by 86% of the IEA-P.**

With this level of interest among the public, and with a substantial body of evidence in its favor (Colangelo, Assouline, & Gross, 2004; Assouline, Colangelo, VanTassel-Baska, & Lupkowski-Shoplik, 2015), acceleration should be incorporated as an option for gifted students around the nation.

- Prominent educators from different branches of education have ardently opposed gifted education, advocating the dismantling of gifted programs for the sake of educational equity (Margolin, 1993; Sapon-Shevin, 1994; Oakes,

Table 4.3
Percentage of Respondent Support for a Proposal to Fund Services for Gifted Education: Comparing Emphasis on Students or Programs (Q36, R4-5)

Poll Question		Race/Ethnicity				Race/Ethnicity x Income						Education Influencers	
		Total	White	Hisp	Black	White		Hispanic		Black		OE	Parent
		Weighted n: Unweighted n:	707 415	513 134	78 128	86 128	<\$50 122	\$50k+ 286	<\$50 46	\$50k+ 87	<\$50 66	\$50k+ 60	42 333
		%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Do you support or oppose guaranteeing that <i>programs for gifted students</i> receive the same level of funding as <i>programs for students with learning disabilities</i> ?	Strongly Support	39	39	35	44	42	38	40	31	41	48	42	41
	Somewhat Support	44	44	51	32	42	46	49	53	35	30	46	44
	Somewhat Oppose	14	14	12	20	14	14	9	14	19	21	8	13
	Strongly Oppose	3	3	2	3	2	3	2	2	5	1	4	3
	Total Support	83	84	86	77	84	84	88	84	77	78	88	85
Do you support or oppose guaranteeing that <i>gifted students</i> receive the same level of funding as <i>students with learning disabilities</i> ?	Strongly Support	34	31	44	48	31	29	46	43	58	36	45	40
	Somewhat Support	47	48	43	38	46	51	39	45	26	51	33	46
	Somewhat Oppose	17	19	13	10	21	18	15	12	12	9	16	12
	Strongly Oppose	2	2	.	4	2	2	.	.	4	4	6	2
	Total Support	81	79	87	86	77	80	85	88	84	87	78	86

Notes. <\$50 = Income under \$50,000/year, \$50k+ = Income \$50,000 and up, OE = Opinion Elite, Hisp = Hispanics, Total Support = the sum of Strongly Support plus Somewhat Support, “.” = to few observations to calculate. Split half sample X (*programs for gifted students*) and Y (*gifted students*). See Appendix B, Table B3 for standard error of measure. Race/Ethnicity does not include respondents who selected more than one race. Race/Ethnicity x Income does not include respondents who selected “Prefer Not to Indicate.”

1900). However, **IEA-P respondents, including minority and low-income respondents, do not want gifted programs dismantled. Instead, they want better access to gifted programs and assurance that teachers of the gifted receive adequate professional development.** Over 70%, and sometimes over 80%, of minority and low-income respondents supported providing program provisions for gifted students including opportunities to accelerate, to work with a mentor, or to attend a specialized online school. **They do not believe that removing advanced educational opportunity is the correct way to create a level playing field.**

- **Public investment is highest—and action seems most likely— at the intersection of gifted education and high-profile issues in general education.** This is especially true for providing teachers with professional development in gifted education and establishing gifted programs in low-income areas.
- Even though a majority of all analysis groups were supportive, subtle changes in key words and question framing had an effect on whether groups offered strong support. The effect of language on support was different for different groups. **On the whole, Hispanic and lower-income Black respondents were more likely to offer strong support when the question was student-centered and focused on serving gifted students.** A higher proportion of White and higher-income

Black respondents offered strong support when questions about funding focused on establishing programs, and mentioned identification as well as services.

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PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS THAT SUPPORT THE FOLLOWING:

75% support creating a **quality online school** for gifted students

86% support **requiring training** for any teacher working with gifted students

86% support providing funding in **underserved areas** for gifted programs

87% support allowing identified gifted students **to be accelerated**

From Then to Now

The Fight for Acceleration

Professional development is the cornerstone of ensuring appropriate programs and services to gifted learners, especially regarding the use of acceleration.





—Croft & Wood, 2015

The debate over whether to accelerate gifted children spans at least nine decades. As far back as the 1930s researchers presented evidence of academic and social-emotional success among accelerated children, while noting that few schools supported the practice (Keys, 1935; Jenkins, 1943; Wilkins, 1936a; Witty & Wilkins, 1933).

Debate about acceleration continued during the dispute over ability grouping and collaborative learning, including articles in the seminal point-counterpoint series in the *Journal for the Education of the Gifted* (Elkind, 1988; Robinson, 1990; Sisk, 1988; Slavin, 1990). This era is also notable for a series of studies which used meta-analysis to identify trends in acceleration research (Kulik & Kulik, 1984, 1992; Rogers, 1992, 2007). The Kulik & Kulik studies gave evidence that acceleration does not advantage gifted students at the expense of other students. Instead, according to their findings, all students benefit when schools allow gifted students to accelerate as long as the curriculum is adjusted appropriately for each group of students. Rogers (2005) refined the research by investigating specific methods under the broad umbrella of acceleration. Rogers reported positive effect sizes for many recommended methods of acceleration including (1) early entrance into kindergarten and first grade, (2) grade skipping, (3) grade-based acceleration, (4) cluster grouping, (5) credit by exam, (6) full-time ability grouping, (7) subject-specific acceleration, and (8) mentorship. She also noted that evidence generally indicates positive social-emotional adjustment among students who accelerate.

Taking a Stand. A landmark event in advocacy for acceleration was the publication of *A Nation*

Deceived (Colangelo, Assouline, & Gross, 2004) and the subsequent establishment of the Institute for Research and Policy on Acceleration at the Belin-Blank Center for Gifted Education and Talent Development. In addition to providing comprehensive syntheses of research findings documenting the efficacy of acceleration, the Belin-Blank Center and Acceleration Institute spearheaded several initiatives to help schools and districts improve the infrastructure of their acceleration practices, including the *Iowa Acceleration Scale* (Assouline, Colangelo, Lupkowski-Shoplik, Lipscomb, & Forstadt, 2009), *Guidelines for Developing Academic Acceleration Policy* (IRPA, 2009), the updated report *A Nation*

-  Effective
 -  Cost-efficient
 -  Simple
 -  In-Demand
- Empowered* (Assouline, Colangelo, VanTassel-Baska, & Lupkowski-Shoplik, 2015) and *Developing Academic Acceleration Policies: Whole Grade, Early Entrance, & Single Subject* (Lupkowski-Shoplik, Behrens, & Assouline, 2018).

These experts caution that acceleration alone does not comprise an entire gifted program, and that acceleration is not the best option for every gifted child. However, they also assert, with evidence, that acceleration is an effective, cost-efficient, and relatively easy-to-implement option that is appropriate for many gifted children.

Acceleration Now. Decades of research and access to tools to ensure best practices in acceleration have shifted the needle of acceptance in public schools to some extent. Even so, state education policies

guiding acceleration practices still vary widely. In a majority of states, individual Local Education Agencies (LEAs) are left to make decisions about whether students can accelerate. And the presence or absence of a policy does not always clarify whether a specific acceleration option is available: A state with no explicit acceleration policy is likely to offer Advanced Placement courses, while a state with an acceleration policy might still not allow early entrance into kindergarten.

The IEA-P adds the voice of the public to the current conversation, and the public enthusiastically supports acceleration. Over 70% of each analysis group reported *concern* that gifted students are not allowed to accelerate, and one-third of Black and Hispanic respondents report a great deal of concern. Moreover, over 80% of each analysis group claim they *support* acceleration for gifted students, with over 40% reporting strong support. The support for acceleration is unequivocal.

Then who demurs? Paradoxically, trends in the IEA-P suggest the group most hesitant about acceleration are educators. While the number of educators in

the IEA-P was too small to generalize, the teachers and administrators who participated in the poll were least likely of any group to lend strong support to acceleration: 25% of this group of educators reported strong support for acceleration compared to 45% of Opinion Elites, and 41% of Black respondents. This trend is consistent with research reporting that even teachers who are supportive of gifted education are tentative about acceleration, citing concern over the social-emotional adjustment of accelerated students (Rambo & McCoach, 2012; Siegle, Wilson, & Little, 2013; Southern & Jones, 2004). Again, the answer seems to be ensuring that teachers receive accurate information about acceleration in pre-service and in-service education. At least one study shows that even modest amounts of information can change teachers' minds in favor of acceleration (Olthouse, 2013).

The belief that acceleration is harmful perpetuates a *bona fide* myth. Unfortunately, this myth, held mainly by educators, seems to be a significant barrier impeding the use of a practice which is evidence-based, affordable, and supported by the American public.

KYLE'S STORY:

Kyle started to read when he was two. He carried the first Harry Potter book with him to preschool and proceeded to finish the book in a week. His preschool teacher recognized Kyle's needs and advised his parents that Kyle should skip kindergarten. At first, the school district denied the request due to policy. As a result, Kyle's initial experience of kindergarten was fraught with boredom and frustration. He cried every morning and would try to negotiate ways to get out of going to school.

Knowing that something had to change, his parents went back to the district who then decided to take the risk and allow Kyle to accelerate to first grade. With the support of his teachers, administrators and parents, Kyle was once again motivated to learn, he was gaining confidence, making friends and maturing among his new peers. This has changed school policy, ensuring other children have similar opportunities.

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CHAPTER 5
AMERICA LISTENS—MESSAGES THAT MOVE PUBLIC OPINION

All of us do not have equal talent, but all of us should have an equal opportunity to develop our talent.

—John F. Kennedy

For decades, proponents of gifted education have attempted to persuade state and national leaders that gifted students need specialized programs and services. Advocates have argued that investing in America’s gifted students is in the best interest of the nation, that these children have the right to work toward their individual potential (Colangelo, Assouline, & Gross, 2004; Marland, 1972; O’Connell-Ross, 1993). Advocates have asked the public to consider the consequences to society at large when potential is unfulfilled, including the appeal, “How can we measure the sonata unwritten, the curative drug undiscovered, the absence of political insight. They are the difference between what we are and what we could be as a society” (J. Gallagher, 1975, p. 4).

These messages may be compelling to those who already believe that gifted students need services; however, there is no evidence that they are genuinely persuasive to individuals outside of the field who require convincing. It is not clear which advocacy messages are more influential than others, or whether changes in focus, phrasing, or framing might change the influence of these messages. In an attempt to fill this gap, a section of the IEA-P was devoted to two tests of commonly used gifted education advocacy messages. In one test, respondents rated the persuasive appeal of common advocacy messages when presented without counterarguments; in the second test, respondents judged the efficacy of messages that argue in favor of gifted education when presented alongside common arguments against gifted education (Chapter 6).

Stand-Alone Advocacy Messages

IEA-P respondents rated whether 13 advocacy messages presented convincing reasons to increase funding for gifted programs. Three of the 13 were Primary Advocacy Messages which are frequently used to persuade others of the value of gifted education (Figure 5.1). The Primary Advocacy Messages included:

Theme	Advocacy Messages
Primary Advocacy Messages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Falling Achievement</i> • <i>Disadvantaged Gifted Overlooked</i> • <i>Right to Fulfill Potential</i>
Aspiration for America’s Future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>America as World Leader</i> • <i>International Competitiveness</i>
Future Innovators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Too Many Edisons Ignored</i> • <i>Invest in Future Innovators</i>
Gifted from Underserved Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Prone to Gangs</i> • <i>Disadvantaged by ZIP Code</i>
Inadequate Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Few Funds for Gifted</i> • <i>Money for Prisons, Not for Gifted</i>
Social-Emotional Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Gifted at Social-Emotional Risk</i> • <i>Potential and Problems</i>

Figure 5.1. Themes and messages tested in the IEA-P.

(1) *Falling Achievement*, which presented data about the nationwide drop in achievement levels among gifted students; (2) *Disadvantaged Gifted Overlooked*, which described the failure to identify low-income and minority gifted students; and (3) *Right to Fulfill Potential*, which claimed that gifted children have a right to fulfill their potential. The remaining ten advocacy messages were tested in pairs, with two messages for each of five themes: (1) Aspiration for America's Future; (2) Future Innovators; (3) Gifted from Underserved Communities; (4) Few Funds for Gifted Education; and (5) Social-Emotional Impact (Figure 5.1). Using paired variations of the same message allowed for assessments of message framing as well as message content. The full text of each message is in Table 5.1.

The messages were presented to randomly assigned split samples of 707 IEA-P respondents; one half of the sample responded to six messages and the other half responded to the remaining seven messages. Messages created for the same theme were assigned to different split samples. For instance, one half of the split sample responded to Aspiration for America's Future: *America as a World Leader*, and the other half responded to Aspiration for America's Future: *International Competitiveness*. Respondents rated each message on a seven-point scale, from 1 = Extremely Unconvincing to 7 = Extremely Convincing. Messages rated either 6 or 7 on the seven-point scale were considered "Very Convincing." The effectiveness of a message was determined from the number of respondents who awarded a message this high rating.

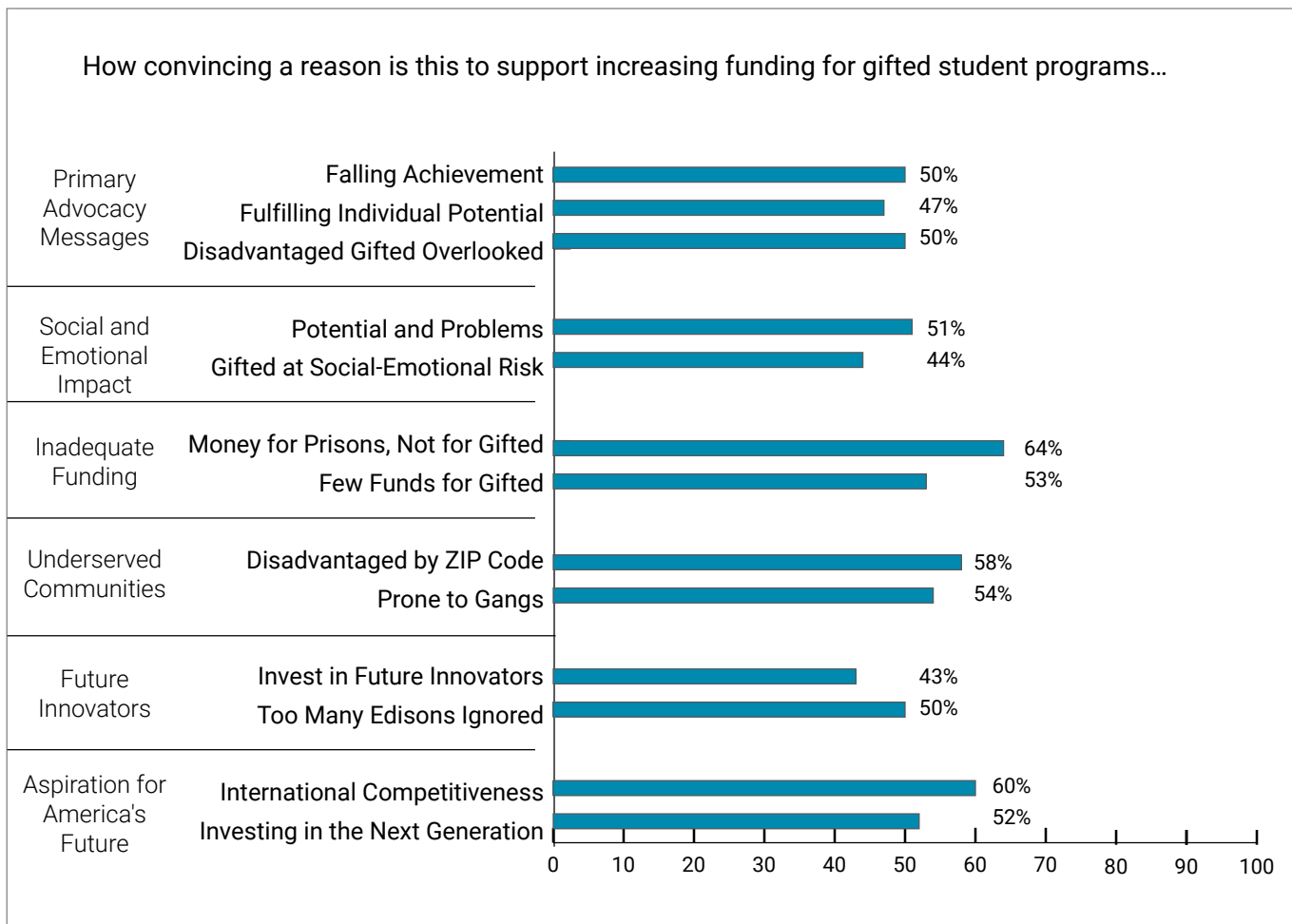


Figure 5.2. Percentage of respondents who rated advocacy messages Very Convincing.

Effectiveness of Stand-Alone Advocacy Messages

Effective Advocacy Messages. Table 5.2 presents respondents' ratings of how convincing they found the 13 advocacy messages, including the number who rated a message a "6" or "7," indicating that it was Very Convincing. All 13 messages received a rating of "6" or "7" by at least 40% of a split sample; no message received Very Convincing ratings by more than 65% (Figure 5.2). None of the messages received negative ratings of "1" or "2" by more than 10% of respondents.

Highly effective messages (Very Convincing to 59-65% of IEA-P respondents). Messages were considered highly effective if they were rated "6" or "7" on the seven point scale by a majority of respondents. These messages received high ratings by a large enough margin to suggest they would consistently receive a positive response.

Three of the 13 messages were rated Very Convincing by 59-65% of respondents (Figure 5.3). The most effective message in the poll was *Few Funds for Gifted Education: Money for Prisons, Not for Gifted*. This message was ranked Very Convincing by 64% of respondents and was rated a "7" by 38% of respondents. The *Aspiration for America's Future: International Competitiveness* message was Very Convincing to 60% of respondents. The *Gifted from Underserved Communities: Disadvantaged by ZIP Code* message was Very Convincing to 59% of respondents, with 35% rating it a "7" on the seven-point scale.

Modestly effective messages (Very Convincing to 50-55% of IEA-P respondents). Modestly effective messages were rated "6" or "7" (Very Convincing) by a slight majority. Of the remaining 10 messages, seven were rated Very Convincing by 50-55% of respondents. The three highest ranked among these modestly effective messages were created for the same themes as the three highly effective messages. *Gifted from Underserved Communities: Prone to Gangs* focused on the possible negative consequences to low-income gifted students in the absence of gifted programs; it was rated Very

Highly Effective Messages

Inadequate Funding: Money for Prisons, Not for Gifted

In 2014, the federal government spent nearly 7 billion dollars on prisons, but we spent almost nothing on programs for gifted students in public schools. In fact, more than half of public schools have zero funds going to gifted learners. Clearly something must be done to help these students reach their full potential.

Aspiration for America's Future: International Competitiveness

While the United States devoted almost no federal funding to developing its most promising youth, other countries like China and India invest millions of dollars in theirs. If our country wants to remain globally competitive in the coming decades, we need to ensure these gifted young Americans receive the support and resources they need to succeed.

Gifted from Underserved Communities: Disadvantaged by ZIP Code

Schools in low-income communities are the least likely to have adequate funds and services for gifted kids. We can't let those with the most potential in these communities fall through the cracks simply because they were born into the wrong ZIP code.

Figure 5.3. Highly effective messages.

Convincing by 54% of those who read it. Fifty-three percent of respondents found the *Inadequate Funding: Few Funds for Gifted* message Very Convincing; this message presented general information about the lack of funding for gifted education in the US. The third modestly effective message, *aspiration for America's Future: Investing in the Next Generation*, focused on America as a leader in innovation and invention; it was rated as Very Convincing by 51% of respondents.

Other modestly effective messages were ranked as Very Convincing by 50-51% of respondents. Two

Table 5.1

Advocacy Messages Tested in the IEA-P

Theme/Message	Message Text
<i>Primary Advocacy Messages</i>	
Falling Achievement	The education system currently cannot handle the needs of these [gifted] students: more than half of public school students who are scoring at an advanced level as fourth graders will be unable to sustain that level of achievement by the time they get to 12 th grade. We have a responsibility to help these kids live up to their potential.
Disadvantaged Gifted Overlooked	Minority students and students from low socioeconomic backgrounds who demonstrate comparable levels of aptitude to white and upper middle-class students are two and a half times less likely to be identified as gifted. We need to invest more resources in the most vulnerable gifted students to ensure they don't fall through the cracks.
Right to Fulfill Potential	In America, every person has the right to reach his or her full potential—that's what the American dream is all about. We have a duty to help gifted students fulfill their dreams and reach their goals by providing the resources necessary to do so.
<i>Aspiration for America's Future</i>	
America as World Leader	America has long been the world leader in entrepreneurship, discovery, and innovation. If we want to continue to lead in the future, we must invest in our nation's most powerful resource: the great thinkers and innovators of the next generation.
International Competitiveness	While the United States devotes almost no federal funding to developing its most promising youth, other countries like China and India invest millions of dollars in theirs. If our country wants to remain globally competitive in the coming decades, we need to ensure these gifted young Americans receive the support and resources they need to succeed.
<i>Future Innovators</i>	
Too Many Edisons Ignored	Too many of our future Beethovens, Marie Curies, Steve Jobs, Sally Rides and Thomas Edisons are sitting in a public school classroom, bored or disengaged, without any of the programs or teachers they need. We need to invest in our future innovators—nurturing, challenging, and inspiring them to achieve greatness.
Invest in Future Innovators	The government spends the most on low-performing schools and very little on high-achieving students. We need to invest in our future innovators—nurturing, challenging, and inspiring them to achieve greatness. Gifted students are the key to America's future and to maintaining our place in the global economy.

Gifted from Underserved Communities

Prone to Gangs

Schools in low-income communities are the least likely to have adequate funds and services for gifted kids. Gifted kids in these communities are often vulnerable to gang recruitment or dropping out. We can't let those with the most potential fall through the cracks.

Disadvantaged by ZIP Code

Schools in low-income communities are the least likely to have adequate funds and services for gifted kids. We can't let those with the most potential in these communities fall through the cracks simply because they were born into the wrong ZIP Code.

Inadequate Funding

Few Funds for Gifted

In 2014, the federal government spent almost nothing on programs for gifted students in public schools. In fact, more than half of public schools have zero funds going to gifted learners. Clearly something must be done to help these students reach their full potential.

Money for Prisons, Not for Gifted

In 2014, the federal government spent nearly 7 billion dollars on prisons, but we spent almost nothing on programs for gifted students in public schools. In fact, more than half of public schools have zero funds going to gifted learners. Clearly something must be done to help these students reach their full potential.

Social-Emotional Impact

Gifted at Social-Emotional Risk

Gifted students often face isolation, anxiety, boredom, depression, and what can often be constant bullying from other kids for being "different." Creating an environment where these students are safe and among other gifted peers is essential to their health and well-being.

Potential and Problems

Every child deserves an education that ensures they can meet their full potential. Unfortunately, gifted students are being left behind by today's education priorities. They often face bullying in the halls and, without proper resources, can find themselves bored and depressed in the classroom.

of the three Primary Advocacy Messages were a part of this set, including *Falling Achievement*, which presents NAEP data documenting decreasing achievement among gifted students, and *Disadvantaged Gifted Overlooked*, which focused on the need to identify low-income and minority gifted students. Social-Emotional Impact: *Potential and Problems*, was also in this cluster; a message which combined a call to allow gifted children to fulfill their potential with a caution about the personal price they may pay if they cannot. The lowest rated among the modestly effective messages was Future Innovators: *Too Many Edisons Ignored*. This message provided examples of inventors and entrepreneurs such as Beethoven, Edison, and Curie as examples of artists, inventors, and explorers who made contributions that benefitted the world at large.

Ineffective messages (Very Convincing to fewer than 50% of IEA-P respondents). Ineffective messages were rated "Very Convincing" by fewer than 50% of respondents. These messages cannot be counted on to persuade the majority of an audience, at least in their current form.

Three of the 13 messages were ineffective (Figure 5.4). One of the three Primary Advocacy Messages that fell in this group, *Right to Fulfill Potential*, which connects fulfilling individual potential with the American Dream, received a Very Convincing rating from 47% of the respondent group. Social-Emotional Impact: *Gifted at Social-Emotional Risk*, focusing on personal negative consequences when a gifted child's potential is not fulfilled, was rated Very Convincing by 44% of respondents. The Future

Table 5.2

Percentage of Responses to: "How Convincing a Reason is this to Support Increasing Funding for Gifted Student Programs...." (Q49-61).

Message	Split Sample	Rating Scale							Very Convincing 6 & 7 Combined %
		Unconvincing			Convincing				
		1 %	2 %	3 %	4 %	5 %	6 %	7 %	
Primary Advocacy Messages									
Falling Achievement	B	3	3	10	13	21	24	26	50
Right to Fulfill Potential	A	2	4	9	15	22	23	24	47
Disadvantaged Gifted Overlooked	A	2	3	10	15	20	25	25	50
Aspiration for America's Future									
Investing in Next Generation	A	2	3	8	13	23	24	28	52
International Competitiveness	B	1	3	6	12	18	29	31	60
Future Innovators									
Too Many Edisons Ignored	A	2	3	8	13	23	25	25	50
Invest in Future Innovators	B	5	4	12	16	20	24	19	43
Gifted from Underserved Communities									
Prone to Gangs	A	2	3	6	13	22	26	28	54
Disadvantaged by ZIP Code	B	3	3	5	11	20	23	35	58
Inadequate Funding									
Few Funds for Gifted	A	2	4	10	14	17	26	27	53
Money for Prisons, Not for Gifted	B	3	2	7	8	17	26	38	64
Social-Emotional Impact									
Gifted at Social-Emotional Risk	A	4	4	10	16	22	24	20	44
Potential and Problems	B	3	4	11	11	21	26	25	51

Notes. Split Sample A and B n = 707 each, for standard error of measure see Appendix B, Table B3.

Innovators: *Invest in Future Innovators* message, which contained a generic appeal to invest in tomorrow's innovators, was rated Very Convincing by 43% of respondents.

Variation in message effectiveness by analysis subgroup. Table 5.3 presents a breakdown of respondent reaction to the advocacy messages by analysis subgroups. Only one of the three highly effective messages, Inadequate Funding: *Money for Prisons, Not for Gifted*, met the criteria for an effective message with the aggregate sample and also with each analysis subgroup.

Education Influencers. Two messages were highly effective with both Opinion Elites and Parents. Over 60% of each group found the messages Inadequate Funding: *Money for Prisons, Not for Gifted* and Aspiration for America's Future: *International Competitiveness* Very Convincing. The only place where Parents and Opinion Elites differed by a substantial margin was for *Disadvantaged Gifted Overlooked*, which was effective with Opinion Elites (65% Very Convincing), but ineffective with Parents (43% Very Convincing). Opinion Elites were the only group who favored *Prone to Gangs* over *Disadvantaged by ZIP Code* under the Gifted from Underserved Communities theme. This was the

Ineffective Messages

Primary Advocacy Message: *Fulfilling Potential*

In America, every person has the right to reach his or her full potential—that’s what the American Dream is all about. We have a duty to help gifted students fulfill their dreams and reach their goals by providing the resources necessary to do so.

Social-Emotional Impact: *Gifted at Social-Emotional Risk*

Gifted students often face isolation, anxiety, boredom, depression, and what can often be constant bullying from other kids for being “different.” Creating an environment where these students are safe and among other gifted peers is essential to their health and well-being.

Future Innovators: *Invest in Future Innovators*

The government spends the most on the low-performing schools and very little on high achieving students. We need to invest in our future innovators—nurturing, challenging, and inspiring them to achieve greatness. Gifted students are the key to America’s future and to maintaining our place in the global economy.

Figure 5.4. Ineffective messages.

only time ratings by Opinion Elites did not mirror the preferences of other analysis groups.

Only 38% of Opinion Elites and 39% of Parents rated Future Innovators: *Invest in Future Innovators* Very Convincing, making it an ineffective message for both groups. This was particularly notable for Opinion Elites, as over 50% of that group rated every other message Very Convincing.

Racial/Ethnic Groups. Inadequate Funding: *Money for Prisons, Not for Gifted*, the only message that was highly effective with the aggregate group and with all subgroups, was Very Convincing to 65% of

White respondents and 62% of Black and Hispanic respondents. The alternate form of the message, Inadequate Funding: *Few Funds for Gifted* omitted mention of prisons and was highly effective only with Black respondents (61% Very Convincing).

The only other message which was Very Convincing across all three racial/ethnic groups was Aspiration for America’s Future: *International Competitiveness*. This message was rated as Very Convincing by 60% of the overall sample, including 60% of White, 64% Hispanic, and 56% Black respondents.

The Primary Advocacy Message: *Disadvantaged Gifted Overlooked* evoked very different responses across racial/ethnic groups, just as it did between Opinion Elites and Parents. The message was highly effective with Black respondents (64% Very Convincing), modestly effective with Hispanic respondents (54% Very Convincing), and it was ineffective with White respondents (44% Very Convincing).

The Future Innovators: *Invest in Future Innovators* message, which was the lowest rated message among all groups, was substantially less effective with Black respondents as compared to White or Hispanic respondents. Only 35% of Black respondents rated this message Very Convincing, the single lowest rating by any group for any message.

Effectiveness of advocacy themes. The three most effective themes in the poll were: (1) Aspiration for America’s Future, (2) Gifted from Underserved Communities, and (3) Inadequate Funding. The six messages under these three themes received the highest ratings from IEA-P respondents, suggesting respondents found the themes compelling above and beyond their specific messages.

The remaining two themes, Social-Emotional Impact and Future Innovators, were less successful with poll respondents. One unifying factor that could explain the low ratings is that the themes and their respective messages emphasized the needs of gifted students without a direct mention of societal benefits.

Table 5.3

Percentage of Respondents who Found Advocacy Messages “Very Convincing,” Education Influencers and Racial/Ethnic Group

Message	Split Sample	Race/Ethnicity			Education Influencers	
		White %	Hispanic %	Black %	Opinion Elite %	Parents %
Primary Advocacy Messages						
Falling Achievement	B	52	42	45	52	48
Right to Fulfill Potential	A	48	53	52	59	55
Disadvantaged Gifted Overlooked	A	44	54	64	65	43
Aspiration for America’s Future						
America as World Leader	A	50	54	54	58	46
International Competitiveness	B	60	64	56	64	59
Future Innovators						
Too Many Edisons Ignored	A	49	54	51	55	48
Invest in Future Innovators	B	43	44	35	38	39
Gifted from Underserved Communities						
Prone to Gangs	A	51	59	61	64	54
Disadvantaged by ZIP Code	B	57	60	64	56	58
Inadequate Funding						
Few Funds for Gifted	A	52	53	61	56	53
Money for Prisons, Not for Gifted	B	65	62	62	61	63
Social-Emotional Impact						
Gifted at Social-Emotional Risk	A	42	50	46	51	48
Potential and Problems	B	51	55	45	54	50

Note. Weighted n = 707 for Split Samples A and B. For subgroup sample size and measurement errors see Appendix B, Table B3. Race/Ethnicity does not include respondents who selected more than one race. Race/Ethnicity x Income does not include respondents who selected “Prefer Not to Indicate.”

Matching message and audience. Considerable variation was observed in the effectiveness of messages across analysis subgroups of the IEA-P. Messages rated as Very Convincing by over 60% of analysis subgroups are presented in Figure 4.10.

Opinion Elites and Blacks were most likely to respond positively to a broad range of messages. Notably, three of the four messages that were highly effective with Opinion Elites were also highly effective with Black respondents: Gifted from Underserved Communities: *Prone to Gangs*, Inadequate Funding: *Money for Prisons, Not for Gifted*, and *Disadvantaged*

Gifted Overlooked. On the other hand, the *Falling Achievement* message was only modestly effective with Opinion Elites and was ineffective with Black respondents. Messages that either told a story or were success-oriented were better received.

Even though Hispanic and Black respondents were more likely to find advocacy messages convincing, a message would not achieve a comfortable majority of over 60% of the entire sample unless White respondents were also persuaded. A perfect example was the message *Disadvantaged Gifted Overlooked*, where 64% of Blacks but only 44% of Whites rated

Ineffective Messages	Modestly Effective Messages	Highly Effective
Primary Advocacy Message: <i>Right to Fulfill Potential</i> Social-Emotional Impact: <i>Gifted at Social-Emotional Risk</i> Future Innovators: <i>Invest in Future Innovators</i>	Inadequate Funding: <i>Few Funds for Gifted</i> Aspiration for America's Future: <i>Investing in the Next Generation</i> Gifted from Underserved Communities: <i>Prone to Gangs</i> Social-Emotional Impact: <i>Potential and Problems</i> Future Innovators: <i>Too Many Edisons Ignored</i> Primary Advocacy Message: <i>Disadvantaged Gifted Overlooked</i> Primary Advocacy Message: <i>Falling Achievement</i>	Inadequate Funding: <i>Money for Prisons, Not for Gifted</i> Aspiration for America's Future: <i>International Competitiveness</i> Gifted from Underserved Communities: <i>Disadvantaged by ZIP Code</i>

Figure 5.5. Ineffective, modestly effective, and highly effective messages.

the message Very Convincing. In this case, the message was effective for Black respondents but ineffective for White respondents, and because of the difference in sample size, the message was only modestly effective overall.

Parents are also crucial allies and advocates for educational issues, so it is notable that the only messages that met the threshold for a highly effective message with Parents in the IEA-P were Inadequate Funding: *Money for Prisons, Not for Gifted* (63%), Aspiration for America's Future: *International Competitiveness* (59%) and Gifted from Underserved Communities: *Disadvantaged by ZIP Code* (58%). In general, the advocacy messages in the IEA-P were less effective with White respondents and Parents than they were for other subgroups.

Comparing Paired Messages for the Same Theme

The power of language is revealed in respondents' differing reactions to the two advocacy messages

for each theme. Although the basics of advocacy messaging are to answer the questions "What is wrong?", "Why does it matter?", and "What should be done?" numerous advocacy groups have added additional guidelines to help refine advocacy messages and increase their effectiveness (Figure 5.6). Comparisons of different messages representing the same theme in the IEA-P provide clear examples of the benefits of attending to these recommendations.

Messages that included specific examples or comparisons were more effective than general messages.

State a problem. Messages that stated a clear problem were more effective than messages with general aspirational statements. The *Invest in*

Table 5.4

Dos and Don'ts of Writing Advocacy Messages

Do	Don't
Do lead with essential human values (e.g. fairness, justice).	Don't lead with the problem.
Do define a problem and suggest solutions.	Don't place blame on people or groups of people instead, focus on flaws in the system.
Do invoke sense of optimism and capacity to solve the problem.	Don't insert wedges between important constituent groups.
Do provide specific examples that explain the need for change.	Don't put race, income, or cultural differences early in the message.
Do explain how values are undone by the problem.	Don't present a problem without suggesting a path to a solution or an actual solution.
Do appeal to a united, inclusive community.	Don't emphasize the historical legacy of disadvantage.
Do evoke "enlightened self-interest"; include reminders that failures in social structures ultimately hurt everyone.	Don't present data in isolation.
Do emphasize shared societal fate, opportunity, or benefit.	
Do identify your advocacy group as a part of a larger community.	

Note. Compiled from Center for Community Change, 2017; Dorfman, Wallack, & Woodruff, 2005; Kennedy, Fisher, & Bailey, 2010

Future Innovators message describes the status quo and presents an uplifting goal but fails to state a problem to grab the public's attention (Table 5.5). The message also leads with a comparison that could create conflicted feelings among people who also support improvements for low-income schools. Even though *Invest in Future Innovators* presented a forward-thinking vision, this was the least effective message. The *Too Many Edisons Ignored* message presents a problem—future innovators are neglected in school. While this message was not as effective as others in the poll, it had a much better reception than the parallel *Invest in Future Innovators* message, and by a large margin among Blacks, Parents, and Opinion Elites.

Provide specific examples that explain the need to change. Messages that included specific examples or comparisons were more effective than general messages. For example, *Aspiration for America's Future: Investing in the Next Generation* only provided a general message describing a desire for America to preserve its dominance in innovation, with nothing specific used as a reference point and little sense of urgency (Table 5.6). This message was modestly effective, rated as Very Convincing by 51% of the sample. However, 60% of respondents found the alternate message, *Aspiration for America's Future: International Competitiveness*, which compared America's investment in gifted children with investments made by China and India,

Table 5.5

Strengths and Weaknesses of Messages for the Theme: Future Innovators

Message Title	Message Text	Very Convincing %	Strengths/Weaknesses
<i>Invest in Future Innovators</i>	The government spends the most on low-performing schools and very little on high-achieving students. We need to invest in our future innovators—nurturing, challenging, and inspiring them to achieve greatness. Gifted students are the key to America’s future and to maintaining our place in the global economy.	43	W General statement W Fails to present a problem
<i>Too Many Edisons Ignored</i>	Too many of our future Beethovens, Marie Curies, Steve Jobs’, Sally Rides and Thomas Edisons are sitting in a public school classroom, bored or disengaged, without any of the programs or teachers they need. We need to invest in our future innovators—nurturing, challenging, and inspiring them to achieve greatness.	50	S Presents a problem S Provides specific example

Note. W = Weakness, S = Strength.

Very Convincing. Adding specific competitors in the international race for intellectual leadership was much more convincing than the generalities in the alternate message.

Convincing, compared to 53% for *Few Funds for Gifted*. However, examples that compare groups of people tend to divide audiences and do more harm than good; these should be avoided.

Respondent reactions to the messages for the theme Inadequate Funding provide another clear example of the benefits of including a specific example in an advocacy message (Table 5.7). The two messages tested for this theme were identical except for nine additional words in *Money for Prisons, Not for Gifted*: “...spent nearly 7 billion dollars on prisons, but we...”. Even though the only difference in the two messages was a nine-word passage 64% of respondents found the *Money for Prisons, Not for Gifted* version Very

Appeal to a united, inclusive community. Messages that addressed a unified group were more effective than messages that created an “us vs. them” divide. Comparing groups of people inherently divides constituents and automatically diminishes the power of an advocacy message to persuade a majority of the public. The impact of dividing the public was evidenced in the responses to three advocacy messages related to underserved gifted students (Table 5.7). Although a majority of respondents were

Table 5.6

Strengths and Weaknesses of Messages for the Theme: Aspirations for America's Future.

Message Title	Message Text	Very Convincing %	Strengths/Weaknesses
<i>Investing in the Next Generation</i>	America has long been the world leader in entrepreneurship, discovery, and innovation. If we want to continue to lead in the future, we must invest in our nation's most powerful resource: the great thinkers and innovators of the next generation.	52	W General statement W Fails to present a problem
<i>International Competitiveness</i>	While the United States devotes almost no federal funding to developing its most promising youth, other countries like China and India invest millions of dollars in theirs. If our country wants to remain globally competitive in the coming decades, we need to ensure these gifted young Americans receive the support and resources they need to succeed.	60	S Presents a problem S Provides specific examples S Compares systems, not children

Note. W = Weakness, S = Strength.

Table 5.7

Strengths and Weaknesses of Messages for the Theme: Inadequate Funding

Message Title	Message Text	Very Convincing %	Strengths/Weaknesses
<i>Few Funds for Gifted</i>	In 2014, the federal government spent almost nothing on programs for gifted students in public schools. In fact, more than half of public schools have zero funds going to gifted learners. Clearly something must be done to help these students reach their full potential.	53	W General statement
<i>Money for Prisons, Not for Gifted</i>	In 2014, the federal government spent nearly 7 billion dollars on prisons, but we spent almost nothing on programs for gifted students in public schools. In fact, more than half of public schools have zero funds going to gifted learners. Clearly something must be done to help these students reach their full potential.	64	S Presents a problem S Compares systems, not children

Note. W = Weakness, S = Strength.

Table 5.8

Strengths and Weaknesses for Advocacy Messages: Overlooked Disadvantaged Gifted, Prone to Gangs, and Disadvantaged by ZIP Code

Message Title	Message Text	Very Convincing %	Strengths/Weaknesses
Theme: Primary Advocacy Message			
<i>Disadvantaged Gifted Overlooked</i>	Minority students and students from low socioeconomic backgrounds who demonstrate comparable levels of aptitude to white and upper middle-class students are two and a half times less likely to be identified as gifted. We need to invest more resources in the most vulnerable gifted students to ensure they don't fall through the cracks.	50	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> W Compares groups of children W Creates an "us vs. them" division W Focuses on identification, not services
Theme: Gifted from Underserved Communities			
<i>Prone to Gangs</i>	Schools in low-income communities are the least likely to have adequate funds and services for gifted kids. Gifted kids in these communities are often vulnerable to gang recruitment or dropping out. We can't let those with the most potential fall through the cracks.	54	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> S Avoids dividing groups S Presents specific problem S Focuses on services, not identification W Focuses on problems with youth, not systems W Suggests stereotype about low-income students
<i>Disadvantaged by ZIP Code</i>	Schools in low-income communities are the least likely to have adequate funds and services for gifted kids. We can't let those with the most potential in these communities fall through the cracks simply because they were born into the wrong ZIP Code.	58	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> S Avoids dividing groups S Presents specific problem S Focuses on services, not identification S Describes a problem with a system-inequitable distribution of resources

Note. W = Weakness, S = Strength

in favor of increasing the number of programs for gifted students in low-income areas (see Chapter 3), they did not find the *Disadvantaged Gifted Overlooked* message, which directly compared lower- and higher-income students, very convincing. More specifically, *Disadvantaged Gifted Overlooked* was appealing to Black and Hispanic respondents and Opinion Elites, but not to a majority of White respondents, only 44% of whom gave the message a Very Convincing rating. The overall result was a modestly effective message.

The two messages tested for the theme Gifted from Underserved Communities, which address the same general topic as *Disadvantaged Gifted Overlooked*, were better received. Like *Disadvantaged Gifted Overlooked*, both messages for Gifted from Underserved Communities present accurate information about disparities in funding for gifted education in low-income neighborhoods but the messages focus exclusively on low-income communities instead of drawing distinctions

between lower- and higher-income groups. Hispanic, Black, and Opinion Elite respondents preferred the two Gifted from Underserved Communities messages over *Disadvantaged Gifted Overlooked*, and the messages were also Very Convincing to over 50% of the remaining poll respondents. Given the poll respondents' differing responses to the concept of identification (see Chapter 4), it is worth noting that the less effective *Disadvantaged Gifted Overlooked* message also mentioned identification, while both Gifted from Underserved Communities messages both emphasize providing services.

Messages that described collective societal benefits of educating gifted students were more successful than messages that focus on benefits to the gifted child.

Table 5.9

Strengths and Weaknesses for the Theme: Gifted at Social-Emotional Risk

Message Title	Message Text	Very Convincing %	Strengths/Weaknesses
Gifted at Social-Emotional Risk	Gifted students often face isolation, anxiety, boredom, depression, and what can often be constant bullying from other kids for being "different." Creating an environment where these students are safe and among other gifted peers is essential to their health and well-being.	44	W Focus is exclusively on gifted children with no connection to all students W Fails to describe universal benefit
Potential and Problems	Every child deserves an education that ensures they can meet their full potential. Unfortunately, gifted students are being left behind by today's education priorities. They often face bullying in the halls and, without proper resources, can find themselves bored and depressed in the classroom.	51	S Leads with what <i>all</i> students need before discussing gifted students' needs S Suggests that the flaw is with a system. W Fails to describe universal benefit

Note. W = Weakness, S = Strength

Table 5.10

Strengths and Weaknesses of Messages for the Theme: Gifted from Underserved Communities.

Message Title	Message Text	Very Convincing %	Strengths/Weaknesses
<i>Prone to Gangs</i>	Schools in low-income communities are the least likely to have adequate funds and services for gifted kids. Gifted kids in these communities are often vulnerable to gang recruitment or dropping out. We can't let those with the most potential fall through the cracks.	54	W Focuses on problems with youth, not systems W Suggests stereotype about low-income students
<i>Disadvantaged by ZIP Code</i>	Schools in low-income communities are the least likely to have adequate funds and services for gifted kids. We can't let those with the most potential in these communities fall through the cracks simply because they were born into the wrong ZIP code.	58	S Describes a problem with a system of inequitable distribution

Note. W = Weakness, S = Strength

Emphasize shared societal fate, opportunity, or benefit. Messages that described collective benefits of educating gifted students were more successful than messages that focus on benefits to the gifted child. Economic security, preservation of American values, and proactive investment in potential were all compelling. The two messages describing gifted students' frustration and boredom were relatively ineffective (Table 5.9). Even messages about innovators, who arguably benefit the whole of society, failed to be effective if the message did not make reference to a social benefit. The Future Innovators: *Invest in Future Innovators* message was rated as Very Convincing by only 43% of the sample and was the single lowest rated message for three subgroups (Blacks 35%, Opinion Elites 38%, and Parents 39%). Its alternate form, which included several specific examples of innovators whose names call to mind their transformative contributions, was more effective, rated as Very Convincing by 51% of the overall sample.

Focus on flaws in systems (don't blame people). Messages that pointed out how broken social, economic, and/or political systems create problems are more successful than messages that suggest that people are the problem. Although messages for Gifted from Underserved Communities shared common strengths in maintaining a united constituent group and presenting a specific problem (Table 5.10), and although they shared nearly identical phrasing, they also have a crucial difference. One message suggested that low-income students are at risk for negative behaviors, and the other described economic disparities in birthplace—being born in the wrong ZIP code. Even though the two messages differed by only a few words, the *Disadvantaged by ZIP Code* message was more effective than the *Prone to Gangs* message with all groups except Opinion Elites. One reason for the difference could be the tacit suggestion in the *Prone to Gangs* message that low-income youth are prone to negative behaviors and lack the resilience

to resist. The ZIP code message focuses on the “accident of birth” that places students in different neighborhoods, directing attention to inequities in social and economic systems.

Don’t present data in isolation. Reports presenting data trends are an asset to advocacy; they document similarities and differences between groups along specific metrics, serve as deep background for policy formation, and ensure that policy is directed to necessary targets (Finn & Wright, 2015; Plucker & Peters, 2016; Xiang, Dahlin, Cronin, Theaker, & Durant, 2011). However, advocacy messages that only present data rarely persuade, as evidenced by the modest response to the *Falling Achievement* message. While the public needs to have accurate, evidence-based information, they engage more deeply with messages with context that breathes life into the data.

Synopsis

The power of any advocacy message shifts with the winds of the times. In the late 1950s, the launch of Sputnik gave the *International Competitiveness* message extraordinary urgency that it lacks today. The results of this section of the poll require interpretation in current social context, at a time when concern is high for many areas of public education.

- All of the messages presented independently were Very Convincing to at least 40% of poll respondents. No message was Very Convincing to more than 65% of poll respondents.
- The six highest rated messages belonged to three themes: (1) Inadequate Funding, (2) Aspiration for America’s Future, and (3) Gifted from Underserved Communities.
- Three of the 13 messages were highly effective, rated as Very Convincing by 58-65% of poll respondents: (1) Inadequate Funding: *Money for Prisons, Not for Gifted*, (2) Gifted from Underserved Communities: *Disadvantaged by ZIP Code*, and (3) Aspiration for America’s

Future: *International Competitiveness*. **Only one message, Inadequate Funding: Money for Prisons, Not for Gifted, was highly effective with the overall respondent group and each of the analysis subgroups.**

- **Highly effective messages engaged respondents in “enlightened self-interest” by suggesting educating gifted students could improve the larger social landscape;** these messages were more effective than generic messages or messages that focus on individuals fulfilling their potential.
- **None of the three Primary Advocacy Messages were highly effective.** While the arguments presented in *Falling Achievement, Disadvantaged Gifted Overlooked, or Right to Fulfill Potential* may resonate with parents and professionals who work with gifted children, they did not seem immediately persuasive to a majority of the public.
- Effective messages about disadvantaged gifted students focus on remedying social inequities, not on stereotypical dire consequences if services are not provided.
- When asked to describe gifted or high-ability students, IEA-P respondents kept a narrow focus on core attributes associated with advanced cognitive ability or achievement orientation. **When responding to advocacy messages, they also preferred messages which focused on students’ abilities instead of on gifted students’ social-emotional needs.**

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Public Perception and Professional Practice:

The Long Road to Equity in Gifted Education

...neither have we made more than a few sporadic attempts to discover gifted Negro children, nor have we attempted to see that those who have been discovered are given the advantages commensurate with their abilities.

—Editorial Comment, *Journal of Negro Education*, 1935¹

EA-P respondents were unequivocal in their desire for public schools to provide specialized programming for gifted low-income and minority students. This remains one of the most entrenched problems in gifted education.

Investigation into the needs of gifted disadvantaged students began in the 1930s when a handful of researchers began documenting the presence of advanced ability in Black children (Jenkins, 1943, 1948; Robinson & Meenes, 1947; Theman & Witty, 1943; Witty & Jenkins, 1934). It took another 15 years and school desegregation for the topic to take hold in mainstream gifted education (Cowles & Daniel, 1968; Frierson, 1965; Gowan, 1968; Tisdall, 1968), and slightly longer for the field to recognize that, although they are interrelated, racial bias and poverty suppress ability in different ways (Passow, 1972). Efforts on behalf of minority and disadvantaged gifted students expanded following the Marland Report (1972). Contributions from this time include a compendium of recommended practices for different underprivileged groups from the National/State Leadership Training Institute (Miley, 1975), the *Baldwin Identification Matrix* (Baldwin, 1977), and policy recommendations from the interdisciplinary conference *Talent Delayed, Talent Denied* (J. Gallagher, 1974).

Today, efforts are no longer “sporadic.” The past 30 years in gifted education are defined by concerted attempts to improve the status of gifted low-income and minority students. This effort is directed in

Despite the United States’ image of being the land of opportunity, for many children living in poverty, access to gifted education opportunities is often limited.

—Goings & Ford, 2018

large part by the Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Act, which requires funded projects to address the needs of students traditionally underrepresented in gifted programs. The Javits program has spurred innovation in identification matrices (Frasier, 1991; Maker, 2001; Shaklee, 1992) and curriculum-based *in situ* identification methods (Coleman & Shah-Coltrane, 2010; Gallagher & Gallagher, 2013) as well as curriculum designed to engage gifted disadvantaged learners (S. Gallagher, 2000; Gavin et al., 2007; Robinson, Adelson, Kidd, & Cunningham, 2018; VanTassel-Baska, 2018). National reports produced during this period provide summaries of evidence-based strategies and program models to identify and engage gifted students from all corners of society (Olszewski-Kubilius & Clarenbach, 2012; VanTassel-Baska & Stambaugh, 2007).

The Javits projects provide pockets of hope, yet the problem persists on a scale far more extensive than short-term, small-scale projects can address. Evidence suggests that, nationwide, high achievers who attend low-income schools perform one grade-level lower than their counterparts in higher-income schools (Wyner, Bridgeland, & Diulio, 2007). Poverty is a chief culprit in achievement disparities. Even in an educational climate where many gifted children are underachieving relative to their ability (S. Gallagher, 2007; Xiang, Dahlin, Cronin, Theaker, & Durant, 2011), underachievement in low-income populations is far more profound. For instance, there is a marked income-based disparity in the number of students who score at the Advanced level of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (Lamprey, Dion, & Donahue, 2009; Plucker & Peters, 2018). However,

¹ All language is from the original document.

income alone cannot account for the opportunity gap: several studies demonstrate that minority students are referred for gifted services less often than White students, even when accounting for prior achievement and economic status (Grissom & Redding, 2016; McBee, 2006; Siegle & Powell, 2004). Inequitable access to gifted education services is systemic as well as individual; within a district, gifted programs and advanced courses are more often located in higher-income schools (Hamilton et al., 2018; Klugman, 2013). **Access to gifted education is, in fact, often determined by ZIP code.**

While professionals in gifted education continue to make inroads on this problem, progress is hampered by the fact that gifted education is entangled in public education's larger struggle to provide an appropriate education for all minority and low-income students. In many school districts, leaders for gifted education programs lack the authority and the resources needed to create equitable programs. Long-term solutions are unlikely unless entire school systems engage with the problem; otherwise the wisdom gained from decades of Javits projects will help only a fortunate few, not a generation. Accordingly, some of the most important advocacy efforts on behalf of gifted students are those directed to colleagues in different branches of education, including:

➡ *Early childhood educators.* Poverty impacts achievement as early as first grade. District-wide identification approaches will be most effective if implemented before income-based achievement gaps have a chance to grow.

➡ *Title I personnel.* Students attending low-income schools are less likely to be identified as gifted, either because of low expectations or because of the absence of gifted programs in low-income schools. Title 1 personnel are crucial allies in bringing gifted identification programs, curriculum, and professional development to low-income schools.

➡ *Teacher preparation and professional development programs.* Teacher referral is a gateway to many gifted programs; currently, those referrals are made by teachers with little or no background in gifted education. Providing information to general education teachers about gifted child characteristics, including non-traditional expression of those characteristics, is crucial to achieving equity in gifted programs. Special efforts to recruit Black and Hispanic educators into the gifted education community is also vital to creating program equity.

➡ *Curriculum coordinators.* Many effective interventions for low-income gifted students involve integrating engaging, inquiry-based curriculum in the regular classroom in low-income schools so that teachers can see which students respond to challenge with higher level thinking. Curriculum coordinators must commit to adopting these curricula, providing an opportunity to raise the achievement ceiling as well as its floor.

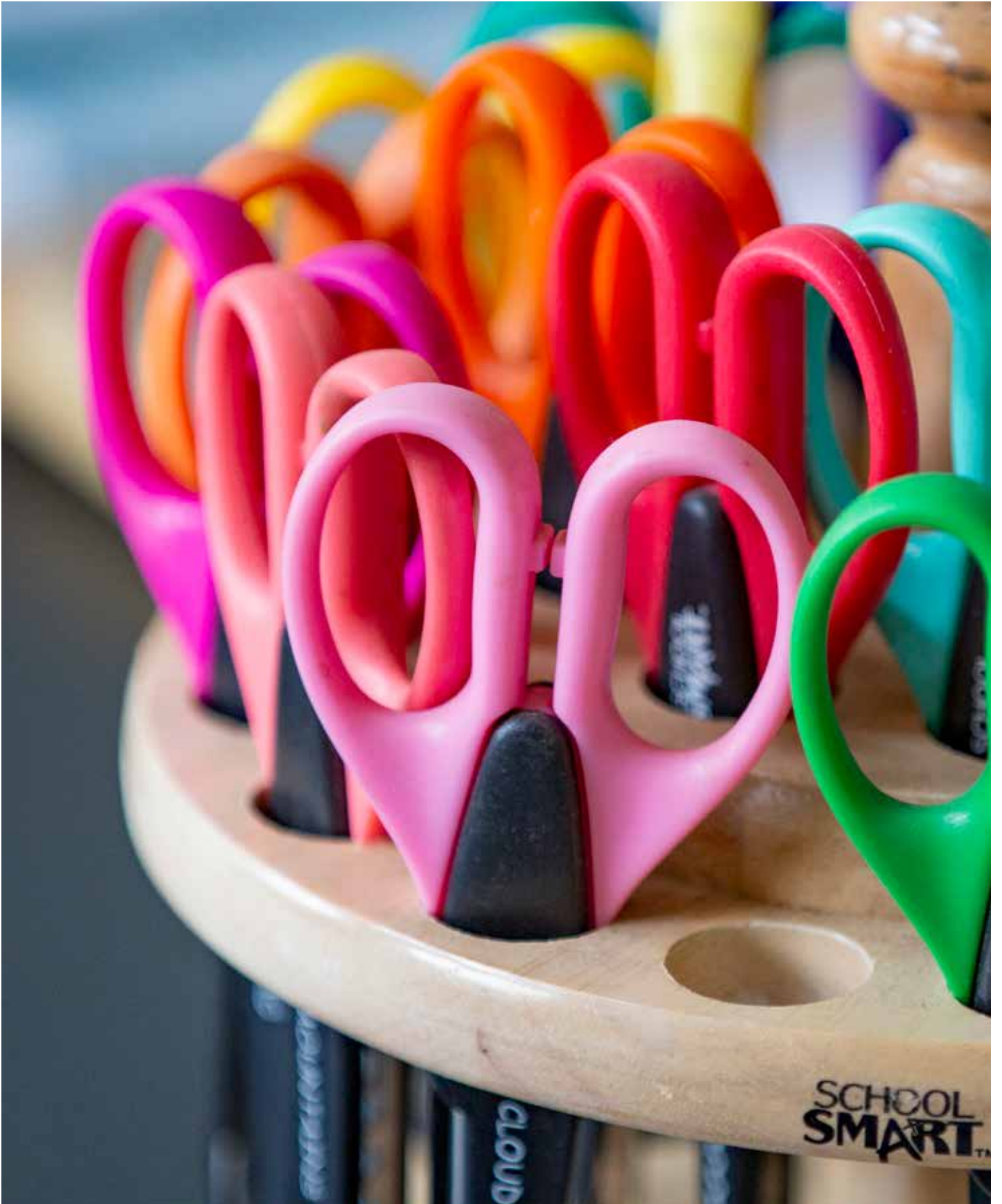
➡ *District leadership.* Motivating and coordinating the intra-disciplinary efforts described above requires the leadership of district administration. Creating equity in gifted programs also requires investment of time and resources. District leaders demonstrate commitment to a cause through budget allocations and personnel.

Results of the IEA-P suggest that educators who make these efforts will receive support from the public. IEA-P respondents from all backgrounds reported that they want gifted programs to be ubiquitous as long as gifted children in poverty and gifted children of color have equal access to services. They do not see gifted education as a problem, but rather, as part of a solution. Gifted education, in their view, is a tool to help the arc of the moral universe bend toward justice for gifted children who are black, brown, or impoverished.

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CHAPTER 6

FOR OR AGAINST: TESTING CONTRASTING MESSAGES

We know that America's very smart, low-income students increasingly fall to the margins as they progress through school, and far too many are discouraged from pursuing a college degree, especially at one of our select colleges and universities.

—Jack Kent Cooke Foundation

Advocacy arguments rarely occur in a void—messages advocating for a cause must be persuasive enough to prevail when countered by arguments *against* the cause. To assess the impact of opposing advocacy messages, the IEA-P gauged public response when presented with common arguments for and against gifted education.

Common Opposition Messages

Three common arguments against gifted education were presented to poll respondents: (1) *Gifted Don't Need Resources*, claiming that gifted students will be fine without special programs; (2) *Siphoning Resources*, suggesting that gifted education programs will take money away from other students; and (3) *Federal Budget Burden*, positing that funding gifted education would further strain the federal budget deficit. Each of these opposition arguments was juxtaposed with two or more favorable arguments supporting gifted education. In each case, respondents read the opposition argument and then one or two favorable arguments; after reading each argument they were asked to select the position they agreed with more (Table 6.1).

Gifted Don't Need Resources. All IEA-P respondents were presented with contrasting positions asking whether gifted students require more educational resources or whether they would be “just fine” even in the absence of special programs. The opposition message, *Gifted Don't Need Resources*, argued that gifted students need no special services because they already have advanced skills. This argument was paired with two arguments favorable to gifted education arguments: *Resources Nurture Ability*, which countered that additional resources are necessary for gifted students to achieve their full potential; and *Resources Prevent Problems*, which

claimed that gifted students need resources because they struggle in their absence. Respondent choices are summarized in Table 6.2.

Questions posed earlier in the poll already established that IEA-P respondents believe gifted students should receive the specialized services they require (see Chapter 5). Answers to the *Gifted Don't Need Resources* argument continued this trend: Respondents were much more likely to support the arguments in support of gifted education (Figure 6.1). When contrasted against the argument that gifted students are already equipped for success, 74% agreed instead that gifted students have a right to fulfill their potential and 70% agreed instead that gifted students would struggle if they did not have special programs. Interestingly, variations of each of these two favorable messages failed to convince a large proportion of respondents when they were presented on their own. In this case at least, messages which were modestly effective on their own were more compelling than an opposition message that relatively few respondents believed.

Education Influencers. Although Opinion Elites and Parents were more likely to agree with both favorable arguments than with the *Gifted Don't Need Resources* counterargument, the rate of agreement was higher for the *Resources Fulfill Potential* argument. Parent agreement with *Resources Fulfill Potential* was particularly high, with 80% choosing that message over *Gifted Don't Need Resources*.

Racial/Ethnic Groups. Over 60% of each analysis group agreed with the favorable messages; however, Hispanics were somewhat less likely to agree than Black or White respondents. Black respondents were more likely than Hispanics to select *Resources Fulfill Potential* (77% Black and 68% Hispanic respondents).

Table 6.1

Messages in Opposition to Gifted Education and Contrasting Favorable Messages

<u>Opposition</u>	<u>Favorable</u>
<p><i>Gifted Don't Need Resources.</i> Gifted students do not need additional resources because they are already equipped for success.</p>	<p>a) <i>Resources Nurture Ability.</i> Gifted students are in need of additional resources because they have natural gifts and talents that need to be nurtured.</p> <p>b) <i>Resources Prevent Problems.</i> Gifted students are in need of additional resources because they often struggle as a result of their unique abilities.</p>
<p><i>Siphoning Resources.</i> Devoting more resources to gifted students will take resources away from other students who may need those resources more.</p>	<p>a) <i>Aspiration & Need.</i> Investing in gifted children-- who often struggle because of their unique gifts-- is one of the best investments we can make in our communities and economic future.</p> <p>b) <i>Disagreeable Choices.</i> When it comes to our children, we shouldn't be forced to decide between one group and another--all their needs should be met.</p>
<p><i>Federal Budget Burden.</i> Spending federal dollars on programs for gifted kids sounds great, but the country just can't afford it. Every year it seems the federal deficit grows larger and America's debt rises.</p>	<p>a) <i>Preserve Innovation Legacy.</i> America has always led the world in innovation and discovery. In order to continue this legacy, it's imperative that we invest in our nation's most powerful resource: the great thinkers and innovators of the next generation.</p> <p>b) <i>Other Countries Support Gifted.</i> America's success in the 21st century relies on our commitment to the next generation. Countries like China, Singapore, and India are investing in their gifted students, while the US provides almost no federal funding for these programs in our schools.</p> <p>c) <i>Wrong Priorities.</i> Our country's priorities are way off base—we spend billions of federal dollars on prisons, and almost nothing on the best and brightest of the next generation. Currently, only a very small handful of schools have the funds they need to serve their gifted students.</p>

Table 6.2

Percentage Who Agree with Favorable Messages When Contrasted with the Opposition Message Gifted Don't Need Resources (Q40-41)

		Race/Ethnicity				Race/Ethnicity x Income						Education Influencers	
		Total	White	Hisp.	Black	White		Hispanic		Black		OE	Par
						<\$50	\$50k+	<\$50	\$50k+	<\$50	\$50k+		
Weighted n:	1414	1004	156	176	395	580	75	73	96	74	42	424	
Unweighted n:	1414	815	281	261	246	554	97	182	128	126	246	690	
Favorable Message	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
Resources Fulfill Potential	74	75	68	77	71	77	77	66	78	76	74	80	
Resources Prevent Problems	70	70	67	73	66	73	67	73	69	80	66	74	

Notes. <\$50 = Income under \$50,000/year, \$50k+ = Income \$50,000 and up, OE = Opinion Elite, Hisp. = Hispanics, Par = Parents. At the 95% confidence level the standard error of measure for the entire sample is ±2.51%. It is ±6.21% among Opinion Elites, ±3.73% among Parents, ±6.03% among Blacks, ±5.81% among Hispanics, and ±3.33 among Whites. Race/Ethnicity does not include respondents who selected more than one race. Race/Ethnicity x Income does not include respondents who selected "Prefer Not to Indicate."

Responses also differed according to income group; higher-income respondents were more likely to agree with the *Resources Prevent Problems* argument than their lower-income counterparts. The greatest income disparity was among Black respondents, where 69% of lower-income Blacks agreed that resources prevent problems, compared with 80% of higher income Blacks.

Disagreeable Choices: When it comes to our children, we shouldn't be forced to decide between one group and another—all their needs should be met.

Gifted Education Siphons Resources Away from Others. The second juxtaposition placed the opposition argument that gifted education takes resources away from other students, *Siphoning Resources*, against two favorable messages (Figure 6.2, Table 6.3).¹ The first favorable message, *Aspiration & Need*, began and ended with statements

¹ All respondents heard the opposition message, and then the sample was split; half compared the opposition message with the *Aspiration & Need* message (split half X), and the other half, with the *Disagreeable Choices* message (split half Y).

about investing in national well-being, with the mention of gifted students' needs sandwiched in the middle. The other favorable message, *Disagreeable Choices*, was different from other messages in the poll because it was generic, not specific to gifted education. This argument suggested that people should not have to choose between the needs of different groups of children—it was, in effect, an argument against limited education budgets.

Disagreeable Choices. The public communicated their frustration that meeting the needs of one group of students required sacrificing the needs of another group through their choice between *Siphoning Resources* and *Disagreeable Choices*. Eight in ten agreed with the message in *Disagreeable Choices*, that all students' needs should be met. This was the highest rate of agreement for any advocacy message tested at any point in the poll and reinforces the general concern over public education reflected in benchmark items (see Chapter 2). Although the message itself presents no solution to the problem of difficult choices, it does reveal the public's attitude towards the constant conversation about trade-offs in education. In an ideal world, they would have schools receive all the resources they need—including resources for gifted students.

Education Influencers. Parent's responses paralleled the other analysis subgroups, with 79% agreeing with

Which of the following is closer to your view?

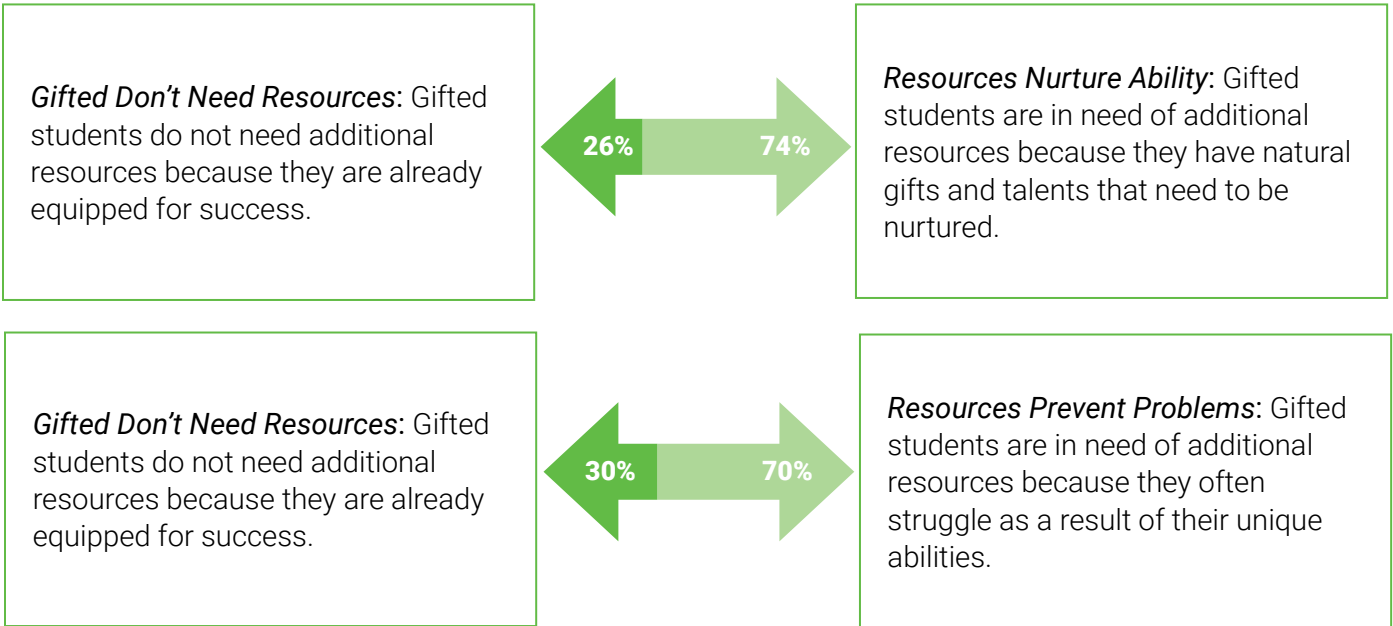


Figure 6.1. Percentage of responses to messages for and against gifted education based on the *Gifted Don't Need Resources* argument.

Which of the following is closer to your view?

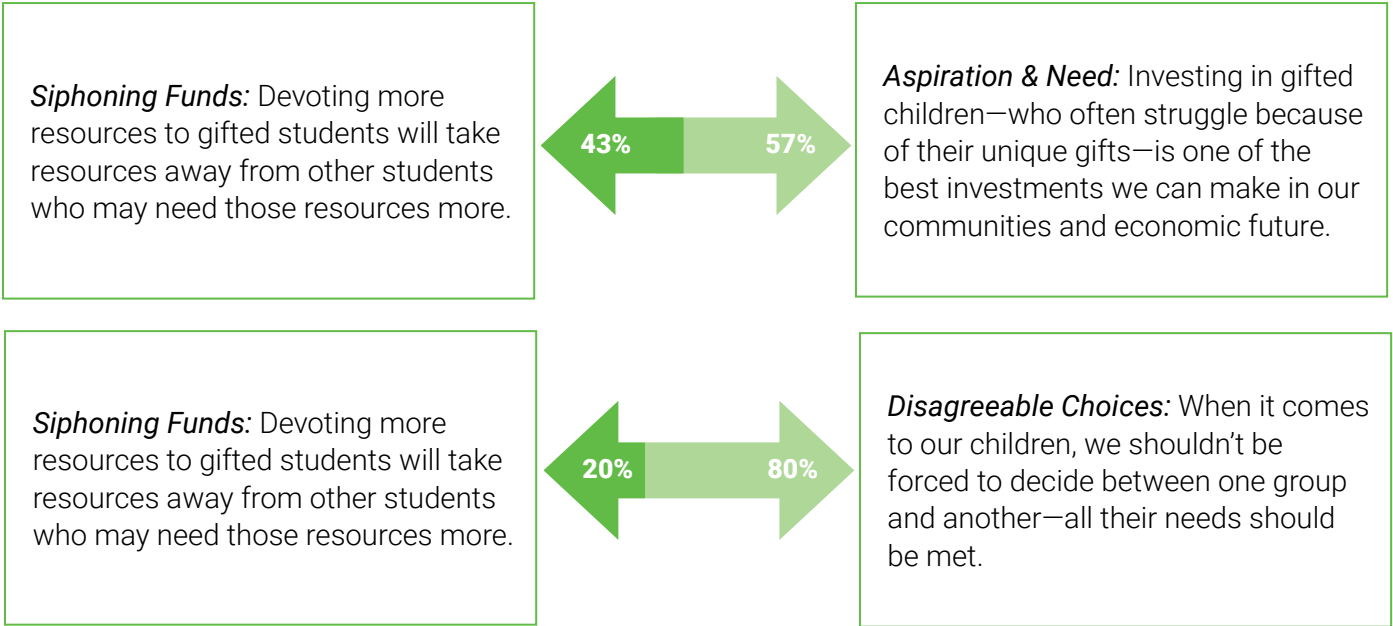


Figure 6.2. Percentage of responses to message favorable to gifted education and opposing based on the *Siphoning Funds* argument.

Table 6.3

Percentage of Respondents Who Agree with a Favorable Message when Contrasted with the Opposition Message Siphoning Resources (Q44-45)

	Weighted n:	Race/Ethnicity				Race/Ethnicity x Income						Education Influencers	
		Total	White	Hisp.	Black	White		Hispanic		Black		OE	Par
		<\$50	\$50k+	<\$50	\$50k+	<\$50	\$50k+	<\$50	\$50k+	<\$50	\$50k+	%	%
Favorable Message	707	496	78	89	192	312	33	45	48	37	21	212	
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
Aspiration & Need	57	58	54	48	52	62	50	56	41	58	66	60	
Disagreeable Choices	80	81	81	75	75	84	85	77	79	69	69	79	

Notes. <\$50 = Income under \$50,000/year, \$50k+ = Income \$50,000 and up, Hisp. = Hispanics, OE = Opinion Elite, Par = Parents. *Aspiration & Need* = Split Sample X, *Desirable Choices* = Split Sample Y. Weighted n provided for Split Sample X. For weighted n for Split Sample Y and all subgroups, along with standard error of measure see Appendix B, Table B3. Race/Ethnicity does not include respondents who selected more than one race. Race/Ethnicity x Income does not include respondents who selected "Prefer Not to Indicate."

the *Disagreeable Choices* message over *Siphoning Resources*. Opinion Elites were less likely than other subgroups to select *Disagreeable Choices* (69%).

Racial/Ethnic Groups. Only small differences were observed among the three racial/ethnic analysis groups; three out of four respondents agreed with the *Disagreeable Choices* across racial/ethnic groups. Support was especially strong among lower-income Hispanic (85%) and higher-income White respondents (84%). Far fewer higher-income Black respondents agreed with this position (69%).

Aspiration & Need. While the vast majority of respondents agree that gifted students need resources, they were ambivalent about spending on gifted students when faced with the prospect that the money would take resources from others. More than half of the sample (57%) agreed with *Aspiration & Need* over *Siphoning Resources*, but the rate of agreement was lower than for any other message.

Education Influencers. Opinion Elites responded in similar proportions to *Disagreeable Choices* (69% Agree) and to *Aspiration & Need* (66% Agree). As a result, even though they were less likely than other groups to agree with *Disagreeable Choices*, they were more likely than other groups to agree with *Aspiration*

& *Need*. Responses from Parents paralleled the trends among other groups. Over half of the Parents who responded to the *Aspiration & Need* message agreed with it and not with the *Siphoning Funds* messages, but more agreed with *Disagreeable Choices*.

Racial/Ethnic Groups. Black respondents were less likely than other racial/ethnic groups to agree with the tenet in *Aspiration & Need* that gifted education is one of the best investments in the future: 48% of Black, 58% of White, and 54% of Hispanic respondents agreed with the *Aspiration & Need* message. Lower-income White and Hispanic respondents were equally likely to agree with either *Siphoning Resources* or *Aspiration & Need* (52% and 50% agreed with *Aspiration & Need*, respectively), while lower-income Blacks were less likely to agree with *Aspiration & Need* (41% Agree).

Federal Budget Burden. Responses to the *Disagreeable Choices* question again revealed the public's overwhelming desire to provide adequate resources to all children in public schools. That desire appeared again in the third forced choice question, where the opposition message *Federal Budget Burden* was positioned against three pro-gifted messages: (a) *Preserve Innovation Legacy*,

Table 6.4

*Percentage of Respondents Who Agree with Favorable Message when Contrasted with Opposition Message
Federal Budget Burden (Q46-48)*

Favorable Message	Split Sample	Total %	Race/Ethnicity			Race/Ethnicity x Income						Education Influencers	
			White %	Hispanic %	Black %	White		Hispanic		Black		OE %	Par %
			<\$50 %	\$50k+ %	<\$50 %	\$50k+ %	<\$50 %	\$50k+ %	<\$50 %	\$50k+ %	OE %	Par %	
Preserve Innovation Legacy	J	70	69	67	73	64	73	78	56	77	74	76	73
Other Countries Support Gifted	K	69	69	74	68	63	73	71	78	62	77	70	76
Wrong Priorities	L	71	69	71	77	60	74	71	72	76	82	72	70

Notes. <\$50 = Income under \$50,000/year, \$50k+ = Income \$50,000 and up, OE = Opinion Elite, Hisp = Hispanics, Par = Parents. Split Sample J n= 472, Split Samples K and L n=471. Sample size and standard error of measure for subgroups is in Appendix B, Table B3. Race/Ethnicity does not include respondents who selected more than one race. Race/Ethnicity x Income does not include respondents who selected "Prefer Not to Indicate."

that investing in gifted students is an investment in America’s leadership in innovation and discovery; (b) *Other Countries Support Gifted*, that investing in gifted students at levels similar to international competitors is essential for economic prosperity; and (c) *Wrong Priorities*, that funding choices should prioritize proactive investments such as gifted education over remediation in prisons.²

The rate of agreement for these messages is presented in Table 6.4. Consistent with the other forced-choice questions, the public was more likely to agree with positions in favor of fully funding education, including gifted education. The three messages favorable to gifted education were equally effective when contrasted with the position that funding gifted education would create a burden on the federal budget: 70% agreed with *Preserve Innovation Legacy*, 69% with *Other Countries Support Gifted*, and 71% with *Wrong Priorities* (Figure 6.3). The *Other Countries Support Gifted* and *Wrong Priorities* messages were both very convincing when positioned against counterarguments. Perhaps more surprisingly, the *Preserve Innovation Legacy* message,

which was similar to two ineffective stand-alone messages, was effective in countering the *Federal Budget Burden* argument.

Education Influencers. Parents and Opinion Elites were unpersuaded by the *Federal Budget Burden* message. Each group responded in favor of the all the pro-gifted messages, with around 70% of each group agreeing with each message.

Racial/Ethnic Groups. In general, respondent choices were similar across racial/ethnic demographics. Between 60-82% of each racial/ethnic group selected a pro-gifted message over the *Federal Budget Burden* argument, regardless of message content.

When juxtaposed, messages advocating for gifted students were always more persuasive than opposition messages.

² All respondents heard the *Federal Budget Burden* message, and three-way split samples (n=471) responded to one of the three pro-gifted responses.

Which of the following is closer to your view?

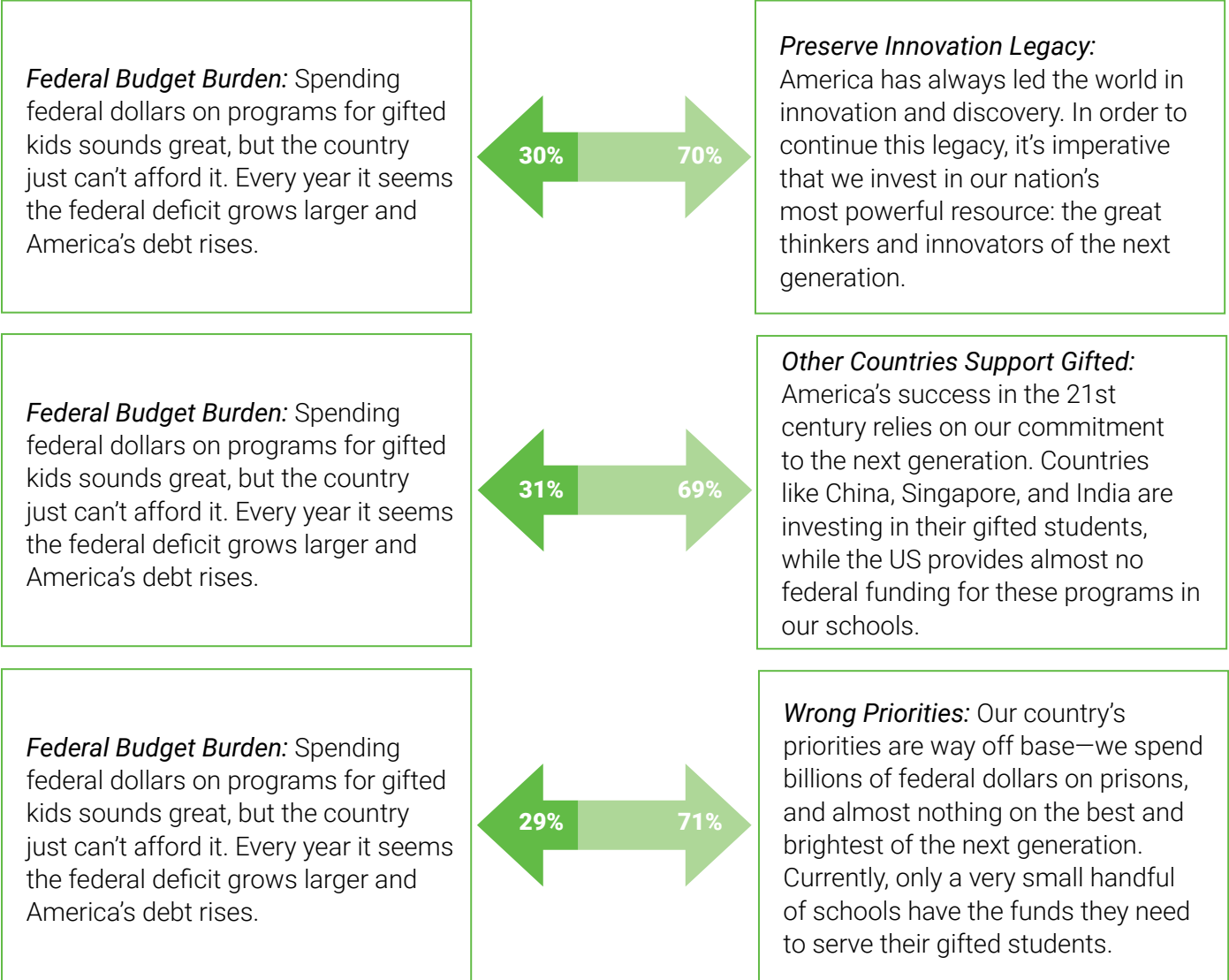


Figure 6.3. Percentage of responses to messages favorable to and opposing gifted education based on the *Federal Budget Burden* argument.

Synopsis

When juxtaposed, messages advocating for gifted students were always more persuasive than opposition messages. Without additional testing, it is hard to tell whether this is because the favorable messages were effective or because the opposing messages were not.

- Throughout the IEA-P, respondents indicated support for providing gifted students with the resources they need. This support was reinforced again in the public's rejection of the

Gifted Don't Need Resources message which claimed that gifted students do not need additional resources because they are already equipped for success.

- When the opposition message *Siphoning Funds* was paired against a favorable message promoting gifted education as an investment in the future, 57% of IEA-P respondents selected the favorable message which blended gifted students needs with an aspiration for national well-being.
- When balancing the tradeoff between an

increase in the *Federal Budget Burden* or providing resources for gifted students, the public consistently favored providing resources for gifted students.

- Of the three opposition messages, *Siphoning Funds* was the most likely to draw support away from gifted education. Again, this reinforces the public's distaste for funding trade-offs in public education.

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CHAPTER 7 ENHANCING PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR FUNDING GIFTED EDUCATION

By investing in our children we are in turn investing in our future. If we put our time and resources into them they will pay it back tenfold by inventing and doing great things.

—Parent

Establishing long-term, quality programs for gifted students hinges on public support and resources. The IEA-P included questions assessing the public's inclination to support spending state or federal funds on behalf of gifted students. Another aim of this series of questions was to determine whether support for allocating public funds to gifted education would change as the result of hearing the ideas presented in the poll. Accordingly, funding questions were asked to the entire respondent group, verbatim, early in the poll and again at the end to gauge the impact of poll participation on public attitudes. The questions were asked first directly following the terminology and benchmark questions about general education (Chapter 2); they were asked again at the end of the poll (see Appendix A for poll questions).

Early Evaluation of Public Support for Federal or State Funding of Gifted Education

A majority of Americans expressed support for federal or state funding for gifted education even before exposure to the issues raised in the IEA-P, with 64% of the aggregate group indicating support for spending at the state level and 63% in favor of spending at the federal level. A summary of the poll results for these questions is in Table 7.1 and 7.2.

Early evaluation of support for federal funding. In the early evaluation of attitudes towards federal funding for gifted education, most Americans supported increasing funding for gifted education “A Little” (45%), and around 1 in 5 supported increasing federal funding “A Lot” (19%). One-third of Americans believed funding should stay about the same (32%) and the remainder (4%) thought spending for gifted students should decrease either a lot or a little (Figure 7.1).

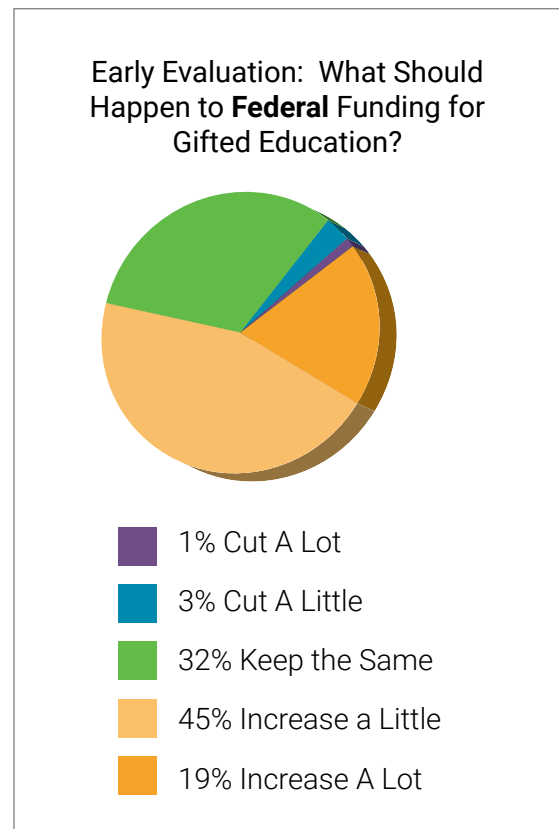


Figure 7.1. Early evaluation percent response: What should happen to federal funding for gifted education?

Education Influencers. In the early evaluation, a sizable majority of Opinion Elites supported an increase in federal funding for gifted education, with 75% in favor of increased federal spending and 31% in favor of increasing that spending a lot. Seven out of ten Parents also said that federal funding for gifted education should be increased either a lot (24%) or a little (46%).

Racial/Ethnic groups. Sixty percent or more of each racial/ethnic group supported an increase in federal funding in the early evaluation, ranging from 60% of

Table 7.1

Percent Response, Early and End Evaluation: "At the National Level Do You Think Federal Funds Dedicated to Programs and Resources for Gifted Kids Needs to be..." (Q32, Q62)

Group	Weighted n	Increased									Decreased								
		Total Increase			A Lot			A Little			Kept the Same			A Little			A Lot		
		Ea	End	+/-	Ea	End	+/-	Ea	End	+/-	Ea	End	+/-	Ea	End	+/-	Ea	End	+/-
%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%		
Education Influencers																			
Opinion Elites	42	75	88	+13	31	44	+13	44	44	0	23	10	-13	2	1	-1	1	1	0
Parents	424	70	86	+16	24	41	+17	46	44	-2	26	11	-15	3	3	0	1	1	0
Race/Ethnicity																			
Black	176	60	85	+15	23	43	+20	37	42	+25	33	12	-21	4	1	3	2	1	1
Hispanic	156	69	82	+13	24	42	+18	45	40	-5	27	14	-13	4	3	-1	1	1	0
White	1004	64	79	+15	17	34	+17	47	46	-1	32	17	-15	3	3	0	1	1	0
Total	1414	64	81	+17	19	36	+17	45	44	-1	32	16	-16	3	2	-1	1	1	0

Notes. Ea = Early Evaluation, End = End Evaluation, "+/-" = percent increase or decrease from early evaluation to end evaluation. At the 95% confidence level the standard error of measure for the entire sample is ±2.51% It is ±6.21% among Opinion Elites, ±3.73% among Parents, ±6.03% among Blacks, ±5.81% among Hispanics, and ±3.33 among Whites. Race/Ethnicity does not include respondents who selected more than one race. Race/Ethnicity x Income does not include respondents who selected "Prefer Not to Indicate."

Table 7.2

Percent Response, Early and End Evaluation: "In Your State Do You Think State Funds Dedicated to Programs and Resources for Gifted Kids Needs to be..." (Q33, Q63)

Group	Weighted n	Increase									Decrease								
		Total Increase			A Lot			A Little			Kept the Same			A Little			A Lot		
		Ea	End	+/-	Ea	End	+/-	Ea	End	+/-	Ea	End	+/-	Ea	End	+/-	Ea	End	+/-
%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%		
Education Influencers																			
Opinion Elites	42	74	87	+13	31	42	+11	43	44	+1	24	12	-12	1	1	0	0	1	+1
Parents	424	68	85	+17	24	41	+17	45	43	-2	27	12	-15	5	3	-2	1	1	0
Race/Ethnicity																			
Black	176	62	81	+19	24	42	+18	38	38	0	33	17	-16	3	1	-2	2	1	-1
Hispanic	156	62	84	+22	20	43	+23	42	41	-1	31	11	-20	6	4	-2	1	1	0
White	1004	63	79	+16	18	32	+14	44	47	+3	33	19	-14	3	2	-1	0	1	+1
Total	1414	63	80	+17	20	35	+15	43	45	+2	33	17	-16	4	2	-2	1	1	0

Notes. Ea = Early Evaluation, End = End Evaluation, "+/-" = percent increase or decrease from early evaluation to end evaluation. At the 95% confidence level the standard error of measure for the entire sample is ±2.51%. It is ±6.21% among Opinion Elites, ±3.73% among Parents, ±6.03% among Blacks, ±5.81% among Hispanics, and ±3.33 among Whites. Race/Ethnicity does not include respondents who selected more than one race. Race/Ethnicity x Income does not include respondents who selected "Prefer Not to Indicate."

Black respondents to 69% of Hispanic respondents. Similar proportions of Black respondents (23%) and Hispanic respondents (24%), but fewer White respondents (17%), believed that federal funding should increase a lot.

Among lower-income Hispanics, 30% believed that funding for gifted education should “Increase a Lot,” as did 29% of higher-income Blacks. Among lower-income Black respondents, 57% supported an increase; they were the least likely to support more federal funding for gifted education.

Early evaluation of support for state funding. A majority of the American public, 63% of respondents, were in favor of increasing state funding for gifted education at the beginning of the poll. The 63% majority was comprised of 20% who approved of increasing state funding a lot, and 43% who approved of increasing it a little.

Education Influencers. Among subgroups, Opinion Elites (74%) were most likely to express support for increasing state funding, and 31% indicated that state funding should increase a lot. A majority of Parents also supported an increase in state funding in the early evaluation (68%), with one in four in support of substantial increases (24%).

Racial/Ethnic Groups. Most subgroups voiced similarly strong support for either state or federal funding for gifted education except for higher-income Hispanics, who were more likely to support increases in federal funding (69%) over state funding (54%). In fact, at 54%, higher-income Hispanics were the least likely of any group to support an increase in state funding for gifted education in the early evaluation. Higher-income Black respondents were most likely to support large increases in state funding (29%).

Overall and across all groups there was little support for cutting state funding for gifted education.

End Evaluation of Public Support for Federal or State Funding

After responding to two dozen questions on the topic of gifted education, respondents’ attitudes towards state and federal funding changed, predominantly

in favor of increasing funding (Figures 7.2 and 7.3). Some changes were dramatic, with shifts of over 15% in many groups and 20 to 30% in others. Overall, **support for increased funding for gifted education programs was uniformly high, with no decided preference for whether the funding was provided at either the federal or state level.**

End evaluation of support for federal funding. In the end assessment, 81% of the overall sample expressed some level of support for improving federal funding for gifted education, an increase of 17% from the early evaluation. Moreover, around 80% of each disaggregated subgroup supported some level of increase in federal expenditure. A majority of this change is accounted for by a 16% decrease in the number of people who believed funding should be “Kept About the Same” and a parallel 17% increase in the number of people who believed federal funding should increase “A Lot.”

Education Influencers. Three-quarters of Opinion Elites favored an increase in federal funding for gifted education early in the poll; this grew to 88% in the end evaluation. The number of Parents supporting more federal funding for gifted education also increased, from 70% in the early evaluation to 86% in the end evaluation. Again, the change was due to an increase in the number of Parents who thought federal funds should increase “A Lot.”

Racial/Ethnic Groups. Support for federal funding increased 15% among both Black and White respondents from early- to end- evaluation, and 13% among Hispanic respondents. There was a 20% increase in the number of Black respondents who believed funding should increase “A Lot” and increases of 18% and 17% among Hispanic and White respondents.

Support for improved funding for gifted education increased more than 10% for all race/ethnicity x income groups except lower-income Hispanics, where the increase was seven percent. The most substantial change was among lower-income Black respondents: in this group, 57% supported additional federal funding for gifted education in the early evaluation and 85% in the end evaluation. Nearly 20% of higher-income Blacks changed their

responses in favor of increased federal funding in the end evaluation, for a total of 86%, the same rate as higher-income Hispanics.

End evaluation of support for state funding. Public support for state funding for gifted education also increased in the end evaluation, and at rates similar to federal funding. In the overall respondent group, the support for state funding increased 17% over the early evaluation and increases of 15% or more were observed in all analysis subgroups. The number of people who believed state funding should be kept the same decreased 16%, suggesting that many respondents changed their position from a neutral stance to more active support for increased funds.

Education Influencers. Opinion Elites who changed their minds between the early and end evaluation tended to favor increased funding, with a 13%

overall increase in support, and an increase of 11% in the number of who believed that state funding should increase “A Lot.” More Parents changed their positions, from 70% in favor of increased funding in the early evaluation to 86% in the end evaluation. A 17% change was observed in the number of Parents in favor of increasing state funding “A Lot,” from 24% in the early evaluation to 41% in the end evaluation.

Racial/Ethnic Groups. Increases in support for state funding for gifted education was highest among Hispanics, with a 22% increase in the number of people supporting more funding for gifted students. More Hispanics than any other group changed their response to “Increase a Lot” in the end evaluation (23%). The rate of change was especially high among higher-income Hispanics (33%), accompanied by parallel drop in the number of Hispanics who believed that funding should be “Kept the Same”

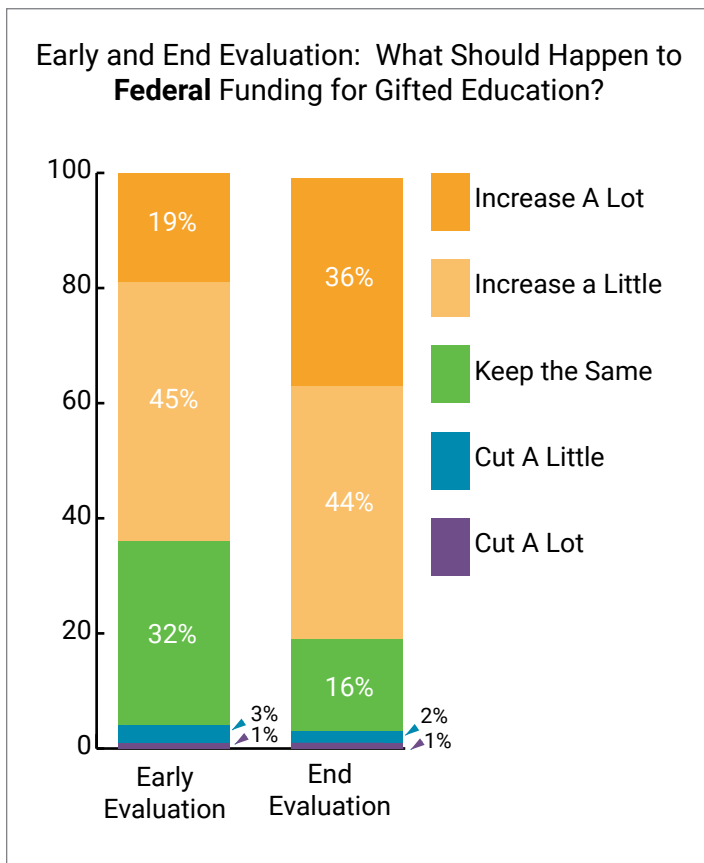


Figure 7.2. Percentage of support for change in federal funding for gifted education: Early and end evaluation.

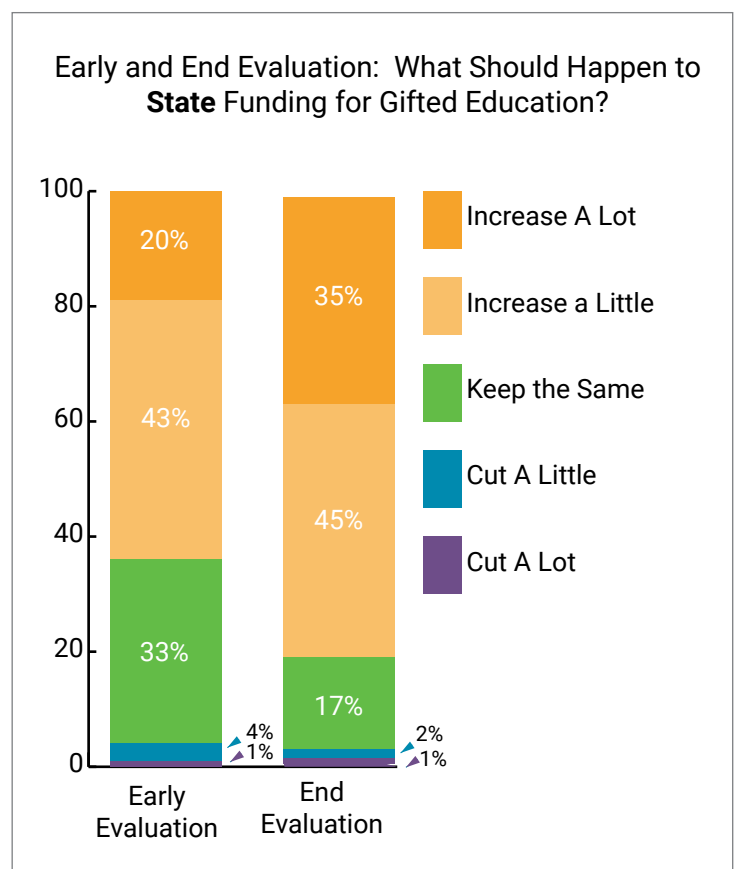


Figure 7.3. Percentage of support for change in state funding for gifted education: Early and end evaluation.

(34%). Twenty percent of Black respondents also changed their answer to “Increase A Lot”, resulting in a change from 60% to 80% between the early and end evaluations.

Synopsis

Across many and varied questions in the IEA-P, the public asserted their support for ensuring an appropriate education for all gifted students. When asked directly, Americans were clear that they support allocating public funds to gifted education programs.

- Despite their belief that public schools are doing a better job addressing the needs of gifted students than other groups of students, IEA-P respondents were overwhelmingly in favor of improving funding for gifted education programs.
- Even when asked early in the poll, a 60% majority of respondents supported allocating state or federal funds for gifted education programs, including over 70% of Opinion Elites and Parents.
- **Support for state or federal funding for gifted education increased anywhere from 10 to 33 percentage points across subgroups after brief, passive exposure to information about gifted education.** In the end evaluation, 81% of all respondents indicated some level of support for increased state or federal funding, including 88% of Opinion Elites.

- **The number of people who thought gifted education funding should increase “A Lot” increased between 13 and 22% across analysis groups.**
- Poll respondents had no clear preference for state or federal funding for gifted education.
- Few people thought that funding for gifted education should decrease “A Lot” or even “A Little” in either the early or the end evaluation.



In the end evaluation, 81% of all respondents indicated some level of support for increased state or federal funding.



FROM SUPPORT TO ACTION: ESTABLISHING A LASTING FOUNDATION FOR GIFTED EDUCATION

If we cannot bring ourselves to push smart kids as far as they can go, we will watch and eventually weep as other countries surpass us in producing tomorrow's inventors, entrepreneurs, artists and scientists.

—Finn & Wright, 2015

Society may have had a love-hate relationship with the gifted when Gallagher first made the claim 30 years ago, but today there is no evidence of “hate” towards gifted students—just the opposite. **Results of this comprehensive public opinion poll suggests that the public is fully in favor of providing gifted students the support they need to flourish academically.** The assembled insights from the poll: (1) demonstrate that the public has a straightforward understanding of giftedness; (2) direct the field towards issues the public is likely to support; and (3) identify advocacy messages to help expand the field’s base of support.

The Public Understands the Term “Gifted” and Sees Through the Myths

The first objective of the IEA-P was to discern how the public defines the term “gifted” and alternative terms used as proxies. After all, if the public did not define the word “gifted” the same way as experts, answers to the other poll questions would be meaningless. Results of the open-ended question eliciting descriptions from respondents reveal an accurate, if narrow, interpretation of the term “gifted,” and also some perceptive distinctions between two sets of terms.

Respondents associated the terms “gifted,” “gifted and talented,” “genius,” and “advanced learner” with advanced cognition, such as having a high IQ or having the capacity to learn quickly. Few, though not many, thought that “gifted and talented” students were also creative. This relatively straightforward view of giftedness did not extend into psychosocial characteristics. None of the descriptors suggested that the word “gifted” was tainted with negative connotations. While most descriptors for the “gifted” set were cognitive, the terms “high-achieving,” “high-

potential,” “highly-able,” or “high-performing” invoked the behaviors of successful school achievers.

This is the starting point when communicating to the public about gifted education: it is best to use the terms “gifted” or “gifted and talented” when referring to students with inherent advanced ability, and “high-ability” or “high-potential” when referring to hard-working high-achievers. The public does not think that “gifted” and “high-ability” are synonymous.

The public also rejected many of the “myths” believed to be associated with gifted students. Nearly 70% of the respondent group rejected four out of five of the myths tested in the poll.

- A total of 74% of respondents *agreed* that giftedness is a rare phenomenon, dispelling the notion that the public believes “all students are gifted.”
- Nearly 70% of respondents *disagreed* that gifted students would be fine without special programs. Moreover, 73% of respondents thought that gifted students should receive funding at the same level as students with learning disabilities—a decided shift in favor of gifted education compared to attitudes in the 1980s (Larsen, Griffin, & Larsen, 1994).
- Over 70% of poll respondents *disagreed* with the myth that gifted students come from affluent families. Over 60% of each analysis group disagreed, ranging from 61% of Opinion Elites to 80% of higher-income Hispanics.
- Over half of poll respondents, 55%, *agreed* that gifted students are always at the top of their class. This was the only myth accepted by more than half of the respondent group. Interestingly, a higher proportion of respondents, 68%, thought that gifted students needed specialized

programs, and even more supported gifted program provisions like acceleration and ability grouping. Either the public's conviction with regards to this myth isn't strong or the public understands that even children at the top of their class may need something more in order to continue their intellectual growth.

Altogether, the public presents a portrait of a gifted student as someone in possession of an advanced capacity to learn—a rare attribute. The public believes this gifted child, who may come from any income group, requires special programming (with resources equal to students with learning disabilities), even if she is already at the top of her class. Using these broad brushstrokes, the American public's definition of giftedness matches that of the gifted education community. With the assurance that IEA-P respondents had a clear understanding of the children under consideration, **the results of this poll provide compelling evidence that the American public unequivocally supports gifted education.**

Public Perception of Gifted Education

The current assessment of public attitudes towards gifted education exists in a broader context defined by a general dissatisfaction with public education. The public gave poor grades to public schools for addressing the needs of average students, low-income students, and students with learning disabilities. Public schools were just as likely to get a D or an F than an A or a B for addressing the needs of these students. IEA-P respondents were twice as likely to award public schools an A or a B for addressing the needs of gifted children relative to the other three groups of students. These grades reveal a broadly held misconception that a majority of K-12 public schools are doing an above-average job providing an appropriate education for America's best and brightest.

The pattern was repeated when IEA-P respondents were asked about potential problem areas in public education, including gifted education. A minimum of

75% of the respondent group reported that funding for high-quality teachers, STEM education, funding for low-income schools, and funding for students with learning disabilities were problems for public schools, but only 56% thought that schools had problems providing adequate resources for gifted students. The 56% is both small in comparison to STEM and low-income schools, and large relative to expected public concern over gifted education—especially since the inconsistent, sometimes non-existent, level of support provided for gifted education is rarely addressed in the public media. It was also clear as the poll progressed that gifted education suffered from the juxtaposition of issues in this question—concern about gifted education was consistently expressed by more respondents when it was presented in isolation from other areas of education.

The public seems unaware of the disparity in gifted education policies among states, or the inadequate levels of funding for gifted education nationwide. Making the general public fully aware of the current state of gifted education should become an integral part of gifted education advocacy.

Issues in Gifted Education with Broad Public Support

Support for gifted education was highest in contexts where gifted education intersected with areas of heightened concern for public education in general: improving low-income schools, increasing the availability of high-quality teachers, and allowing students to be grouped by ability. Four issues repeatedly emerged as areas of substantial concern and consistent support among the public, and a fifth surfaced as a consequence of advocacy message testing.

Issue 1: Programs for Gifted Students in Low-Income Schools.

 **Providing funding for gifted programs in underserved areas received support from 84% or more of each analysis subgroup,**

Far from condemning gifted education as elitist, the public clearly desires gifted programs to be widely available and equitable: 84% expressed concern that low-income and minority gifted students often go unnoticed, and 81% were concerned that gifted programs were frequently limited to high-income areas. Fully 86% of respondents favored providing funding for gifted education programs in underserved areas. This included 92% of higher-income Hispanic and Black respondents and 92% of Parents. The desire for programs in underserved regions came from all racial/ethnic groups and income levels and was substantially higher than the general concern expressed over funding for low-income schools. Fortunately, gifted education has the benefit of decades of research which introduced innovative ideas and validated traditional practices to improve identification and services for the most neglected gifted students.

The problem is multidimensional and will not be solved with a single solution; issues facing low-income gifted students are often different from issues facing gifted minority students, and problems facing one minority group are different from those facing another. Given the magnitude of the problem, district personnel must also embrace the problem and help work towards solutions. Partnerships outside of education can help promote change and increase accountability. Effective first steps should include:

- Raising awareness among groups who advocate for low-income and minority communities, including the media, faith organizations, and advocacy agencies, to support efforts to ensure gifted education and advanced courses are available across school districts.
- Developing within-district partnerships, especially with Title 1, English language learning, early childhood education departments, and professional development.
- Promoting early childhood gifted identification. One of the challenges in identifying low-income students is the early onset of the achievement gap. Formal identification of giftedness during

primary years has been controversial yet is essential for this group of students.

- Enhancing requirements for teacher preparation and professional development in gifted education. Some advocates for minority students think that pre-service preparation may be a more accessible route to sustained change than efforts to change district identification policies (see below). Recruiting and retaining teachers of color to gifted education is an essential part of this part of the agenda for change.
- Sharing information within district about the many benefits of ability grouping.

“While the number of African American children identified for gifted and advanced programs is deplorable and the task of remedying this situation daunting, developing teachers with a commitment to social justice and culturally responsive teaching is a step in the right direction. My colleagues and I, as teacher educators, have little influence on the identification process for gifted programs and advanced classes in the neighboring school systems. We can, however, educate our pre-service teachers about this inequity and help them develop the skills necessary to identify gifted African American students with measure other than culturally biased tests. Additionally, we can teach pre-service teacher the importance of supporting and mentoring these students as they develop their academic identities.”

Frye & Vogt (p. 12)

Issue 2: Required Teacher Preparation in Gifted Education

- ➡ **At least 80% of each analysis subgroup supported requiring specialized training for all teachers who work with gifted students.**

Time and again, the American public expressed their desire for high-quality teachers in public school classrooms. Four out of five respondents reported that the absence of funding for high quality teachers was a problem, suggesting a crisis of confidence in the very foundation of education. Even more respondents were concerned about teachers of gifted students: 82% reported concern that teachers are not adequately trained to meet the needs of gifted students, and 86% support requiring training for any teachers working with gifted students.

Given the overwhelming concern over teacher quality generally and the equally overwhelming support for teacher preparation in gifted education, it may be that a portion of respondents hope that “a rising tide lifts all boats,” presuming that teachers who learn instructional strategies for gifted students will be better teachers for all their students. Evidence suggests that this is true; achievement levels of all students can increase in classrooms with teachers who completed coursework in gifted education (Blumen-Pardo, 2002). Beyond this, providing teachers with coursework and professional development in gifted education has the potential to solve a multitude of problems that plague the field. Teachers who complete gifted education coursework which follow guidelines from the National Gifted Education Standards for Teacher Preparation (*National Association for Gifted Children and Council for Exceptional Children*, 2013):

- Understand how and when to accelerate or ability group;
- Learn how to instruct students in the use of higher-level thinking skills;
- Acquire correct conceptions about gifted students, including low-income and culturally diverse gifted students, before misconceptions can form;
- Make more accurate referrals to gifted education programs.

Currently, most pre-service teachers are required to learn how to teach typically developing students and students with disabilities, but they are not required to learn how to teach gifted students. This is a

glaring omission in teacher preparation that requires a remedy. Students in both gifted and general education would benefit from a system where (1) all pre-service teachers learn the fundamentals of gifted education, (2) motivated teachers pursue specialist degrees in preparation for more intensive settings (honors classes, self-contained classrooms), and (3) in-service professional development provides ongoing opportunities for teachers to enhance their skills. Pre-service or in-service education for district and school administrators is also essential, as administrators are often the gatekeepers for programmatic change.

Requirements for pre-service and graduate level coursework are in the hands of state boards of education. Building advocacy groups to present the benefits of this coursework should include personnel beyond higher education and include concerned parents, students, and classroom teachers who desire change.

Issue 3: Promoting Acceleration and Ability Grouping

Acceleration of gifted students received support from 87% IEA-P respondents.

Although 56% of IEA-P respondents awarded schools an A or a B for addressing the needs of gifted students, 78% reported concern that students were grouped by age instead of ability, and 76% were concerned that gifted students could not accelerate. Among their numbers were 87% of Black respondents, 87% of Parents, 89% of higher-income Hispanic respondents, and 92% of Opinion Elites. Professionals from gifted education have long advocated for gifted students to have access to these opportunities; the barriers, then, seem to exist primarily from those within the professional education community who call for heterogeneous classrooms in the name of educational equity. Results from the IEA-P provide resounding evidence that the low-income and minority populations who these educators purport to represent do not want to abolish ability grouping, acceleration, or any form of gifted education; instead, they want all gifted

students to have an equal opportunity to accelerated or advanced courses.

Copious evidence supports ability grouping and acceleration for gifted students; this evidence has failed to convince many in general education. However, new research may help change attitudes in the wider education community by demonstrating the benefits of acceleration and ability grouping for all students. Studies from outside of gifted education suggest that carefully structured within-class ability grouping (cluster grouping in the primary years) can be beneficial to many students, including English language learners and that the benefits increase when ability grouping occurs across successive grades (Hong, Corter, Hong, & Pelletier, 2012; Robinson, 2008). Investigations of ability grouping in secondary school suggests that “detracking” may have done more harm than good (Figlio & Page, 2002).

“We find that tracking [ability grouping] programs are associated with test score gains for students in the bottom third of the initial test score distribution. We conclude that the move to end tracking may harm the very students that it is intended to help... We can find no evidence that detracking American schools, as is currently in vogue, will improve outcomes among disadvantaged students. This trend may instead hurt the very students detracking is intended to help.”


Figlio & Page (In Yecke, 2002, p. 101)

Others have also found that strategically implemented ability grouping can benefit many students. For instance, creating advanced classes for identified gifted students, and then filling open seats with high-achieving but unidentified students, can create a desirable setting benefitting many (Card & Giuliano, 2015). Loveless (2016) also makes a strong case that dismantling ability grouping has disproportionately disadvantaged low-income students. He suggests that Advanced Placement should not be open-enrollment, but rather that ability

grouping should be implemented in low-income middle schools so gifted students in those schools are prepared to qualify for and succeed in Advanced Placement courses when they reach high school.

Given the public’s support and the growing evidence of success, the conditions are right to advocate for school districts to reconsider ability grouping and acceleration, with an emphasis on ensuring best practice in implementation so that all students benefit.

Issue 4: Acquiring Funding for Gifted Education Programs

 **64% of all respondents supported an increase in funding for gifted education at the outset of the poll; support increased to 81% by the end of the poll.**

Establishing long-term, quality programs for gifted students hinges on public funds. Results from the IEA-P strongly suggest the public is ready for increased funding for numerous areas of education, including gifted education. The public is concerned about inadequate monies for quality teachers, STEM, low-income schools, and students with learning disabilities. Over half are concerned about funding for the arts and resources for gifted education. The importance of raising public awareness about the condition of gifted education in the US became clear through the assessment of public attitudes toward funding gifted education at the beginning and end of the poll.


Even at the outset, a majority of the public supported an increase in funds for gifted education. When asked explicitly early in the poll, 63% of respondents supported increases in federal funding for gifted students, and 64% supported increases in state funding. This level of support was consistent with answers to other questions where 56% indicated that resources for gifted students were inadequate, and 57% reported that providing resources for gifted students was a priority, compared to other priorities in education. For the first time since polling started on this question in the 1980s, respondents indicated

that gifted students should receive the same level of funding as students with learning disabilities. Support among Opinion Elites was especially strong, with 74% supporting a state increase and 75% supporting a federal increase early in the poll.

After answering IEA-P questions, an additional 18% of respondents supported an increase in federal funding and an additional 16% supported an increase in state funding. Over 80% of each analysis subgroup endorsed an increase in state or federal funding for gifted education at the end of the survey, including 88% of the influential Opinion Elites. The degree of support also changed; an additional 13-22% of each analysis subgroup believed that funding for gifted education should increase “A Lot.” **By the end of the poll, the proportion of respondents supporting an increase in gifted education matched the level of concern expressed by respondents over funding for high-quality teachers, STEM education, low-income schools, and students with learning disabilities.** The public’s support for funding gifted students only faltered when faced with funding trade-offs within education.

The twenty-five minute exposure to issues raised in the IEA-P resulted in a sizable increase in support of additional funding, with no preference for whether the funds came from state or federal governments. Public awareness is pivotal to advocacy efforts; the results here suggest that, once they are informed, people who are initially hesitant are willing to support gifted education.

Issue 5: Develop Advocacy Messages and other Tools to Enhance Public Awareness

 **The three highest rated advocacy messages share an emphasis on (1) the societal benefits of educating gifted youth, and (2) addressing the broken systems that prevent gifted students from receiving the services they need.**

Advocates attempting to persuade an audience often have only moments to start a conversation. Advocacy messages are designed to open the door; effective messages immediately capture sympathy

for a cause. The IEA-P tested numerous advocacy messages to distinguish between those that work and those that don’t, either on their own or when paired with a counterargument.

- Among the stand-alone messages, *Money for Prisons, Not for Gifted* was the only message that was highly effective with the entire respondent group and with every analysis subgroup. Two others were highly effective with most poll respondents: *International Competitiveness and Disadvantaged by ZIP Code*. These three messages share an emphasis on the societal benefits of educating gifted youth, and on addressing the broken or misaligned systems that prevent gifted students from receiving the services they need.
- Messages which focused exclusively on gifted students—their social-emotional needs, their right to fulfill their potential, or their capacity to innovate—were ineffective or only modestly effective, often failing to convince half of a generally supportive public.
- Three messages in the poll represented commonly used arguments in favor of gifted education. These messages, *Falling Achievement*, *Right to Fulfill Potential*, and *Disadvantaged Gifted Overlooked*, were either ineffective or modestly effective as presented in the poll.
- In general, messages tended to be more effective when they included one or more elements of successful advocacy messages: (1) state a problem, (2) provide specific examples, (3) unite the audience, (4) emphasize societal benefits, (5) focus on flaws in systems, not people, and (6) use data judiciously.
- When presented with messages for or against gifted education, respondents consistently preferred messages supporting gifted education. It is impossible to determine whether this is because the gifted education messages succeeded or because the counterarguments failed; however, it is clear that the public rejects the notions that gifted students are already equipped for success, or that funding gifted education would put an undue burden on the federal government.

Answers provided by respondents throughout the poll suggest additional guidelines to follow when communicating with the public about gifted students.

- The public dislikes funding tradeoffs in public education. Consequently, advocacy messages should focus on the potential for “win-win” outcomes where gifted education brings benefits to other students as well. Building teacher capacity and providing programs for gifted students from traditionally underserved groups are two areas with a high likelihood for success.
- Respondents gave straightforward definitions of “gifted” students which excluded ancillary characteristics. Design advocacy messages around this simple definition and save more complex conceptions of giftedness for public education campaigns.
- Gifted education evoked more concern from the public when presented in isolation from other education issues. Unless the advocacy message offers a win-win scenario where two problems are solved together, present gifted education issues on their own.
- Gifted education evoked more concern when presented as program components instead of a global “gifted program.” Focus messages on the need for specific elements of gifted programs such as acceleration policies, ability grouping, mentorship programs, or an online school.
- More than once, Black and Hispanic respondents offered substantially more support when questions focused on children instead of programs. Especially with these groups, tailor messages to emphasize meeting the needs of gifted children instead of describing services or programs.

Unanswered Questions and Ongoing Opportunities

While the IEA-P answered many questions, no single poll can answer everything, and there is much left to learn. This area is replete with opportunities for further research; a few of the opportunities are outlined below.

Depth of understanding. Perhaps most importantly,

the poll established *what* the American public thinks about gifted education, but it does not reveal *why*. A new poll with more open-ended or follow-up questions would help clarify why, for example, brick-and-mortar schools were so much less popular than every other program option. Also, although it is clear that the American public is dissatisfied with public education, it is impossible to tell whether their support for gifted education was a consequence of their discontent, a belief that educating gifted students is a pathway to national well-being, a hope that provisions offered gifted students will help all students, or something else altogether.

Assessing Understanding of the Status Quo. This poll focused more on what the public wants than on its knowledge of the status quo. It may well be that the public was offering support for services and programs it believes already exist when in fact they do not.

Expanding the Scope of the Poll. Given the scope of the project, including all segments of the population was impossible. Subsequent polls that include representative samples of different subgroups of the public, particularly Asian Americans, would add extra dimension to the current findings.

Conclusions

Results from the IEA-P provide a timely reminder that keeping a finger on the pulse of national attitudes is crucial to advancing the aims of gifted education. Today, the American public is more inclined than ever to support gifted education. The public’s responses to poll questions suggest that even with brief exposure to the issues, support grows.

All evidence suggests that this is an ideal moment to establish a strong infrastructure for gifted education at national, state, and local levels, thus ending the history of vulnerability that gifted education has faced. The American public wants gifted education programs expanded so that they reach children in every ZIP code, they want teachers who are highly qualified to teach those students, and they want program provisions that allow all children

to advance through school at their own pace and level of learning. Accomplishing these goals will require gifted education to build strong state and national systems; at the local level it will require individual programs become an integral part of school systems. An overwhelming majority of the public voiced strong support for all teachers who work with gifted students—virtually all teachers—to receive training in gifted education, which presents an opportunity to expand pre-service and in-service preparation.

The challenge is less about persuading the public as to the benefits of specialized education for gifted students, and more about finding ways to access existing support, expanding its base, and transforming it into action. America agrees, we must educate our most gifted youth so they can carve a path through the complex problems of the 21st century.

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AUTHORS

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Ms. Jones has been an educator, researcher and administrator of educational programs for over 30 years. She holds a Master's degree in special education from the University of Southern California and has completed doctoral work in the field of educational policy and learning theory. Ms. Jones served as the Associate Director of Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth and the Director of the Western Region for ten years prior to founding the Institute for Educational Advancement in 1998. While at CTY, Elizabeth served as Co-Principal Investigator with Dr. Sally Ride and Dr. JoBea Way for a NASA and National Science Foundation sponsored educational initiative called KidSat. She received recognition from the National Diffusion Network for the creation and implementation of exemplary programs for underserved gifted students and specialized in the intellectual, social and emotional needs of students. She created and implemented the SDB teacher recognition program and expanded the scope of services at CTY. As President of IEA she was contracted to assist in the creation and implementation of the Davidson Young Scholars program. She went on to lead in the creation and implementation of the award-winning Yunasa summer camp for the gifted and the Caroline D. Bradley Scholarship program.

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Appendix A

IEA-P Poll Questions and Procedure

IEA Gifted and Talented Messaging Survey
December 8, 2016

25-Minute Online Survey

800 interviews with registered voters nationwide

Oversample of 150 Hispanics, 150 African Americans, 150 parents and 150 Opinion Elites, minimum 75 Educators

Parents: anyone with children under the age of 18

Opinion Elites: over 30, employed full-time, make more than \$75,000, read the news at least almost every day, are college educated, and choose at least 2 activities from the political and community engagement list

SPLITS:

A/B= 1/2 of Sample

X/Y = 1/2 of Sample

C/D/E= 1/3 of Sample

J/K/L= 1/3 of Sample

Screeners and Caregiver Demos

SHOW TO ALL

1. Are you:
 - 1) Male
 - 2) Female

2. What is your current age? OPEN END NUMERIC, TERMINATE UNDER 18 OR OVER 110

3. Are you registered to vote?
 - 1) Yes
 - 2) No TERMINATE

4. Do you have children?
 - 1) Yes
 - 2) No

IF PREV =1

5. How old are your children? Please select all that apply. MULTIPLE RESPONSE
 - 1) Under 5 years old
 - 2) 5 to 9 years old
 - 3) 10 to 14 years old
 - 4) 15 to 18 years old
 - 5) Over 18 years old

CODE AS PARENT: Q5=1,2,3,4

SHOW TO PARENTS

6. Do you have any kids who are gifted, learning disabled or "twice-exceptional" (gifted and learning disabled)? Please select all that apply. MULTIPLE RESPONSE
 - 1) Gifted
 - 2) Learning disabled
 - 3) Twice-exceptional (gifted and learning disabled)
 - 4) My kids are none of these EXCLUSIVE

SHOW TO ALL

7. In which state do you live? INSERT DROP DOWN LIST

CODE REGION

- 1) NORTHEAST: CT, ME, MA, NH, RI, VT, NJ, NY, PA
- 2) MIDWEST: IN, IL, MI, OH, WI, IA, KS, MN, MO, NE, ND, SD
- 3) SOUTH: DE, DC, FL, GA, MD, NC, SC, VA, WV, AL, KY, MS, TN, AR, LA, OK, TX
- 4) WEST: AZ, CO, ID, NM, MT, UT, NV, WY, AK, CA, HI, OR, WA

8. Are you currently...?

- 1) Employed full time
- 2) Employed part time
- 3) Not employed but looking for work
- 4) Not employed and not looking for work
- 5) A student
- 6) A homemaker
- 7) Retired

SHOW IF Q8=1,2

9. Do you currently work in a paid position in any of the following fields or areas? RANDOMIZE

- 1) Advertising, marketing or market research TERMINATE
- 2) News media or journalism
- 3) Education
- 4) Charitable or community services organization
- 5) Government
- 6) Sales and manufacturing
- 7) Finance or banking
- 8) None of these (EXCLUSIVE PUNCH) ANCHOR

SHOW IF Q9=3:

10. Do you work in:

- 1) Pre-K education
- 2) K-12 education
- 3) Higher education
- 4) Other

SHOW IF Q10=1,2

11. Which best describes your current job? MULTIPLE PUNCH.

- 1) Teacher
- 2) Administrator
- 3) Counselor/adviser
- 4) Administrative support staff
- 5) Custodial/janitorial/maintenance staff
- 6) Researcher
- 7) School Board Member
- 8) Other

SHOW TO TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS: Q11=1,2

12. Do you currently work in:

- 1) Public school
- 2) Private school

- 3) Online Education
- 4) Supplemental Education Provider
- 5) Other SPECIFY

CODE EDUCATOR: Q12=1

SHOW TO ALL

13. What is the last grade or level of school you have completed?
 - 1) Less than high school-diploma
 - 2) High school graduate
 - 3) Some college – but less than two years of college
 - 4) Some college – two years or more/A.A. degree
 - 5) Technical or trade school
 - 6) College graduate/bachelor's degree/B.A./B.S.
 - 7) Postgraduate courses
 - 8) Master's degree
 - 9) M.B.A. or law degree
 - 10) Ph.D., Ed.D, Psy D, or M.D.

14. For statistical purposes only, will you please indicate which of the following categories contains your total annual household income before taxes for 2015?
 - 1) Less than \$15,000
 - 2) \$15,000 to less than \$30,000
 - 3) \$30,000 to less than \$40,000
 - 4) \$40,000 to less than \$50,000
 - 5) \$50,000 to less than \$60,000
 - 6) \$60,000 to less than \$75,000
 - 7) \$75,000 to less than \$100,000
 - 8) \$100,000 to less than \$150,000
 - 9) \$150,000 or more
 - 10) Prefer not to indicate

15. How often, if ever, do you read a print newspaper, read news about current events on the internet, watch the news on television, or listen to news programming on the radio?
 - 1) Rarely or never
 - 2) Less than once a week
 - 3) Once or twice a week
 - 4) Every few days
 - 5) Almost every day
 - 6) Once a day or more

16. Here is a list of activities a person might do. Which of these activities have you done in the past two years? These aren't common activities, so if you haven't done any of them, just select that.

RANDOMIZE, MULTIPLE RESPONSES ALLOWED

- 1) Called or written an email or letter to an elected official about a particular issue
- 2) Written a letter to the editor of a magazine or newspaper
- 3) Spoken in a public forum about a community or political issue
- 4) Volunteered time with a community organization, like a non-profit group or local charity
- 5) Volunteered for a political candidate or campaign
- 6) Donated money to a non-profit organization or charity
- 7) Donated money to a political campaign, political committee, or PAC
- 8) Played a leadership role in your community, like with a religious group
- 9) Held an elected or appointed government position, or had an immediate family member hold an elected or appointed government position
- 10) Played a leadership role in your local school, Parent Teacher Association, or school board
- 11) Held a position with an educational foundation
- 12) None of the above

ANCHOR, EXCLUSIVE PUNCH

CODE OPINION ELITE IF Q2 (AGE) =30+, Q8 (EMPLOYED) =1, Q13 (ED)=6,7,8,9,10, Q14 (INCOME)=7,8,9, Q15 (NEWS) =5,6 AND Q16 (ACTIONS) AT LEAST SELECT TWO ANSWERS 1-11

SHOW TO ALL

17. Which of the following ethnic groups best describes you? MULTIPLE RESPONSES ALLOWED

- 1) White or Caucasian
- 2) Black or African American
- 3) Latino, Hispanic, or Mexican
- 4) Asian or Pacific Islander
- 5) Native American
- 6) Other SPECIFY

17A. CODE REPORTED RACE FROM Q6

- 1) WHITE ONLY: Q6=1 ONLY
- 2) ALL HISPANIC: Q6=3
- 3) AA NON-HISP: Q6=2 AND Q6=NOT 3
- 4) OTHER: REST OF SAMPLE

Attitudes Toward Education and Education Priorities

SHOW TO ALL ON SEPARATE SCREEN

Today, you're going to see some questions about your views on education.

18. Students are often given the grades A, B, C, D, and F to judge the quality of their work. Generally speaking, how good of a job do you think America's K-12 public schools are doing addressing the needs of all their students?

- 1) A
- 2) B
- 3) C
- 4) D
- 5) F

19. Using a grading scale of A-F, how good of a job do you think K-12 public schools across the country are doing at addressing the needs each of the following types of students?

COLUMNS= USE SAME CODES

RANDOMIZE ROWS=

- 1) Low income students
- 2) Students with learning disabilities
- 3) SPLIT C: Gifted students
- 4) SPLIT C: Highly-able students
- 5) SPLIT C: High-potential students
- 6) SPLIT D: Gifted and talented students
- 7) SPLIT D: High-achieving students
- 8) SPLIT E: Genius students
- 9) SPLIT E: High-performing students
- 10) SPLIT E: Students who are advanced learners

SHOW TO ALL

20. Now you will see a list of different things some people say are problems with our current education system. For each, please indicate how big of a problem you think this is.

UPPER LEFT: *How big of a problem for our education system is this:*

COLUMNS=

- 1) Not a problem at all
- 2) Not a very big problem
- 3) A big problem but not one of the biggest
- 4) One of the biggest problems in education

RANDOMIZE ROWS=

- 1) Inadequate funding to hire quality teachers
- 2) Inadequate funding for low-income students
- 3) Too much testing required of students
- 4) Inadequate resources for gifted students
- 5) Inadequate funding for students with learning disabilities
- 6) Not enough spent on STEM (*Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics*) education
- 7) Not enough spent on arts education

RANDOMIZE NEXT TWO

21. Generally speaking, do you support or oppose charter schools?

- 1) Strongly support
- 2) Somewhat support
- 3) Somewhat oppose
- 4) Strongly oppose
- 5) Unsure

22. Generally speaking, do you support or oppose voucher programs that would use government funds to help parents cover the cost of private school tuition for their children if they choose? USE SAME CODE

END RANDOMIZE

Naming

SPLIT C

23. When you think about "gifted" students, what words, images or types of children come to mind?
OPEN END
24. When you think about "highly-able" students, what words, images or types of children come to mind? OPEN END
25. When you think about "high-potential" students, what words, images or types of children come to mind? OPEN END

SPLIT D

26. When you think about "gifted and talented" students, what words, images or types of children come to mind? OPEN END
27. When you think about "high-achieving" students, what words, images or types of children come to mind? OPEN END

SPLIT E

28. When you think about "genius" students, what words, images or types of children come to mind? OPEN END
29. When you think about "high-performing" students what words, images or types of children come to mind? OPEN END
30. When you think about "advanced learners" what words, images or types of children come to mind? OPEN END

SHOW TO ALL

31. How big of a priority should it be to ensure this group of students has the resources they need?
SET UP CARD SORT: *Compared to other priorities in education...should it be:*
 - 1) The single most important priority
 - 2) One of a few very important priorities
 - 3) Important, but not among the very top priorities
 - 4) Not very important
 - 5) Not important at all

RANDOMIZE CARDS=

- 1) SPLIT X: Gifted students
- 2) SPLIT X: Highly-able students
- 3) SPLIT X: High-potential students
- 4) SPLIT X: Gifted and talented students
- 5) SPLIT Y: High-achieving students
- 6) SPLIT Y: Genius students
- 7) SPLIT Y: High-performing students
- 8) SPLIT Y: Students who are advanced learners

END CARDS

Key Metrics and Policies

SHOW TO ALL

For the rest of the survey, you're going to see some questions specifically about "gifted" students. To give you some more information, the term "gifted" refers to children who have advanced cognitive abilities and greater intellectual capacity than the norm.

Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.

RANDOMIZE NEXT TWO

32. At the national level: do you think federal funds dedicated to programs and resources for gifted kids needs to be:

- 1) Increased a lot
- 2) Increased a little
- 3) Kept at about the level it's at now
- 4) Cut a little
- 5) Cut a lot

33. In your state: do you think state funds dedicated to programs and resources for gifted kids needs to be: USE SAME CODES

END RANDOMIZE

34. Would you support or oppose a federal mandate that would require public schools to provide services to gifted students?

- 1) Strongly support
- 2) Somewhat support
- 3) Somewhat oppose
- 4) Strongly oppose

35. And thinking about your own state, would you support or oppose a state mandate that would require public schools to provide services to gifted students? USE SAME CODES

SHOW TO ALL

36. Now you will see a list of different proposals some people say could help improve the education of gifted children. For each, please indicate if you support or oppose this proposal.

SET UP GRID

COLUMNS=

- 1) Strongly support
- 2) Somewhat support
- 3) Somewhat oppose
- 4) Strongly oppose

RANDOMIZE ROWS=

- 1) Creating a quality, separate school for gifted children
- 2) Creating a quality, online school for gifted children
- 3) Providing additional funding to schools in underserved communities specifically to support programs for gifted students
- 4) SPLIT X: Guaranteeing that programs for gifted students receive the same level of funding as programs for students with learning disabilities
- 5) SPLIT Y: Guaranteeing that gifted students receive the same level of funding as students with learning disabilities
- 6) Enabling students who have been identified as gifted to have their education accelerated (allowing them to skip a grade, grouping students by ability, or other means)
- 7) Requiring that any teacher who serves gifted children received special training

- 8) SPLIT X: Improved funding to help train teachers who identify and serve gifted children
- 9) SPLIT Y: Improved funding to help train teachers who are educating gifted children

END SERIES

Beliefs About Gifted Students/Education

SHOW TO ALL

37. Now you're going to see a list of statements some people might make about gifted kids.
SET UP CARD SORT, SHOW AT TOP: *Do you agree or disagree...*

PUNCHES=

- 1) Strongly agree
- 2) Somewhat agree
- 3) Somewhat disagree
- 4) Strongly disagree

ROWS, RANDOMIZE:

- 1) Gifted students are always at the top of their class academically
- 2) Because gifted kids are so smart, they do just fine with or without special programs designed for them
- 3) Gifted students generally come from well-off families
- 4) When people talk about students with "special needs," this includes gifted students as well as those with learning disabilities
- 5) Gifted kids need just as much funding and support as students with learning disabilities
- 6) Gifted students are rare—comprising a very small percentage of the total student population

END CARDS

RANDOMIZE NEXT TWO

38. Consider two students in the public school system: an average student and a gifted student. Under the current system, who would you say tends to get more resources?

- 1) The average student
- 2) The gifted student
- 3) Both get the same amount

39. Consider two students in the public school system: a student with learning disabilities and a gifted student. Under the current system, who would you say tends to get more resources?

- 1) The student with learning disabilities
- 2) The gifted student
- 3) Both get the same amount

END RANDOMIZE

RANDOMIZE NEXT TWO

40. Which of the following is closer to your view?

- 1) Gifted students are already equipped for success, so they are not in need of additional resources
- 2) Gifted students are in need of additional resources because they have natural gifts and talents that need to be nurtured-

41. Which of the following is closer to your view?

- 1) Gifted students are already equipped for success, so they are not in need of additional resources
- 2) Gifted students are in need of additional resources because they often struggle as a result of their unique abilities-

END RANDOMIZE

Details of How Problem Manifests

SHOW TO ALL

42. Please indicate how much each of the following concerns you personally, if at all.

UPPER LEFT: *Does this concern you:*

COLUMNS:

- 1) A great deal
- 2) Some
- 3) Not very much
- 4) Not at all

ROWS, RANDOMIZE:

- 1) Students who have been identified as gifted are often unable to accelerate even when recommended by their teachers
- 2) Students are grouped into classes by age, rather than academic ability
- 3) Teachers are not sufficiently trained to address the needs of gifted students
- 4) There are too few mentor programs in place for gifted students
- 5) Gifted programs are often only provided for students in higher-income areas
- 6) Minority students and those from low-income households are often not identified as gifted when they should be
- 7) There are relatively few schools that serve gifted students.

FOR CONTEXT

- 8) Identifying certain kids as "gifted" unfairly limits the potential of other children
- 9) Funding programs for gifted students will take away funding from more important priorities, like improving low income schools
- 10) Funding programs for gifted students will take away funding from more important priorities, like programs for students with disabilities

SHOW TO ALL

43. When it comes to accelerating gifted children (in special programs, or by advancing them to a higher grade level), which concerns you more:

- 1) Putting gifted students in separate classes will make it hard for them to develop socially and emotionally
- 2) If we don't give gifted students the resources and challenges they need, they will be more likely to develop social or emotional problems

44. SPLIT X: Which of the following is closer to your view?

- 1) Devoting more resources to gifted students will take resources away from other students who may need those resources more
- 2) Investing in gifted children – who often struggle because of their unique gifts – is one of the best investments we can make in our communities and economic future

45. SPLIT Y: Which of the following is closer to your view?

- 1) Devoting more resources to gifted students will take resources away from other students who may need those resources more
- 2) When it comes to our children, we shouldn't be forced to decide between one group and another – all their needs should be met

Funding Argumentation

SHOW TO ALL

Now you will see two different statements about programs for gifted kids in public schools.

SPLIT J:

46. Which do you agree with more? RANDOMIZE

- 1) Spending federal dollars on programs for gifted kids sounds great, but the country just can't afford it. Every year it seems the federal deficit grows larger and America's debt rises. With limitless funds it would be great to spend more on gifted kids—and all kids—but that's just not the world we live in. For gifted programs to be funded, other programs would need to be cut, and that's not a sacrifice we should make.
- 2) America has always led the world in innovation and discovery. In order to continue this legacy, it's imperative that we invest in our nation's most powerful resource: the great thinkers and innovators of the next generation. Even exceptional talents need to be nurtured and challenged in order to grow and reach their full potential. By supporting gifted students today, we're investing in our country's future and a brighter tomorrow for all students.

SPLIT K:

47. Which do you agree with more? RANDOMIZE

- 1) Spending federal dollars on programs for gifted kids sounds great, but the country just can't afford it. Every year it seems the federal deficit grows larger and America's debt rises. With limitless funds it would be great to spend more on gifted kids—and all kids—but that's just not the world we live in. For gifted programs to be funded, other programs would need to be cut, and that's not a sacrifice we should make.
- 2) America's success in the 21st century relies on our commitment to the next generation. Countries like China, Singapore and India are investing in their gifted students, while the U.S. provides almost no federal funding for these programs in our schools. If America wants to remain competitive in the 21st century, we need to invest in the leaders and innovators of the future. Investing in gifted kids is investing in America's continued prosperity.

SPLIT L:

48. Which do you agree with more? RANDOMIZE

- 1) Spending federal dollars on programs for gifted kids sounds great, but the country just can't afford it. Every year it seems the federal deficit grows larger and America's debt rises. With limitless funds it would be great to spend more on gifted kids—and all kids—but that's just not the world we live in. For gifted programs to be funded, other programs would need to be cut, and that's not a sacrifice we should make.
- 2) Our country's priorities are way off base—we spend billions of federal dollars on prisons, and almost nothing on the best and brightest of the next generation. Currently, only a very small handful of schools have the funds they need to serve their gifted students. Surely a world superpower can find the money it needs to adequately invest in its children. We have the ability to invest in gifted students, we just need the will. Let's spend our hard-earned tax dollars on something we can be proud of.

Messages

SHOW TO ALL

For each, please select how convincing a reason this is to support increasing funding for gifted student programs.

SET UP CARD SORT, SHOW AT TOP: *How convincing a reason is this to support increasing funding for gifted student programs...*

PUNCHES=

- 1) 1 – EXTREMELY UNCONVINCING
- 2) 2
- 3) 3

- 4) 4
- 5) 5
- 6) 6
- 7) 7 – EXTREMELY CONVINCING

ROWS, RANDOMIZE:

NAEP Facts

49. SPLIT B: The education system currently cannot handle the needs of these students: More than half of public school students who score at an advanced level as 4th graders will be unable to sustain that level of achievement by the time they get to 12th grade. We have a responsibility to help these kids live up to their potential.

America Aspiration

50. SPLIT A: America has long been the world leader in entrepreneurship, discovery, and innovation. If we want to continue to lead in the future, we must invest in our nation's most powerful resource: the great thinkers and innovators of the next generation.

Compared to other counties

51. SPLIT B: While the United States devotes almost no federal funding to developing its most promising youth, other countries like China and India invest millions of dollars in theirs. If our country wants to remain globally competitive in the coming decades, we need to ensure these gifted young Americans receive the support and resources they need to succeed.

Future innovators + names

52. SPLIT A: Too many of our future Beethovens, Marie Curies, Steve Jobs, Sally Rides and Thomas Edisons are sitting in a public school classroom, bored or disengaged, without any of the programs or teachers they need. We need to invest in our future innovators—nurturing, challenging, and inspiring them to achieve greatness.

Future innovators + economy

53. SPLIT B: The government spends the most on low-performing schools and very little on high-achieving students. We need to invest in our future innovators—nurturing, challenging, and inspiring them to achieve greatness. Gifted students are the key to America's future and to maintaining our place in the global economy.

Underserved communities + prison pipeline

54. SPLIT A Schools in low-income communities are the least likely to have adequate funds and services for gifted kids. Gifted kids in these communities are often vulnerable to gang recruitment or dropping out. We can't let those with the most potential fall through the cracks.

Underserved communities + privilege of birth

55. SPLIT B Schools in low-income communities are the least likely to have adequate funds and services for gifted kids. We can't let those with the most potential in these communities fall through the cracks simply because they were born into the wrong zip code.

No funding

56. SPLIT A In 2014, the federal government spent almost nothing on programs for gifted students in public schools. In fact, more than half of public schools have zero funds going to gifted learners. Clearly something must be done to help these students reach their full potential.

No funding + Prison

57. SPLIT B In 2014, the federal government spent nearly 7 billion dollars on prisons, but we spent almost nothing on programs for gifted students in public schools. In fact, more than half of public schools

have zero funds going to gifted learners. Clearly something must be done to help these students reach their full potential.

Realities

58. SPLIT A Gifted students often face isolation, anxiety, boredom, depression, and what can often be constant bullying from other kids for being "different." Creating an environment where these students are safe and among other gifted peers is essential to their health and well-being.

59. SPLIT B Every child deserves an education that ensures they can meet their full potential. Unfortunately, gifted students are being left behind by today's education priorities. They often face bullying in the halls and, without proper resources, can find themselves bored and depressed in the classroom.

60. SPLIT A: Minority students and students from low socioeconomic backgrounds who demonstrate comparable levels of aptitude to white and upper middle class students are two and a half times less likely to be identified as gifted. We need to invest more resources in the most vulnerable gifted students to ensure they don't fall through the cracks.

61. SPLIT A: In America, every person has the right to reach his or her full potential—that's what the American dream is all about. We have a duty to help gifted students fulfill their dreams and reach their goals by providing the resources necessary to do so.

END SERIES

Reevaluating the Problem

SHOW TO ALL

After everything you've read today...

RANDOMIZE NEXT TWO

62. At the national level: do you think federal funds dedicated to programs and resources for gifted kids needs to be:

- 1) Increased a lot
- 2) Increased a little
- 3) Kept at about the level it's at now
- 4) Cut a little
- 5) Cut a lot

63. In your state: do you think state funds dedicated to programs and resources for gifted kids needs to be: USE SAME CODES

END RANDOMIZE

64. Would you support or oppose a federal mandate that would require public schools to provide services to gifted students?

- 1) Strongly support
- 2) Somewhat support
- 3) Somewhat oppose
- 4) Strongly oppose

65. And thinking about your own state, would you support or oppose a state mandate that would require public schools to provide services to gifted students? USE SAME CODES

Demographics

SHOW TO ALL

Thank you for your time so far! Just a few last questions for statistical purposes only.

66. Which of the following news sources do you use on at least a weekly basis? Please select all that apply. MULTIPLE RESPONSE
- 1) Local TV news
 - 2) National network news
 - 3) Print newspaper
 - 4) Online newspaper
 - 5) Online-only news site
 - 6) Magazines
 - 7) Social Media
 - 8) Radios news organizations
 - 9) Newswires
 - 10) Other (please specify) SPECIFY ANCHOR

67. Do you consider yourself a: ALTERNATE 1-5/4-1,5
- 1) Strong Democrat
 - 2) Weak Democrat
 - 3) Weak Republican
 - 4) Strong Republican
 - 5) Independent ANCHOR
 - 6) Other SPECIFY ~~DO NOT READ~~

SHOW TO ALL

68. If you had to classify your political beliefs, would you say you are:
- 1) Very Liberal
 - 2) Somewhat liberal
 - 3) Moderate
 - 4) Somewhat conservative
 - 5) Very conservative

69. Did you happen to vote for a candidate for President in the 2016 general election that took place last month?
- 1) Yes
 - 2) No

SHOW IF Q69=1

70. Again, these responses are completed confidential and for statistical purposes only. Did you vote for? ALTERNATE ROWS 1-2
- 1) Democrat Hillary Clinton
 - 2) Republican Donald Trump
 - 3) Libertarian Gary Johnson ANCHOR
 - 4) Green Party candidate Jill Stein ANCHOR
 - 5) Other SPECIFY ANCHOR

SHOW TO ALL

71. Do you live in a: ALTERNATE 1-3/3-1
- 1) City
 - 2) Suburb just outside a city

3) More rural area

72. Are you:

- 1) Married
- 2) Separated/divorced
- 3) Widowed
- 4) Not married, living with partner
- 5) Never married/single

73. Do you or does someone you know have a child who's been identified as gifted? [IF EDUCATOR, SHOW: Please do NOT consider children you work with in your professional role.]

- 1) Yes, my child.
- 2) Yes, child of someone I know
- 3) My child and the child of someone I know
- 4) No

SHOW IF Q73=1,2,3

74. And is that child current enrolled in public school?

- 1) Yes, my child.
- 2) Yes, child of someone I know
- 3) My child and the child of someone I know
- 4) No

SHOW TO EDUCATORS

75. And do you currently or have you in the past worked with gifted students on a regular basis in your professional role?

- 1) Yes, in my class
- 2) Yes, in another capacity (*specify*) SPECIFY
- 3) No

SHOW TO PARENTS

76. Does your child – or children – attend: RANDOMIZE, ALLOW MULTIPLE
Please select all that apply.

- 1) Public school
- 2) Private school
- 3) Parochial/religious school
- 4) Charter school
- 5) Home school
- 6) Online school
- 7) Hybrid school
- 8) Other (please specify) SPECIFY, ANCHOR

Appendix B

Composition of the IEA-P Sample

Table B1

IEA-P Respondent Demographic Characteristics

	Race/Ethnicity			Income 1			Income 2			Race/Ethnicity x Income						Education Influencers		
	Total	White		\$30- \$50-		\$50K+ \$100K+	<\$50K \$100K+	\$50K+ \$100K+	White		Hispanic		Black		Opinion Elites	Parents		
		1414	1004	156	176				<\$30K	\$50K	<\$50	\$50k+	<\$50	\$50k+			\$50k+	<\$50
Weighted n:	1414	1004	156	176	256	342	541	230	598	771	395	580	75	73	96	74	42	424
Total n:	1414	815	281	261	210	277	548	353	487	901	246	554	97	182	128	126	246	690
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Gender	49	45	65	49	49	46	53	47	47	51	42	48	66	69	49	48	56	46
Male	51	55	35	51	51	54	47	53	53	49	58	52	34	31	51	52	44	54
Female	26	22	36	29	31	22	26	26	26	26	21	23	43	33	27	30	18	28
Age	32	31	39	31	24	33	36	35	29	36	27	35	41	41	30	35	54	56
18-34	42	47	25	39	45	45	39	39	45	39	52	42	16	27	43	35	28	16
35-54	30	30	36	26	18	26	36	40	22	37	22	38	28	48	25	28	64	100
55 plus	70	70	64	74	82	74	64	60	78	63	78	62	72	52	75	72	36	0
Parent	18	18	17	19	19	14	18	22	16	19	15	21	23	16	19	14	21	18
Not Parent	23	24	9	27	29	28	20	17	29	19	31	21	8	11	36	17	26	24
Geographic Region	39	39	34	45	27	38	44	42	33	43	35	43	25	46	38	53	31	41
Northeast	21	18	39	11	24	20	18	19	22	19	19	16	44	28	7	16	23	17
Midwest	4	5	2	5	2	4	6	5	3	5	3	6	3	1	6	4	21	14
South	96	95	98	95	98	96	94	95	97	95	97	94	97	99	94	96	79	86
West	56	54	68	70	76	63	51	37	68	47	65	45	82	61	77	58	0	53
Educator	44	46	32	30	24	37	49	63	32	53	35	55	18	39	23	42	100	47
Not Educator	75	100	30	1	64	78	78	77	72	78	100	100	36	28	2	0	78	76
Education	12	.	4	100	21	12	10	8	16	10	.	.	5	2	100	100	5	11
Non-College	11	.	100	3	16	10	9	10	13	9	.	.	100	100	4	2	7	13
Baccalaureate +	5	.	1	1	5	4	5	7	4	5	.	.	2	0	.	1	10	3
Race/Ethnicity	2	.	5	3	6	2	1	1	4	1	.	.	7	2	5	0	2	1
White/Caucasian																		
Black																		
Latino, Hispanic, or Mexican																		
Asian/Pacific Islander																		
Native American																		

Notes. Hisp = Hispanic, "*" = insufficient data to calculate. Some respondents report multiple ethnicities; analysis was based on their primary ethnic/racial identity.

Table B2

Distribution of items across full and split samples

Item	Full Sample	Two Way Split				Three Way Split						
		A	B	X	Y	C	D	E	J	K	L	
18	.											
19	•1,2					3-5	6-7	8-10				
20	.											
21	.											
22												
23						.						
24						.						
25						.						
26							.					
27							.					
28								.				
29								.				
30								.				
31				•1-4	•5-8							
32	.											
33	.											
34	.											
35	.											
36	•1-3, 6-7			•4, 8	•5, 9							
37	.											
38	.											
39	.											
40	.											
41	.											
42	.											
43	.											
44				•1,2								
45					•1,2							
46									•1,2			
47										•1,2		
48											•1,2	
49												•
50		•										
51			•									
52		•										
53			•									
54		•										
55			•									
56		•										
57			•									
58		•										
59			•									
60		•										
61		•										
62	.											
63	.											
64	.											
65	.											

Note. Items 1-17 and 66-76 gathered demographic data and were completed by all respondents. Numbers indicate which items respondents answered within the question (See Appendix A).

Table B3

Sample Size and Standard of Error of Measure Full and Split Samples in the IEA-P

Split Samples	Full Sample			Race/Ethnicity									Education Influencers						
	n	Wn	se	White			Hispanic			Black			Opinion Elite			Parents			
	n	Wn	se	n	Wn	se	n	Wn	se	n	Wn	se	n	Wn	se	n	Wn	se	
Full Sample	1414	1414	±2.51	815	1004	±3.33	281	156	±5.81	261	176	±6.03	246	42	±6.25	690	424	±3.73	
Two-Way Split																			
X	707	707	±3.69	415	513	±4.81	134	78	±8.47	120	86	±4.59	116	21	±9.10	333	212	±5.37	
Y	707	707	±3.69	400	496	±4.90	147	78	±8.10	133	89	±8.50	130	21	±8.60	357	212	±5.19	
A	707	707	±3.69	417	503	±4.80	153	78	±8.43	125	87	±8.77	110	21	±8.42	337	212	±5.34	
B	707	707	±3.69	398	505	±4.91	146	78	±	136	89	±8.40	136	21	±8.11	353	212	±5.22	
Three-Way Split																			
C	471	471	±4.52	275	329	±5.91	98	52	±9.90	76	59	±11.24	82	14	±10.82	241	141	±6.31	
D	471	471	±4.52	272	341	±5.94	90	52	±10.33	92	59	±10.20	83	14	±10.76	224	141	±6.55	
E	472	472	±4.52	268	339	±5.99	93	52	±10.16	93	58	±10.16	81	14	±10.89	225	142	±6.53	
J	472	472	±4.51	279	334	±5.87	90	52	±10.30	82	58	±10.80	82	14	±10.20	243	142	±6.30	
K	471	471	±4.52	268	338	±5.99	96	52	±10.00	87	57	±10.50	91	14	±10.27	229	141	±6.48	
L	471	471	±4.52	268	339	±5.99	95	52	±10.10	92	60	±10.20	73	14	±11.50	218	141	±6.60	

Note. Wn= Weighted n, se= standard error of measure at the 95% confidence level. se for Hispanics in split sample B was not provided in the Benenson summary.