ADDRESSING INEQUITIES IN GIFTED EDUCATION: AN EXAMINATION OF

THE GIFTED IDENTIFICATION POLICY AND PROCESS AT TWO ELEMENTARY

SCHOOLS

A Capstone Project

Presented to

The Faculty of the Curry School of Education

University of Virginia

In Fulfillment

of the Requirements of the Degree

Doctor of Education

by

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August 2018

Curriculum, Instruction, and Special Education
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Charlottesville, Virginia

APPROVAL OF THE CAPSTONE PROJECT

This capstone project, *Addressing Inequities in Gifted Education: An Examination of the Gifted Identification Policy and Process at Two Elementary Schools*, has been approved by the Graduate Faculty of the Curry School of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education.

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Abstract

As our nation continues to become more diverse, equity of education and educational opportunities for culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) groups is a top concern. Students in CLD groups (e.g., English Learners, students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, students of color) face numerous educational inequities such as higher rates of suspension, unequal access to high-rigor courses such as Advanced Placement courses, as well as unequal access to gifted and talented education opportunities (USDOE, 2016). CLD groups are significantly under-represented in gifted programs at the national, state, and local level. Specifically, for my capstone project I considered the ways in which the enactment of the gifted identification policy and process hinders and/or facilitates the identification of CLD students at two elementary schools. I employed a qualitative case study and collected multiple data sources, including state and district gifted policy documents, state and district gifted identification reports, interviews with multiple stakeholders (e.g., district and school administrators, teachers, and parents), and observations related to the gifted identification process. I shared my findings with regards to the policy, alignment of policy enactment in addition to the ways in which those facilitate and hinder the identification of CLD students. I conclude by making recommendations to JCPS regarding adjustments that could be made to the policy and practices to encourage more equitable gifted identification practices.

Keywords: gifted, gifted identification, culturally and linguistically diverse students, policy enactment, underrepresentation in gifted education, critical race theory

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

DEDICATION

For my family.
John, Taylor, and Charlie—thank you for your endless support and boundless love.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I will be forever grateful for the following individuals who have contributed so much to me over the course of these past three years as I pursued my Ed.D. and attempted to be a good friend, mom, and wife.

Dr. Susan Mintz, thank you for your endless support and encouragement. You have challenged me intellectually and pushed me to be a better consumer of education research and literature as well as a creator of content. Having you a few footsteps away throughout the course of this journey has been a blessing. Thank you for the tissues, chocolates, and laughs. I will be forever appreciative of the time you have spent with me.

Dr. Catherine Brighton, you are the ultimate saleswoman and the reason I came back to Curry for a second time. Thank you for your guidance, feedback, and encouragement over the past four years whether it was in your office, at a grant meeting, or over tacos and baked potatoes at Pinn Hall. I'm so thankful we both live in Charlottesville and look forward to crossing paths in the future.

Dr. Patrice Grimes, it seems only fitting that I began and ended my education at Curry with you by my side. I have grown so much as an educator and person since I met you all of those years ago. Thank you for nudging me towards a life rooted in a quest for educational equity for all students. I look forward to many more talks about inquiry, equity, and family.

Dr. Tonya Moon, thank you for pushing me to do my best work whether it be in my writing or event planning. I have grown immensely during the past three years and I can attribute so much of that growth the to the opportunities you have given me from

presenting at BPI and NAGC to conceptualizing and co-authoring curriculum. Thank you for believing in me.

To "the office": ***Dr. Marcia Invernizzi, Dr. Kerrigan Mahoney, Dr. Mindy Moran, Michelle Kreamer, Andrew McCartney, Dr. Barbara Wheatley, Sarah Orme,*** *and* ***Dr. Christine Carr***, I know many of us giggled when Dr. Brighton said we would be lifelong friends; but I should have known she knew best. I love you all. ***Michelle,*** thank you for the hours of time you spent with me pouring over protocols and data analysis. I am so thankful for your help with this capstone.

To the educators of JCPS: ***Mrs. Williams, Mr. Robinson, Mrs. Grant, Mrs. Miller, Mr. Taylor, Mrs. Davis, Mrs. Jones, and Mrs. Stanley***, thank you for opening your doors. Without your willingness to talk and share this project would not have been possible.

To my Curry friends who have supported me in countless ways, especially: ***Christine Carr,*** we basically said "I do" in August 2015 and never looked back. There are no words except thank you, I'll miss you so much and I love you. #sharpiesonwhiteboards, #givemea20 ***Mindy Moran***, our story arc is not yet complete and I'm so happy that both John and I have you as a friend.

To my local framily, (**the Dahls, the Miracles, the Reons, the Bunins, the Parkers, the Isleys, and the O's)** thank you for helping with the kids, staying by my side even after the countless missed hangouts, birthdays, and celebrations, and for keeping John sane. I'm looking forward to many more years of friendship.

And, lastly, to my family without whom this journey would have been impossible. ***Mom, Dad & Christina, Ann & Chuck, Liz Shree, Sam & Annalise***, and ***Jackie,*** thank

you from the bottom of my heart for the hours of help with the boys and for being my biggest cheerleaders throughout this process. ***Taylor*** and ***Charlie,*** I love you so much. I hope this degree inspires you to chase your passions, to work hard, and to persevere in the face of challenges. You've become two loving, wild boys over the past three years and I cannot wait to spend more time with you and watch you grow. And finally, ***John,*** I have jokingly said that you deserve the graduation party and an honorary doctorate when this all comes to a close… but, it is the truth. You have not only been my steadfast companion over the past three years, but you have been instrumental in raising our boys to be thoughtful, kind, and loving while keeping us all humming along. Thank you for supporting me through the late nights, weekends of writing, the ups and downs. The boys and I are so lucky to have a man like you in our lives. I hope I've made you proud. I love you.

Chapter 1: Introduction

As our nation continues to become more diverse, equity of education and educational opportunities for culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) groups continues to be a top concern. According to a 2016 report released by the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights, CLD groups (e.g., English Learners, students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, students of color), face several challenges including but not limited to higher rates of school suspension, unequal access to high-rigor courses such as Advanced Placement courses, and unequal access to gifted and talented education opportunities (USDOE, 2016).

In addition, CLD students also represent disproportionately low numbers of students who are scoring at the highest levels of student achievement, (i.e., an advanced score) on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) as well as state assessments (Plucker, Hardesty, & Burroughs, 2013). This phenomenon, known as the "excellence gap", is defined as "large gaps in academic achievement at the top end of the ability distribution" (p. 1). Note that the authors are referring to those who receive an advanced score when they refer to the "top end of the ability distribution". These gaps are either growing or are remaining stagnant for CLD students across grade levels and subjects according to the latest NAEP reports ("The Nation's Report Card", 2018) . (See

Appendix A and Appendix B for a visual representation of the excellence gap trends on the NAEP Grade 4 Reading and Math assessments from 1998-2011.)

There are long-term consequences for the inequitable learning opportunities present in our schools. For example, a recent report concluded that the inequities in the U.S. education system "impose an economic impact on the country equivalent to a permanent national recession", further noting that had the achievement gap been closed by 2008 the U.S. gross domestic product (GDP) could have been $1.3 trillion to $2.3 trillion higher (USDOE, 2013, p. 12). Additionally, students from economically disadvantaged families are less likely to attend and graduate from college than wealthier students (Bailey & Dynarski, 2011). Moreover, some researchers contend that failing to identify and develop talent in young children has been associated with subsequent negative outcomes in cognitive, academic, social, and affective development (Neihart, Reis, Robinson, & Moon, 2002).

Gifted Education: Access Issues for CLD Students

Lack of access to gifted programs also contributes to underachievement and higher dropout rates for students of color (Ford, 2010; Ford, 2013). These data suggest that a large number of students in our schools "are being "intellectually barred" from achieving their obvious, emergent, and latent talents and abilities" (Siegle et al., 2016, p. 105). Ominously, Plucker et al. (2013) concluded,

> We find it difficult to escape the conclusion that America has developed a permanent talent underclass. In an age of increasing global competitiveness, it is somewhat harrowing to imagine a future in which the largest, fastest-growing segments of our K–12 student population have almost no students performing at advanced levels academically. (p. 29)

The current "talent underclass" is not due to an inherent lack of ability in these students,

despite arguments to the contrary. Assessments, whether they are a measure of achievement, cognitive ability, or intelligence have been used to support assumptions that CLD students are inherently less intelligent (Murray & Hernnstein, 1994; Tannenbaum, 1979). Intelligence tests results have differed by racial and ethnic population groups since their inception in the early 1900's and were used as a tool to promote segregation and arguments for stricter immigration policies (Tannenbaum, 1979). More recently Murray and Hernnstein, authors of *The Bell Curve,* argued that social inequality in the U.S. is largely due to differences in IQ scores across racial groups. While specific groups (e.g., Whites and Asians) typically receive higher scores on intelligence and cognitive ability tests that other non-White groups, there is a preponderance of evidence that points to reasons for the achievement gap on these tests (see Callahan, 2018; Erwin & Worrell, 2012; Olszewski-Kubilius & Clarenbach, 2012; Peters & Engerrand, 2016; Steele & Aronson, 1995). Common reasons in the literature for differential performance on standardized assessments include, cultural bias of tests (Ford, 1998) and social and environmental factors such as poverty (Olszewski-Kubilius & Clarenbach, 2012), access to preschool (Peters & Engerrand, 2016), stereotype threat (Erwin & Worrell, 2012; Steele & Aronson, 1995), and language learning status (Callahan, 2018).

The reality of differential achievement on assessments is one reason for the inequitable identification of CLD populations as gifted because the use of these assessments is nearly ubiquitous. In fact, the most common step in the gifted identification process is a nomination/referral followed by standardized testing (Callahan, Moon, & Oh, 2013; Callahan, 2018; Erwin & Worrell, 2012). Additionally, many states also require a specific score, sometimes referred to as a cut-off score, on at least one

standardized traditional measure which often come in the form of intelligence, achievement, or cognitive ability tests (Callahan et al. 2013).

Plucker et al. argue that the underachievement of CLD groups is due, in part, to unequal access to gifted programming for these students (Plucker et al, 2013; Peters & Engerrand, 2016). This lack of access is alarming due to the widely held assumption that giftedness and gifted potential is distributed equally across all different cultures and socioeconomic classes (Frazier, Garcia, & Passow, 1995; U.S. Department of Education [USDOE], 1993). In fact one scholar bluntly stated, "[t]here is no logical reason to expect that the number of minority students in gifted programs would not be proportional to their representation in the general population (Frazier, 1997, p. 498). Despite this assumption, it has been documented that CLD groups are identified as gifted at much lower levels than their White counterparts (e.g., Callahan, 2005; Yoon & Gentry, 2009; USDOE, 2016). For example, in schools that have gifted and talented programs, Black and Latin/x students represent 42% of the total school enrollment; however only 28% of these students are enrolled in gifted and talented programs (USDOE, 2016). Put bluntly, this equates to the "under-education of approximately 500,000 Hispanic and Black students" (Wright, Ford, Young, 2017, p. 49). There is a similar trend for English Learners who comprise 11% of the student population at schools with gifted and talented programs; however, they represent only 3% of the nation's gifted and talented students (USDOE, 2016). It is imperative that these disparities in and barriers to opportunity, access, and achievement for CLD populations are recognized and addressed not only for economic reasons, but because these issues affect student motivation and academic success during K-12 schooling, as well as postsecondary success in the form of lower college acceptance

and graduation rates and lower median annual earnings (Musu-Gillette, Robinson, McFarland, KewalRamani, Zhang, & Wilkinson-Flicker, 2016).

Institutional Barriers

The exclusion of CLD students in both academically rigorous classes and gifted and talented programs has been linked to institutional barriers. Ford (2010) argues that the disproportionality of CLD students in gifted and talented programs are due to the following four barriers:

> (a) lack of teacher referral, (b) students' differential performance on traditional intelligence and/or achievement tests, (c) stagnant and outdated policies and procedures for labeling and placement, and (d) social-emotional concerns and eventual decisions of their Black and Hispanic students and their primary caregivers about gifted education participation (p. 32).

Teacher referral is one popular way for students to gain access to gifted programming (Callhan et al, 2013). In their 2008 review of the literature on teacher referral of culturally and linguistically diverse students, Ford, Grantham, and Whiting found that Black and Hispanic students were under-referred by teachers to gifted programs. Additionally, even when CLD students, specifically Black students, have the same test scores as their White counterparts, they are referred for gifted services at lower rates (Grissom & Redding, 2016).

Secondly, as previously noted, CLD students often perform at lower levels than their White or Asian counterparts on intelligence and/or ability tests (Erwin & Worrell, 2012). One purported reason for this is bias within the tests (Ford, 1998). One example of test bias is content-related bias where certain items or directions can be construed as unfair to certain groups (Erwin & Worrell, 2012). For example, CLD students "may be less familiar with the content of items on a test than their majority peers, may provide

incorrect answers that would be considered *correct* in the context of their culture, or may

have simply not been afforded the opportunity to learn the test's content" (Erwin &

Worrell, 2012, p. 78). Further, when districts use norm-referenced tests to determine

eligibility for gifted services, CLD students are more likely to be underrepresented

because of their differential achievement. To remedy this problem there are proponents of

using different tests (e.g., nonverbal tests) or to use the same tests differently by

employing local or group norms to determine who could benefit from gifted education

(Peters & Engerrand, 2016).

In addition to differential performance on assessments, many states and districts

continue to use outdated policies and procedures for gifted identification and placement.

The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) released a position statement

regarding the identification of CLD students calling for the use of culturally sensitive

identification protocols and the use of multiple measures in identification in addition to

other recommendations (NAGC, 2011). Despite this, many state education agencies

(SEAs) and local education agencies (LEAs) do not follow these guidelines (NAGC &

Council of Directors of State Programs for Gifted [CDSPG], 2015). For instance, only

19 states reported using multiple measures in their identification process (NAGC &

CDSPG, 2015). In a separate study, Callahan et al. found that numerous states and

districts were using psychometrically unsound practices such as using a "combination of

multiple cut-off scores derived from traditional and/or alternative assessments such as a

student portfolio, observations of the student, or parent input" resulting in multiple

opportunities for students to be denied gifted services (2013, p. 14). This is often referred

as a student having to overcome multiple hurdles, which are arbitrary in nature and not

based on empirical evidence.

Lastly, students and parents within the CLD groups have concerns over student participation in gifted and talented programs. Gifted identification and placement is an overwhelmingly White affair: the tests used to identify students are often written by White people, those who interpret test scores are often White, gifted education teachers are typically white, and the gifted curriculum is unlikely to be multicultural (Ford, 2011, 2014). Oftentimes parents and students from CLD backgrounds feel that the only way to succeed is by "acting White" (Ford, Grantham, & Whiting, 2008). Unfortunately, CLD students—especially Black students—who engage in achievement-oriented behaviors, or who "act White", are sometimes seen as betraying their racial group and adopting the values of the oppressor (Ford, Grantham, & Whiting, 2008). The combination of a cultural mismatch, peer pressure, and the negative feelings that come with participation in gifted services are reason for many CLD students to opt out of gifted programming, even when it is offered.

The Virginia Context: Equity Issues within Gifted Education

The macro problem of equity and access of CLD populations with regards to educational opportunities is also mirrored at the state level. The "persistence of barriers that limit the full participation of underserved student populations in this process" is of paramount importance to the larger gifted education community as well as the commonwealth of Virginia (Siegle et al, 2016, p. 104; Virginia Department of Education [VDOE], 2017a). While Virginia requires school divisions to identify students as gifted and to then provide instructional services aligned with their needs, (VDOE, 2017b), there are numerous divisions that are struggling to equitably identify CLD students (VDOE,

7

2017a). Some reasons for the difficulty in identifying CLD students are: (a) a lack of longitudinal qualitative data on students in addition to their universal screening data, (b), a lack of promotion of the open-access referral process where school, home, and community stakeholders may recommend students for gifted services, (c) a lack of a talent development programs prior to identification, (d) a need for more professional development that stresses how talents appear in various cultures and an understanding of multiple exceptionalities, and, (e) the need to educate families about gifted education (VDOE, 2017a). The difficulties of identifying a diverse cadre of students as gifted is reflected in the number and percentage of students identified as gifted compared to the total state population disaggregated by race and ethnicity in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1.
Enrollment by Race and Ethnicity in Virginia

Race and Ethnicity	Total Student Enrollment 2016-2017		Gifted Identified 2016-2017	
	N	%	N	%
American Indian or Alaska Native	3,584	2.7%	304	0.1%
Asian	87,604	6.8%	22,907	13.7%
Black	291,064	22.6%	16,427	9.9%
Hispanic	194,427	15.3%	14,050	8.4%
White	639,748	49.7%	102,832	61.7%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1,973	0.1%	234	0.1%
Two or more races	68,759	5.3%	9,878	5.9%
Total	1,288,481	100%	166,632	100%

In response to this ongoing issue, in July of 2015 the Virginia Board of Education asked the Virginia Advisory Committee for the Education of the Gifted (VACEG) to investigate best practices "for approaches to the identification of gifted students that better promote equity and opportunity across all student demographic groups" (VDOE, 2017a, p. 2). VACEG analyzed division-level gifted enrollment data disaggregated by

subgroup membership (e.g., English Learners, Hispanic students, students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds) from 2012 to 2014. VACEG members then calculated the percentages of students identified as gifted from each subgroup (e.g., Hispanic students) and compared it to the overall percentage of students from that subgroup (e.g., total population of Hispanic students) to identify school divisions that were demonstrating increasing diversity in their gifted populations. VACEG members further examined the gifted identification practices of those school divisions that demonstrated growth in terms of greater diversity in gifted education enrollment. The VDOE released the findings of that examination in October 2017 in a document titled *Increasing Diversity in Gifted Programs in Virginia*.

The aforementioned document was created to "assist school divisions in reviewing their gifted program's process of identification to develop practices that promote equity across all demographic groups (VDOE, 2017a, pg. 2)." The report shared several promising practices occurring across the state related to increasing diversity within the commonwealth's gifted programs. The recommendations for increasing diversity fell into five categories: the referral process, the gifted identification process, talent development, parent education, and professional development. One example of a recommendation regarding parent outreach was the practice of having communications about gifted education translated into home languages of families. Another highlighted practice was the promoting the open-access referral process by holding workshops for educators and families with titles like "The Referral Process" or "What is Giftedness in Our Division?" (p. 3). Some divisions employed practices related to talent development such as effective uses of cluster grouping and co-teaching models that serve a dual

purpose: to serve students and to build teacher capacity to work with at-potential gifted students.

The need for more equitable practices in education generally, and in gifted education, is a national and local issue. The next section will further explain issues of equity and access for CLD students.

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Problem of Practice

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Educational Equity: A National Issue

The problem of practice for the current study is couched within a larger problem of practice regarding the inequitable education many CLD students are receiving on a national scale. Educational equity is broadly encapsulated by this quote by President Barrack Obama, "*We are true to our creed when a little girl born into the bleakest poverty knows that she has the same chance to succeed as anybody else*" (USDOE, n.d., Equity of Opportunity). This quote specifically highlights poverty; however, the construct is broader than that. Educational equity is achieved when all students, regardless of personal or social circumstances, receive the resources they need to achieve their academic potential and their circumstances do not present obstacles. In essence, in order to provide an equitable education for all students, we must realize that there is an uneven playing field and we need to take extra measures to ensure success for those who need it. In fact, The Commission on Equity and Excellence in Education issued a report to the USDOE in 2013 regarding these very issues. This report was meant to inspire immediate action at the national, state, and local level and specifically noted,

> [T]his is a declaration of an urgent national mission: to provide equity and excellence in education in American public schools once and for all. This collective wisdom is a historic blueprint for making the dream of equity, and a world-class education, for each and every American child a reality" (p. 10).

The report was a call to action and urges our country to attend to issues of inequitable school funding, the equitable distribution of high-qualified teachers across the country, universal access to preschool with a focus on the poorest communities, among others.

Our nation is and continues to become more diverse with each passing year ((National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2017). The 2014-2015 school year was the first where the overall number of Latino, African-American, and Asian students in public K-12 classrooms surpassed the number of non-Hispanic whites (NCES, 2017). The percentage of White students enrolled in public schools is expected to continue to decrease while all other races and ethnicities are expected to see an increase in their enrollment. It is disturbing that CLD students face the following inequities: unequal access to rigorous courses and gifted programs, higher suspension rates, a higher likelihood of attending schools with higher concentrations of inexperienced teachers, a lower likelihood attending preschool, and greater chance of attending schools which are underfunded (USDOE, 2013; USDOE, 2016). The increasing diversity coupled with the fact that students in CLD groups consistently have documented issues with access to equitable educational opportunities presents a grave problem for our nation. Given this newfound reality for public schools, matters of educational equity and access are of paramount importance.

Equity within Gifted Programs

One of the many glaring issues is that CLD students are greatly underrepresented in gifted programs nationwide and have been historically. Figure 1.1 contains gifted identification data from the 2006, 2009, and 2011 from the Office of Civil Rights. Additionally, Figure 1.1 contains the percentage of underrepresentation for Black and

Hispanic students as calculated by the Relative Difference in Composition Index (RDCI), explained in the following paragraph.

	National Enrollment	Gifted Enrollment	Under-Representation Percent
2006 Black Hispanic	17.13% 20.4%	9.15% 12.79%	47% 37%
2009 Black Hispanic	16.17% 15.4%	9.9% 11.3%	43% 31%
2011 Black Hispanic	19% 25%	10% 16%	47% 36%

Figure 1.1 Black and Hispanic Students: Under-representation in Gifted Education Nationally (2006, 2009, 2011). From Wright, Ford, & Young (2017, p. 53).

It is clear from the national data that inequities in gifted education exist with regards to the underrepresentation of CLD groups. Despite evidence of inequitable practices, there are numerous ways that the term "equity" has been conceptualized and defined in the field of gifted education. One common way is to define equity is by using the Relative Difference in Composition Index (RDCI). The RDCI "for a racial or cultural group is the difference between their gifted education composition and general education composition, expressed as a percentage of their general education composition" (Ford, 2014, p. 144). For example, in the context of gifted education, if a group had an RDCI of -30 this means that was a 30% discrepancy between that group's representation in schools and its representation in a gifted education program. While this number is helpful when comparing levels of underrepresentation across groups, it "not adequate for determining what is unacceptable or possibly illegal/discriminatory underrepresentation;

nor is it specific enough to determine goals for improving representation" (Ford, 2014, p. 145).

A second helpful way to conceptualize equity in gifted education is by using The Office of Civil Rights 20% Equity Threshold, commonly referred to as the Equity Index (EI) in gifted research and state documents (e.g., Ford, 2014; Texas Education Agency, 2009; VDOE, 2017a; Wright, Ford, Young, 2017). The EI should theoretically be the minimally accepted level of underrepresentation for each group because once the percentage of underrepresentation exceeds that designated threshold, it is beyond statistical chance, meaning policies and procedures may be discriminatory against CLD groups (Ford, 2014). To illustrate this point, consider the fact that 10% percent of African American/Black students were identified as gifted in the U.S. in 2011, yet they comprised 19% of total enrollment in public schools. After calculating the EI for this group (formulas for calculating RDCI and EI are in Appendix C), the targeted goal for the minimum percentage of African American/Black students identified as gifted in 2011 would have been 15.2%. However, as noted above, this minimum threshold was not met, therefore leading us to the conclusion that underrepresentation is significant beyond statistical chance and the identification of this group is inequitable.

Another similar viewpoint is that equity in gifted education has been achieved when the populations of gifted learners are representative of the larger school populations from which they are drawn (Texas Education Agency, 2009). Lastly, the NAGC website has a section titled, *Equity in Gifted Education,* and proposes this vision of equity,

> Ensuring the availability of rigorous coursework and gifted education programs and services at every grade level for all students who would benefit from the challenge, combined with equitable identification procedures, would reduce the underrepresentation of diverse learners in gifted education programs and put more

learners from every population in a position to increase their achievement and maximize their potential (NAGC, n.d., "Including Diverse Learners").

While these conceptualizations and definitions of equity in gifted education differ, there is a common thread, notably that in order for gifted identification to be considered equitable, CLD students need access to gifted education at much higher rates. For the purposes of this study, equity in gifted identification will be defined in two ways: 1) All students, regardless of personal or social circumstances, have access to and receive the resources they need to achieve their academic potential and their circumstances do not present obstacles, and 2) equity in gifted identification exists when the population of the total division is reflected in the population of the students identified for gifted services. The first part of the definition acknowledges that all students should have access to opportunities and resources while second part presents one way to measure the equity with regards to gifted education. The second part of the definition is also how the organization for which this project is being completed currently defines equity in gifted education.

Equity and Diversity in Gifted Education: A Local Issue

Prior to the release of the VDOE document in the Fall of 2017, *Increasing Diversity in Gifted Programs in Virginia*, one school division in central Virginia, Jenkins County Public Schools (JCPS), decided to start investigating ways to change its gifted identification processes in elementary schools to promote more equitable identification with a specific focus on CLD groups. In September the division Lead Coach for Gifted (i.e., the district gifted program administrator) shared,

> Despite a focus on equitable practices, Virginia school districts have made little progress in achieving equity in gifted identification. Discrepancies still exist between the percentage of underrepresented populations in the total student

14

population versus the percentage of underrepresented populations identified for gifted services (L. Williams, personal communication, September 15, 2017). She noted that students from historically underrepresented backgrounds were not identified and enrolled in gifted programming at her district at percentages proportional to their overall populations. This data from the 2016-2017 school year is represented in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2.
Students Enrolled and Gifted Identified by Demographic in JCPS

Race and Ethnicity	Division Total Enrollment 2016-2017		Gifted Identified 2016-2017	
	N	%	N	%
Asian	729	5%	102	7%
Black	1,482	10%	32	2%
Hispanic	1,824	13%	40	3%
Two or more	841	6%	80	8%
White	9,196	66%	1,114	80%
Economically Disadvantaged	4,357	31%	77	6%
English Learner	1,433	10%	16	1%
Total	13,712	100	1,368	100%

Although the literature points to possible reasons for inequitable identification, the district administrators want to investigate how the enactment of the local gifted identification policy is facilitating or hindering the identification of CLD students within the division's elementary schools. I address this issue with the current study.

School Division

Jenkins County Public Schools (JCPS) is a medium-sized school division located in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The county encompasses over 700 square miles and has approximately 100,000 residents. The county is a primarily rural but also contains suburban and urban settings. The division serves approximately 14,000 students from prekindergarten through twelfth grades; approximately 10% are English Learners and

nearly 30% are economically disadvantaged (i.e., receive free and reduced-price lunch

under the federal program). The current study took place in two elementary schools

within JCPS, both of which are in a densely populated area of the division referred to as

the "urban ring". Each school has one full-time gifted resource teacher who is

responsible for enacting the local gifted identification policy. These two schools will

offer a unique opportunity to study the inequitable identification of CLD students because

they have among the highest combined numbers of English Learners, African

American/Black students, Hispanic students, and economically disadvantaged students in

the division. Demographics for the schools are listed in Table 1.3.

Table 1.3.
JCPS Elementary School Demographics: Appleton ES and Wilson ES

School	Total Enrollment	Socio-economically Disadvantaged	English Learners	Black	Hispanic	White
Appleton	500+	54%	21%	22%	27%	32%
Wilson	300+	54%	20%	27%	20%	39%

Purpose of the Current Study

In Virginia, the "identification of students for the gifted education program shall

be based on multiple criteria established by the school division and designed to seek out

those students with superior aptitudes, including students for whom accurate

identification may be affected because they are economically disadvantaged, [or] have

limited English proficiency" (§ 22.1-16 of the Code of Virginia). Given the fact that

CLD students are being identified a disproportionately low levels as compared to their

White counterparts in JCPS, it is imperative to investigate in what ways the division's

gifted identification policy and the enactment of the policy is facilitating and/or hindering

equitable identification practices.

As a result of my study, I sought to help one school division with self-identified issues of identifying CLD students as gifted examine and address its current practices and policies. First, I examined and described the enactment of the district gifted identification policy and process of two elementary schools in JCPS and then discussed the enactment compared to stated division policy. Secondly, I examined how the enactment of the identification policy facilitates or hinders the identification of CLD populations. The two schools under study were purposively sampled from the larger number of elementary schools due to: a) the high discrepancy between the percentage of students identified as gifted from their underrepresented populations and the percentage of these populations within the total student population of the school, and b) the demographic composition of each school, namely that they have high numbers of CLD populations as compared to other elementary schools within the district.

Conceptual Framework

I employed the theoretical lens of Critical Race Theory (CRT) across all dimensions of the current study. Additionally, I drew upon literature related to policy enactment generally and regarding gifted identification, as well as the literature about the gifted identification process. This combination of literature and theory informed my research design, interview questions, data analysis, and guided my interpretations and recommendations.

Theoretical Framework: Critical Race Theory

Initially "CRT scholarship focused its critique on the slow pace and unrealized promise of Civil Rights legislation" (Yosso, 2005, p. 72). Due to the origins of the critical race movement being intertwined with Civil Rights legislation, many of the earliest

17

applications of CRT focused on a Black/White binary; however, the field of critical race theory now has many branches that focus on issues of gender, class, sex, and language status. CRT is also applied in educational contexts as a "theoretical and analytical framework that challenges the ways race and racism impact educational structures, practices, and discourses" and is "conceived as a social justice project that works towards the liberatory potential of schooling" (Yosso, 2005, p. 74). CRT has many recognized tenets that theorists and scholars agree should inform theory, research, pedagogy, curriculum, and policy. Of the numerous tenets, in this study I specifically applied two of the tenets as "useful analytic and strategic tool[s] to analyze, critique, and make sense of" the enactment of the gifted identification policy in JCPS (Milner, Pearman, & McGee, 2013, p. 399). In the next two paragraphs I introduce and explain both of the tenets utilized for this study.

Tenet 1: Race and racism are ordinary. This tenet is the undergirding premise, or starting place of CRT. Chapman (2013) briefly and powerfully explains why below:

> Given the histories of slavery, manifest destiny, and westward expansion, the "basic structure" of U.S. society was built upon the maintenance of White supremacy and the oppression of people of color. Institutional racism causes deep inequities by affecting where people can live and attend school, and the future opportunities available to them. Therefore, for CRT, exploring the permanence of race and racism is the first instance to which social justice must be applied (p. 103).

Critical race theorists posit that race and racism are "central, endemic, permanent and a fundamental part" of understanding and explaining how U.S. society functions (Yosso, 2005, p. 73). Milner and colleagues (2013) note that due to the integral nature of race and racism in American society, they are also "deeply embedded in policies, practices, procedures, and institutionalized systems and practices of teacher education" (p. 340.). I

argue that it logically follows that they are equally as embedded in the policies and practices surrounding gifted education.

Tenet 2: Interest Convergence. This tenet holds that lasting educational equity and justice will only be realized when the interests of people of color converge with those of the dominant culture, or White elites, also known as the interest convergence principle put forth by Derrick Bell (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Milner et al. 2013). To illustrate how interest convergence operates in practice, we look to a widely used example, Derrick Bell's analysis of the *Brown v. Board of Education.*

In a unanimous decision, the Supreme Court ended the separate but equal doctrine and effectively desegregated schools. The case is usually seen as a "sign of enlightenment and a landmark civil rights victory"; however, critical theorists, most famously Derrick Bell, argue that the decision needs to be seen through a wider lens (Gilborn & Ladson-Billings, 2010, p. 41). In fact, they argue, that moves to bring about desegregation would not have happened "without the civil rights protests *and* a wider geo-political context (p. 42). For example, during the time of *Brown v. Board* decision the U.S. was

> locked into the Cold War, a titanic struggle with the forces of international communism for the loyalties of uncommitted emerging nations, most of which were black, brown, or Asian. It would ill serve the U.S. interest if the world press continued to carry stories of lynchings, Klan violence, and racist sheriffs (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 23).

The reality of being embedded in the Cold War coupled with the fact that African American veterans of the Korean and Second World War would not willingly return to a life of "social vilification" meant that the interests of Blacks and Whites converged at this moment in time to produce a favorable desegregation ruling. With regards to the current study, reforms to the gifted education policy and process "will always be, contingent

19

upon the interests of White people in power" (Milner et al., 2013, p. 341). The ways in which CRT is intertwined with educational equity is further described in the next section.

Critical Race Theory and Equitable Outcomes. Issues of race and racism within education are universal and K-12 institutions have attempted to balance the notions of excellence and equity for nearly 100 years (Brown, 2008). This struggle is particularly acute for gifted education programs, which exist to "develop advanced abilities—to provide interventions to those students who need them in order to develop excellence" (Peters, 2016). It is hard to argue against providing students with opportunities to develop excellence—except when the students who are afforded those opportunities are disproportionately from White, Asian, and high-income families (Peters, 2016). In fact, scholars and practitioners alike have argued that gifted programs continue to serve as a means for "resegregation", as well as a structure of privilege and power in our education system (Stark, 2014). In fact, the valuing of language, values, customs, and traditions of the dominant culture as "normal, normative, or the standard" operates as an invisible, systematic barrier that leads to inequitable representation of CLD populations as gifted (Ford, 2010, p. 33).

Given the national, state, and local underrepresentation of CLD students in gifted education, applying the aforementioned tenets of CRT to all aspects of this study aligns with the purpose of examining both the policy and the enactment of the policy to learn the ways in which they facilitate and hinder the identification of CLD groups. Using CRT as a theoretical lens through which to examine the district policy and the enactment of the policy includes but also goes far beyond a simple calculation of the RDCI and the EI for CLD groups. It means examining the policy and enactment for inequitable (i.e.,

discriminatory and biased) practices including but not limited to designated cutoff scores, reliance on testing for identification, use of national norms instead of local norms, patterns of teachers who do not refer CLD students for gifted identification, etc. Moreover, it will help me make sense of the of the ways in which lasting change is possible in terms of educational equity for CLD groups in JCPS. The use of CRT, specifically the two tenets above, will be salient throughout the body of the conceptual framework, which is depicted in Figure 1.2.
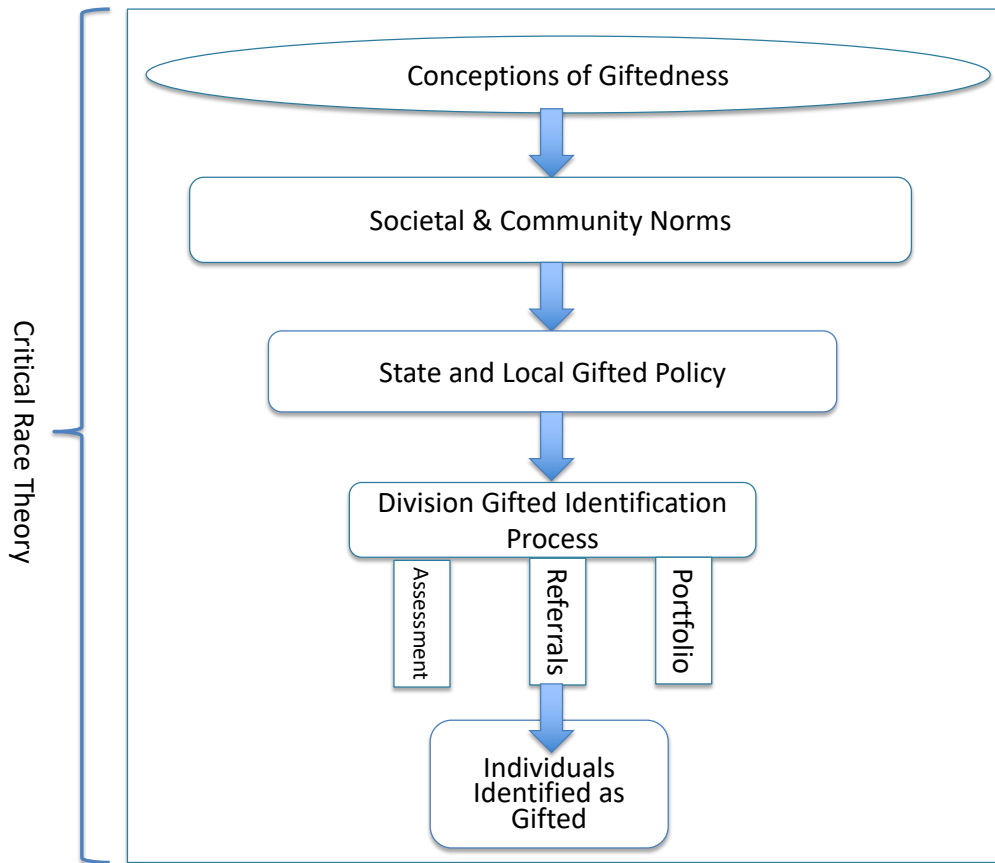
Figure 1.2. Conceptual Framework

In the following sections I will explain the relationship among the various components of the conceptual framework presented in Figure 1.2 while also noting how the CRT

operates within each component.

Conceptions of Giftedness. A fundamental belief of gifted education is that there are individuals, whether they are children, adolescents, or adults, who are "different in some significant way from others in their age group in their learning profiles and behaviors" (Callahan, Hertberg-Davis, & Missett, 2018, p. 14). From this belief often stems a definition of who those individuals are. However, despite the widely-held belief that gifted individuals exist, conceptions and definitions of giftedness are not agreed upon; therefore, states and districts often have varying policies and process for identifying students as gifted.

The U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement (1993) published a definition that reflects contemporary understanding of gifted students:

> *Children and youth with outstanding talent perform or show the potential for performing at remarkably high levels of accomplishment **when compared with others of their age, experience, or environment** [bold added for emphasis]. These children and youth exhibit high performance capability in intellectual, creative, and/or artistic areas, possess an unusual leadership capacity, or excel in specific academic fields. They require services or activities not ordinarily provided by the schools. **Outstanding talents are present in children and youth from all cultural groups, across all economic strata, and in all areas of human endeavor** [bold added for emphasis].* (p. 26).

When looking at this definition with an outcome of equity in mind it quickly becomes apparent (see the bold excerpts) that giftedness, or "outstanding talent", is present across all children, definitively including CLD groups. Unfortunately, the traditional implementation of this definition is often at the expense of equity, meaning that students are compared to their age-level peers using standardized tests. Without taking other factors into account such as experience or environment, as written in the definition,

"relying solely on age-based norms for identification purposes has resulted in persistent underrepresentation over a span of decades" (Peters & Engerrand, 2016, p. 164). One possible reason for the consistent underrepresentation of CLD students in gifted education is closely related to the first tenet of CRT. Milner and colleagues argue that racism is deeply ingrained and embedded in educational policies and processes, and those policies will only change when the interests of the dominant culture converge with the interests of underserved populations (p. 340).

Societal and Community Norms. Educational policies and organizations are nested within the social, economic, and political structures of their time (Brown, 2008). Oftentimes the individuals and groups with the most capital (i.e., social, financial, and cultural), are the ones determining community norms. Social capital is defined as the ability to secure benefits through membership in networks and other social structures (Coburn & Russell, 2008). Relatedly, cultural capital refers to behavioral styles, ways of speaking, cultural preferences, and understanding of valued cultural knowledge as well as degrees, credentials, grades, and test scores that serve as social markers to indicate that holders have specific levels or types of knowledge and skills (Hong & Youngs, 2008; Olneck, 2000). This understanding of capital inherently values upper and middle classes and considers their ways of knowing to be more valuable in a hierarchical society while simultaneously discounting the knowledge CLD students and families have (Yosso, 2005).

Belonging to the network with the most capital has positive advantages such as increased access to information and financial resources, and knowledge that your language and values are dominant and respected. This is especially true for middle to

upper-middle class families of the dominant culture. In fact, "possession of economic, cultural and social capitals, and 'a feel for the game' generated by middle-class habitus, mean their families are engaging in a range of exclusive and exclusionary practices that provide their offspring with real as opposed to the illusory choices of their working-class counterparts" (Reay, 2004, p. 79). In essence, the valuing of certain values, languages, and ways of being serves as a way to uphold and maintain White privilege (Yosso, 2005)

In terms of the current study, societal and community norms also serve to mediate the definitions and conceptions of who is gifted. One consequence of societal and community norms is that they can serve to restrict access to opportunities for those who are not in the dominant culture or community (Portes, 1998). In one study, gifted education was found to be closely tied to "recognizing and rewarding dominant cultural capital", ultimately leading those without it to either not get in, or to drop out because they did not quite fit in (Reay, 2004). In fact, students who withdrew from the gifted program stated that the program was either, "for posh kids" or "for clever children and none of my friends go so I felt all on my own" (Reay, 2004, p. 82). In this way, the gifted education program served as a way for the dominant group to maintain power through cultural reproduction (Yosso, 2005).

State and Local Gifted Policy. Oftentimes societal and community values are filtered into policies. Because there is no federal gifted policy, decision-making about gifted education is left to the states. According to numerous recent studies into the condition of gifted education across the nation there are clear patterns, namely that law, policies, and funding vary greatly state-to-state and even within states (Callahan et al,. 2013; Mcclain & Pheiffer, 2012; NAGC & CDSPG, 2015). In addition, there is also

limited oversight of gifted education. Almost half of the states do not require districts to submit plans for educating gifted students and only 11 states nationwide produce an annual report (NAGC & CDSPG, 2015). Further, despite calls for equitable representation of CLD groups, "only 20 states report race and ethnicity data for gifted students and even fewer identify students from low-income settings (12) or who are English Language Learners (10) (NAGC, n.d., "Turning a Blind Eye"). These practices hamper nationwide efforts to track the progress of equitable practices in gifted education. In order to "change the areas that undermine the success of people of color" those in positions of power need to get serious about "interrogating, exposing, and challenging racist policies and practices" (Milner et al., 2013, p. 350.)

Despite the varied practices nationwide, Virginia has state regulations that require divisions identify and provide services for gifted students, require local school divisions to have a local plan for the education of the gifted which is reviewed regularly, and require divisions to report race and ethnicity data for gifted students (VDOE, 2012). Despite this, divisions have some freedom to take local context into consideration while they develop their own local plans (i.e., gifted education policies) as long as they comply with the state regulations. While Virginia divisions can choose to identify and serve students in four areas of giftedness (i.e., general intellectual aptitude, specific academic aptitude, career and technical aptitude, or visual and performing arts aptitude), the vast majority of divisions choose to serve students in one area of giftedness (L. Williams, personal communication, Nov. 17, 2017). Even though the state provides districts with options for broadening their conceptions of giftedness, many divisions—including JCPS—are choosing to focus identification and services on intellectual ability. This

practice is not unique to JCPS as found by Callahan et al. "although alternative theories of intelligence and broadened conceptions of giftedness have been offered repeatedly in the literature in gifted education over the last several decades, they have not been widely adopted nor operationalized in local identification practices" (Gubbins, Callhan, & Renzulli, 2014, p. 424). The use of the general intellectual ability designation by JCPS (and many other divisions) could be reflective of more traditional conceptions of giftedness.

In contrast to the seemingly narrowed conception of giftedness employed by many divisions in Virginia, including JCPS, there is also a new focus on equity and diversity. For instance, the recently released VDOE document, *Increasing Diversity in Gifted Education*, provides recommendations for increasing diversity in gifted programs. Additionally, JCPS has recently committed and focused itself on equity and access for all students. In fact, a major budget initiative for the 2017-2018 school year was dedicated to

> providing resources and support for students that will transform each student's experience by eliminating inequitable practices and cultivate the unique gifts, talents, and interests of every child so that success and failure are no longer predictable by student identity—racial, cultural, economic or any other social factor" (JCPS Budget survey, personal communication, Nov. 18, 2017).

These dual initiatives underscore the appropriateness of applying the theoretical framework of CRT to examine the state and local gifted identification policies. For example, according to an internal JCPS equity report from the 2015-2016 school year, significant gaps exist between the Standards of Learning (SOL) test pass rates between White and Asian students and their Black, Hispanic and economically disadvantaged counterparts. Further, the 31-point difference between White and Black students on the mathematics SOL test was the largest in all of Virginia, out of 132 districts in the

Commonwealth (L. Williams, personal communication, February 2, 2018). When examining this phenomenon through the lens of CRT, particularly the interest convergence tenet, the quest for educational equity by CLD populations suddenly seems to be converging with the interests of the JCPS leadership. Specifically, when faced with the public nature of the equity data and the possible harm it could do the reputation of the school system, the division leadership has a vested interest in providing a more equitable education to CLD students.

Division Identification Process. JPCS has a Local Plan for the Education of the Gifted (i.e., the local gifted policy) which provides specifics about the gifted education, including screening procedures, referral processes, and procedures for identification. Additionally, a summary of the identification process is provided on the division website:

> Identification for gifted services is ongoing and is organized into three cycles a year - one for each grading period. In each cycle, students are nominated for consideration for gifted services by a teacher, parent, self, principal, or community member. Once a student is nominated, the school develops a profile for that nominee. The profile incorporates input from school personnel and the student's family and includes school ability test scores, evidence of exceptional performance and products, school achievement, and evidence of critical thinking skills, creativity, and problem solving. A school identification committee consisting of the principal/designee, the gifted resource teacher, and one of the student's classroom teachers reviews the student profile and determines each student's eligibility, and makes recommendation about appropriate services for all nominated students.

In order to be considered eligible for gifted services, the school-based team looks through the student's profile. According to the state that profile *must* include the referral form, student achievement data, results from a nationally norm-referenced aptitude test, and teacher input, while additional materials *can* include a student portfolio and parent input. Despite having the option to fully rely on referrals, aptitude, and achievement data, JCPS includes the student portfolio as a part of their identification process.

27

While nomination/referral are a pervasive part of the identification process in elementary schools (Callahan et al, 2013), this practice could come at the expense of equitable identification of CLD students if teachers are the main source of referrals. Studies have shown that teachers systematically under-refer CLD students for gifted education programs (e.g., Ford, Grantham, & Whiting, 2008; Grissom & Redding, 2016; McBee, 2006). In their application CRT, Gilborn and Ladson-Billings assert "one of the most prevalent forms of contemporary racism in US schools is deficit thinking" (2010, p. 75). Moreover, the requirement to include a nationally norm-referenced aptitude test in the identification process could also be considered inequitable to CLD groups because they been shown to score lower than their Asian and White counterparts (Erwin & Worrell, 2012; Geissman, et al., 2013, Peters & Engerrand, 2016).

In addition to referrals and assessment data, JCPS also requires the student profile to include a portfolio component. Students need to have evidence of strength in the form of student work samples in two to four domains, which include creativity, problem solving, critical thinking, and performance. Evidence can come from school or home which raises questions about how equitable the creation of the portfolio really is. This could more negatively affect students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds who have competing demands at home (Matthews, 2018). Additionally, finding evidence of critical thinking or creativity assumes students have the opportunity to demonstrate that in a work sample either from school or home. This could be problematic because CLD students lack access to quality curriculum and academically rigorous subjects (USDOE, 2016). JCPS recognizes this issue and instituted the inclusion of K-2 talent development lessons during the 2016-2017 school year so that *all* primary students would receive

high-quality curriculum and have the opportunity to demonstrate their strengths. The purpose of these lessons is both instructional and diagnostic and the curriculum provides gifted resource teachers (GRTs) and classroom teachers with a way to collect evidence in the form of behavioral observation/checklist and student work for possible future use in a student portfolio. Despite the requirement of these lessons, the gifted coordinator is unsure how they are being implemented in practice.

The focus of this capstone is on educational equity and the educational opportunities afforded to CLD groups. Specifically, as a component of this study, I considered the ways in which the current gifted identification policy and process in JCPS hinders and/or facilitates the identification of CLD students in two elementary schools. The research questions are as follows:

1) How is the gifted identification process enacted at two Jenkins County elementary schools?

2) To what extent does the enactment of gifted identification process at the two schools align with the stated school division gifted identification policy?

3) In what ways does the school division's gifted identification policy and process facilitate the identification of CLD populations?

4) In what ways does the school division's gifted identification policy and process hinder the identification of CLD populations?

Definition of Terms

This section contains a list of key terms used throughout the context of this capstone.

Achievement Tests: Tests designed to measure what students have already learned, mostly in specific content areas. (NAGC, n.d., Glossary of Terms)

Aptitude Tests: A test predicting a student's future performance in a particular domain.

Cognitive Abilities Test (CoGAT): is a group-administered assessment intended to estimate students' learned reasoning and problem-solving abilities through a battery of verbal, quantitative, and nonverbal test items (http://www.hmhco.com/hmh-assessments/ability/cogat-6)

Critical Race Theory (CRT): CRT is applied in educational contexts as a "theoretical and analytical framework that challenges the ways race and racism impact educational structures, practices, and discourses and is conceived as a social justice project that works towards the liberatory potential of schooling (Yosso, 2005, p. 74). The two tenets applied in this study are: 1) Race and racism are "central, endemic, permanent and a fundamental part" of understanding and explaining how U.S. society functions (Yosso, 2005, p. 75), and 2) the interests of CLD groups achieving racial equality will be accommodated only when it converges with the interests of Whites" (Milner, Pearman, & McGee, 2013, p. 339).

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Student: a person from a diverse background which includes those of Black, Hispanic, and Asian descent, English Learners, and those from low socioeconomic backgrounds. In the context of this study, culturally and linguistically diverse students will refer to those who are underrepresented in gifted programming. They are often referred to as CLD students (NAGC, n.d., Glossary of Terms; USDOE, 2016)

Equity: This definition is twofold: 1) All students, regardless of personal or social circumstances, have access to and receive the resources they need to achieve their academic potential and their circumstances do not present obstacles, and 2) equity in

gifted identification exists when the population of the total division is reflected in the population of the students identified for gifted services.

Gifted: There are numerous conceptions of and definitions of gifted. For the purpose of this study the Virginia definition will be used: "those students in public elementary, middle, and secondary schools beginning with kindergarten through twelfth grade who demonstrate high levels of accomplishment or who show the potential for higher levels of accomplishment when compared to others of the same age, experience, or environment. Their aptitudes and potential for accomplishment are so outstanding that they require special programs to meet their educational needs" (VDOE, 2012).

Group norms: This practice relies on comparisons of an individual's results with a group of individuals who have taken the same assessment and who are from the same group (e.g., students who receive free and reduced lunch). "For example, instead of identifying an arbitrary percentage such as the top 10% of all students in a given school as "the gifted," administrators might instead select the top 10% of achievers within the group of students eligible for free or reduced lunch and from those students not eligible for free and reduced lunch" (Peters & Gentry, 2012).

Identification: refers to the multi-staged process of finding students who are eligible for gifted education services. The identification process consists of an assessment component, a referral component, and a portfolio component followed by a meeting where a committee determines whether a student is eligible to receive gifted services. "The process shall include the review of information or data from multiple sources to determine whether a student's aptitudes and learning needs are most appropriately served

through the school division's gifted education program" (§ 22.1-16 of the Code of Virginia).

Intelligence Test: a test designed to measure the ability to think and reason rather than acquired knowledge

Norm-Referenced Testing: Refers to a "quantitative approach to show the position of an examinee in relation to his or her peer group (Fogarty, 1999). It relies on comparisons of an individual's results with a large group of individuals who have taken the same assessment, referred to as the norming group (NAGC, n.d., Glossary of Terms).

Local norms: Similar to the definition of norm-reference tests, using local norms also refers to a "quantitative approach to show the position of an examinee in relation to his or her peer group (Fogarty, 1999). The norming group would instead consist of a group of individuals from the local area (i.e., school or division) (Peters & Gentry, 2012).

Portfolio: An alternative or supplement to traditional measures of giftedness, portfolios offer a collection of student work over time that can help to determine achievement and progress. Many of the elements found in portfolios cannot be captured by a standardized test (NAGC, n.d., Glossary of Terms).

Referral/Nomination: The terms *referral* and *nomination* will be used interchangeably to describe the process undertaken by a teacher, parent, peer, community member, or the student his/herself to designate a student as potentially gifted. It is a part of the identification process (McBee, 2006).

Talent development: Programs, curricula, and services for gifted and talented students that can best meet their needs, promote their achievements in life, and contribute to the

enhancement of our society when schools identify students' specific talent strengths and focus educational services on these talents (NAGC, n.d., Glossary of Terms)

Chapter Summary

Within this chapter I described how CLD students within the U.S. face educational inequities from unequal access to high-level, rigrous courses to higher numbers of school suspensions, to underrepresentation in gifted education. I then demonstrated how unequal access and underrepresentation of CLD students in gifted education is mirrored at the state and division level. I situated my capstone project within the greater problem of educational inequity and specifically focused on the underrepresentation of CLD students in gifted education within Jenkins County Public Schools. I then shared my conceptual framework which I used to guide my review of literature, data collection and analysis, recommendations and discussion. Lastly, within this chapter I included a list of terms that could aid in the reading and understanding of this capstone. In the next chapter I review literature relevant to the problem of practice.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

Educators have been calling for more equitable practices in gifted identification for decades (e.g., Frazier, 1997; Ford, 1998; Ford, Grantham & Whiting, 2008; Siegle et al, 2016). The underrepresentation of CLD groups in gifted education is problematic because *all* students deserve to have equitable access to educational programming that provides opportunities for them to reach and perform at their highest potential. Underrepresentation of CLD groups has been documented according to various lenses such as Critical Race Theory (CRT), conceptions of giftedness, societal norms about giftedness, policies surrounding gifted education and how they are enacted, and various components of the gifted identification process itself (e.g., talent development opportunities, use of assessment, teacher referral, portfolio use,). For this review, relevant literature has been selected and conceptually structured to mirror the conceptual framework presented in Chapter 1 (Creswell, 2014). The concepts in the conceptual framework begin with broader concepts (e.g., conceptions of giftedness), and then filter to narrower, more specific concepts such as the particular ways in which the gifted identification process is enacted. The conceptual framework is in Figure 2.1 below.
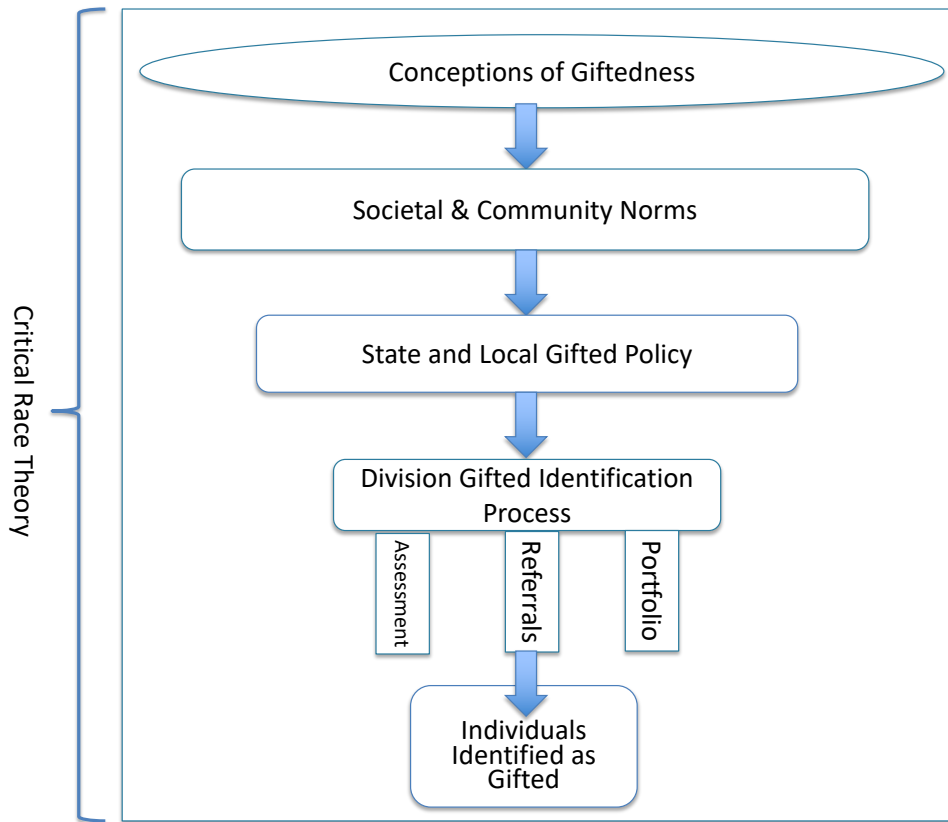
Figure 2.1. Conceptual Framework.

To locate articles for this systematic review of the literature, I conducted a search of EBSCOHost databases using terms which pertained to each heading. For example, when searching for information regarding conceptions of giftedness I used the following terms: "conceptions of giftedness" AND "teacher" AND "elementary". I limited the search to the last decade (2007-2017), and only considered articles that appeared in peer-reviewed journals. I then read the titles and abstracts to determine inclusion. In addition to the limitations on date and source, the inclusion criteria were: 1) articles had to be empirical in nature, 2) the settings had to be in the United States in order to maintain a consistent

framework within the larger culture, 3) articles needed to be relevant to the research questions. I also retrieved articles and books that continually surfaced within the literature.

Critical Race Theory and Gifted Education

While there are a number of educational researchers using Critical Race Theory (CRT), the use of CRT as an analytic tool in gifted education is severely lacking. For example, an EBSCOhost search of the terms "critical race theory" and "gifted education" anywhere in the text produced 185 results. Searching the descriptor "critical race theory and gifted education" in the title of the article produced no publications. When I returned to the first search, I identified six articles that were relevant to the current study and pertained to gifted education as opposed to education or higher education generally. Of the five articles I identified, four were theoretical pieces and two were empirical in nature.

From these articles a few key themes emerged which were also discussed in Chapter 1 and will be discussed throughout this chapter: a) the researchers who used CRT to analyze gifted education showed deep concern for marginalized populations and use CRT to expose injustices as a way to advocate for change, b) gifted education privileges White students at the expense of access for Black, Hispanic and English learners, c) deficit thinking about CLD students is one of the components fueling underrepresentation in gifted education, and, d) gifted programming provides an opportunity for those within schools and school divisions to exercise veiled discrimination against CLD students (Evans-Winters, 2014; Henfield, Moore, & Wood, 2008; Mansfeild, 2016; Montoya, Matias, Nishi, & Sarcedo, 2016; Stambaugh & Ford, 2014). These themes are integrated

throughout the rest of the literature review as they relate to particular parts of my conceptual framework.

Conceptions of Giftedness

There has been a large shift in the definitions and conceptions of giftedness over the past several decades from a focus on IQ scores to a more recent consensus in the field that giftedness is multifaceted and is not solely based on a single psychometric measurement. In fact, Brown et al. conducted a survey study inclusive of approximately 3,000 classroom teachers, gifted teachers, and professors nationwide to examine their assumptions about the gifted identification process. They found that respondents supported the use of ongoing assessment and context-bound procedures (e.g., taking a student's cultural and environmental background into consideration), while disagreeing with a more restrictive approach to identification (e.g., primarily relying on IQ or achievement tests, using precise cutoff scores to determine who receives services). While this work was a convenience sample and cannot necessarily be generalized to the greater population, the results support the general belief that giftedness is multifaceted and the identification process should reflect this.

Although many in the field of gifted education agree that giftedness is multifaceted, an agreed upon construct of giftedness remains elusive (Callahan, Hertberg-Davis, Missett, 2018). Despite a growing consensus that giftedness is multifaceted, some scholars and educators believe that part of the lack of equity in gifted education stems from the fact that the concept of giftedness is solely defined from the perspective of one group, white middle class Americans (Ford, 2014; Frazier, 1997). The valuing of White ideologies and the infusion of them into definitions and policies is part of the ways that

racism remains an integral part of society and educational affairs (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Additionally, because teachers are often the gatekeepers of gifted services, it is important to consider their conceptions of giftedness. The following section will describe recent empirical studies on this topic.

Teacher's Conceptions of Giftedness

Given the fact that teacher referral is one of the most common ways for a student to enter into the gifted identification process (Callahan et al, 2013), it is important to understand how teachers perceive giftedness. The empirical evidence in this section highlights the troubling intersection between teacher beliefs and their impacts on gifted education for CLD students.

In one 2005 study, researchers investigated the effect of students' ethnicity on teacher referral and recommendation for placement in a gifted program through the use of vignettes (Elhoweris, Mutua, Alsheikh, & Holloway, 2005). They used stratified cluster sampling to select 16 elementary schools from four geographic quadrants within one city. Participants included 207 elementary teachers whose demographics closely mirrored the national trends with regards to gender and racial composition. These teachers were presented with a vignette about a student who possessed "research-based characteristics of an individual who could be classified as gifted" (p. 27). One third of the sample was provided with the information that the student was European American, one third that the student was African American, and one third received no information about the child's race or ethnicity. The vignettes remained the same except for the description of race or ethnicity. Teachers were asked whether the child should be referred for a comprehensive evaluation for possible placement in a gifted program and whether they felt the child

should be placed in a gifted program. The researchers found that teachers are less likely to perceive giftedness among students of color than among white students even when presented with evidence about the students that is otherwise identical (Elhoweris et al., 2005). This study provides some evidence that elementary teachers perceive giftedness differently according to race and ethnicity, although the homogenous nature of the sample requires caution in wide applications of the results.

Results from other studies are similar. For example, researchers surveyed teachers about their conceptions and beliefs about gifted children annually as part of a larger Javits grant-funded study designed to increase minority representation in gifted programs (Spiers Neumeister, Adams, Pierce, Cassady, & Dixon, 2007). The survey was given to the 40 participating 4th grade teachers and 27 responded, resulting in a 68% response rate. Of note, most of the teachers (21 of 27) who responded attended a 4-day professional development over the summer where they were exposed to topics such as principles related to the gifted identification of CLD students, and instructional strategies to meet the needs of varied learners in the classroom. Despite this "few, if any, teachers mentioned gifted characteristics that are prevalent in minority populations such as oral tradition, movement and verve, communalism, and affective characteristics" (p. 486). Additionally, teachers reported being concerned over the identification of 63 out of the 187 students identified as gifted during the course of the research study, meaning that the teachers did not agree wholeheartedly with the identification status of those children. Analysis of the survey data demonstrated that teachers were less likely to recognize strengths in those students about whom they had concerns. The results of the survey

analysis are consistent with the belief that educators engage in deficit thinking about CLD students (Ford, 2010).

Lastly, Moon and Brighton (2008) used components of both of the previous two studies to learn about primary teacher's conceptions of giftedness: survey and vignettes. They conducted a descriptive study to investigate primary teachers' conceptions of giftedness. They used a disproportionate stratified sample of K-2 teachers who worked in diverse schools. Of the 6,062 teachers sampled a total of 434 teachers responded to the survey resulting in a response rate of 14%. While the response rate for this study would be considered low, the authors note that the demographics of the respondents closely aligned with those of the sample group which reduced the rated of response bias. The survey consisted of five sections which used a Likert-type scale: Conceptions of Giftedness, Instructional Practices, Identification of Talent, Student Readiness, Demographics. The sixth section consisted of an open-ended section where teachers were asked to read vignettes about a student and recommend educational services based on the details in the vignette. The student profiles were different: one was of a student who demonstrated "typical" gifted traits whereas the other profiles were of students who had their talent masked by language, health, or socioeconomic status.

Moon and Brighton found that teachers could more readily see positive rather than negative characteristics of gifted students. Their interpretation was that teachers have preconceived notions of giftedness and that these were more positively skewed. One troubling finding was that teachers in this study had a hard time believing that students with "a limited vocabulary" could be gifted. This could be one reason for the underrepresentation of EL students in gifted programs. Equally troubling from an equity

standpoint is that the teachers in this study believed that the following factors were contributors to the identification of giftedness: a) they have lots of books at home, b) they have lots of experience from family trips, and c) their parents worked with them at home. Additionally, approximately one quarter of respondents did not believe that giftedness was equally distributed among all racial, cultural, or ethnic groups and 27% of respondents did not believe equal distribution for all socioeconomic groups. Results from the vignette portion of the study revealed that teachers believed that gifted services were only appropriate for students with no observable contextual factors that could mask talent.

The combination of the results from these three empirical studies indicate that vignettes, it is likely that these conceptions of giftedness would lead to the under-identification of students from CLD groups in authentic contexts. As was previously noted, engaging in deficit thinking about students is common in school settings and needs to be addressed as a form of "contemporary racism" Gilborn & Ladson-Billings, 2010, p. 75). Conceptions and beliefs about giftedness, what it is—and more specifically *who* is or is not gifted—shape societal and community norms around the topic.

Societal and Community Norms around Giftedness

Some scholars view gifted education as a way to maintain de facto segregation in our nation's schools (e.g., Stark, 2014; Ford, 2014). Those scholars posit that gifted identification is an exclusionary process and has been used as a way to separate students both historically and today. By historically and socially situating giftedness in the next section I will explain the ways in which rigorous education has been perceived as something reserved for students from the dominant culture of middle to upper-middle

class status and that this societal norm is seemingly still enacted today.

A Brief History of Gifted Education

The purpose of this section is to provide a very brief overview to situate giftedness in social context in the United States. Because educational policies and organizations are nested within the social, economic, and political structures of their time it is important to consider how our society came to current conceptions of giftedness.

The current underrepresentation of CLD groups in gifted education can be traced back to the Progressive Era (1890's-1920's) where a two-tier education system was put in place as a solution for dealing with ethnic and linguistic diversity (Stark, 2014). The Progressive Era marked the beginning of the movement to separate students by their perceived ability levels leading to the advent of academic tracking. Intelligence testing "legitimized" and racialized the discourse about the need for separate tracks or classes for gifted children (Stark, 2014). The gifted education movement spurred from Terman and Hollingworth's research on intelligence testing, where Terman argued that African American and Hispanic descent were correlated to low IQ (Feldhusen, 1998; Mansfeild, 2016). While this was the beginning of the hierarchical and racial segregation, gifted education "took flight after the launch of Sputnik in 1957" (Feldhusen, 1988, p. 736). In the post-Sputnik era the United States frantically began a talent search for youth who demonstrated a proclivity for science and math after the suffering the demoralizing technological defeat in the race for supremacy in space exploration. This talent search essentially did not permeate beyond the White, middle-class (Tannenbaum, 1979).

During the 1960's and 1970's equality and equity became a national priority due to desegregation and the Civil Rights Act. It was during this time that members of CLD

groups and others concerned with social justice contested the use of IQ tests and the creation of special classes based upon the use of those scores as a way of promoting de facto segregation (Tannenbaum, 1979). Despite the passage of *Brown v. Board of Education*, intelligence tests were used to effectively create segregated classes based upon their use because, as is still the case today, students from CLD groups scored lower on IQ tests. At the time "there was an overwhelming sentiment favoring the idea that high potential is equitably distributed among all races, privileged and underprivileged, but that life's circumstances in some groups are oppressive enough to cast a shadow over their innate competencies" (Tannenbaum, 1979, p. 16). In the push for equitable education opportunities for all some cities (e.g., New York and Los Angeles) ceased using IQ tests for educational placement. Also, within this time period, the Marland report, the first national report on gifted education, was shared with Congress. It famously noted the "dearth of services and commitment to gifted children and youth in the nation's schools" (Robinson, 2018).

During the 1980s, shifts towards a more inclusive conception of giftedness began to take hold. The field began to recognize constructs other than intelligence to its "understanding of extreme cases of development—zeal, motivation, creativity, innovation" (Robinson, 2018). For example, researchers introduced more dynamic theories of intelligence (Brown et al., 2005) such as Gardner's Multiple Intelligences Theory and Sternberg's Triarchic Theory of Intelligence, as well as broadened conceptions of giftedness (e.g., Renzulli's Three Ring Conception of Giftedness). Additionally, the Jacob Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Act passed as part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 1988. One of the three components of

the Javits Act is the dispersal of grant money to researchers who focus on the underrepresented populations of gifted students (USDOE, 2017). Despite these advances, scholars and practitioners alike have argued that gifted programs continue to serve as a means for "resegregation" as well as a structure of privilege and power in our education system (Stark, 2014; Ford, 2014). Despite recent shifts towards more inclusivity and culturally responsive practices in gifted education, an undercurrent of bias against CLD populations remains part of the landscape.

Restricted Access of CLD Groups to Gifted Education

While possessing social and cultural capital are often seen in a positive light, there are negative consequences, namely that those who hold the most capital can restrict access to opportunities for those who are not in the dominant culture or community (Portes, 1998). Social capital represents an individual's ability to use their status and membership in certain social structures to "facilitate purposive actions, usually to obtain some sort of benefit" (Maier & Youngs, 2009). Likewise, those with cultural capital embody certain behavioral styles and ways of speaking, while also knowing that their cultural preferences and cultural knowledge are valued. Additionally, cultural capital is institutionalized in form of degrees, credentials, grades, and test scores that serve to denote cultural distinction (Hong & Youngs, 2008; Olneck, 2000).

One of the societal norms that is perpetuated through practices and processes of multiple stakeholders (e.g., parents, teachers, GRTs) is that giftedness is often an off-limit label for CLD students; a fact that is supported by national data with a majority of those identified being White students ("Civil Rights Data Collection, n.d."). Cultural bias is one of the reasons that CLD groups have restricted access to gifted education. For

example, both African American teachers and White teachers judge African American children to have less academic promise that White children (Elhoweris et al., 2005). The selection of White students for special programming (e.g., gifted education) reflect enduring, racist perceptions of educators (Morris, 2002). Additionally, as discussed in the introduction of this paper, those with the most capital "call the shots" or determine what is considered the norm.

Barlow and Dunbar (2010) conducted an ethnographic case study to examine the processes one division used to identify and enroll students in a gifted magnet school. The study occurred over a 15-year period where the authors undertook dual roles as both participants and researchers. At the outset the authors were both involved in a number of initiatives to help desegregate a gifted magnet school such as serving on committees to help develop a fair gifted identification process and assisting with parent outreach to educate diverse families about the school. During the course of the study the two researchers began to take on the role of social scientists as well in order to document the unfolding events. They were engaged in a form of ethnographic, participatory action research over the course the study where they began to keep detailed records about the process and events and also received university grant funding to interview a number of people involved in the process.

Over the course of the study Barlow and Dunbar (2010) found that unequal access to educational opportunity (i.e., identification and subsequent admission into the gifted magnet school) is "perpetuated through practices that express and protect the advantages of whiteness" (p. 64). There were multiple practices that excluded CLD students and families from the gifted program. First, for several years at the beginning of the study the

district screened only those students who were who were recommended by parents or teachers for admission to the school. The majority of those screened and referred were White students. Secondly, the district used a complicated and "inconvenient" identification process. For example, parents were responsible for bringing their kindergarten students to the testing center inaccessible by public transportation. The test was only given once on one particular Saturday morning which likely limited the number of students who could be tested. Additionally, a score from a singular test given in kindergarten was the sole determinant for placement in the gifted program.

Each of these practices served to restrict access of CLD students to gifted programming while bolstering White students' rates of identification. For example, using only teacher or parent referral would automatically result in lower rates of CLD students due to the lack of teacher and parent referral of CLD students to gifted programs (e.g., Grissom & Redding, 2016; McBee, 2006). Additionally, by putting the onus of testing on families in a difficult-to-reach location for those dependent on public transportation, the school division was privileging those families who could "negotiate the detailed and complex process" (Barlow & Dunbar, 2010). In sum, inaccessibility "perpetuates racial disparities and white racial dominance" in gifted programs (Montoya et al., 2016, p. 129).

As Reay (2004) notes, gifted education programs are one way of recognizing and rewarding dominant cultural capital in schools. Specifically, she notes that gifted programs privilege the potential of the already advantaged (i.e., White middle to upper-middle class), thus exacerbating class inequalities in education. In fact, cultural and social capital provides those families with the tools, resources, connections and knowledge to "play the educational game effectively" (Reay, 2004, p. 84). Despite the shift towards

broader conceptions and more inclusive definitions of giftedness, societal norms and beliefs still permeate into gifted education policies and the enactment of those policies. The next section will focus specifically on how gifted policies are written and enacted at the state and local level.

<div style="text-align:center">State and Local Gifted Education Policy</div>

The creation of policy reflects values, choices, and privileged points of view. This is certainly evident in gifted education given the lack of a federal mandate in the U.S. The extant literature on gifted education policies are often survey-oriented (e.g., Callahan et al; 2013; McClain & Pfeiffer; 2013; NAGC & CSDPG, 2015) in order to gather information about the current state of gifted education in terms of topics such as current definitions, funding mandates, and identification processes to name a few. The findings from these studies illustrate the high levels of variability in state gifted policy. Responses on a recent survey of state departments of education indicate that state and local definitions, assessment practices, funding, requirements of those who work gifted students among other factors vary widely. Practices even vary *within* states, with seven states not requiring their districts to follow the state definition when writing their local definitions, policies, and procedures (NAGC & CSDPG, 2015). These practices are illustrative of the challenges associated with researching gifted education and the enactment of policies at a national or even state level.

Given the challenges associated with research in gifted education coupled with the local nature of gifted education, this section will focus on research about policy enactment at the state and local level specifically focusing on efforts to increase the representation of CLD students in gifted education. McBee, Shaunessy, and Matthews

(2012) conducted a study in Florida where there was a mandate to identify and educate gifted and talented students. In the original mandate all localities were required to use the following eligibility criteria for gifted program services, students had to a) demonstrate a need for the program, b) exhibit a majority of gifted characteristics on a given checklist, and c) score over 130 on an IQ test. An addendum to the state stature in 1991 "allowed districts the option of establishing local alternative identification plans targeting underrepresented groups" which would then be approved by the Florida Department of Education (p.330). The authors investigated the extent to which implementation of this alternative identification policy, referred to as Plan B, increased representation of CLD students in gifted programs. They found that the majority of districts (46 out of 67) in the state developed alternative identification plan. Results from a related study (Matthews & Shaunessy, 2010) that used the same data set outlined the content of the 42 available district plans. A majority (over 50%) of the Plan B alternative identification plans followed these criteria:

- all students must comprise the initial screening pool

- a systematic screening process is evident

- nominations are accepted from sources other than teachers

- parents are provided with printed information about characteristics

- assessment choice is individualized according to learner strengths

- both potential and current performance are considered

- placement is based on student needs and strengths rather than the number of slots available, and

- multiple assessments are used and include quantitative and qualitative components.

McBee et al. (2012) found that students receiving free and reduced-price lunch were identified at nearly doubled the rate prior to the establishment of Plan B plans and that there was a two thirds increase in the identification of Black students as well. This finding is important because it underscores the possibility that changing local educational policies can positively affect the identification of CLD students as gifted. Although this study was conducted in Florida, the results of this study do provide "initial support for the development of such alternative pathways for the identification of underrepresented learners (McBee et al., 2012, p. 337). Another important step for states, divisions, and schools to consider is to specifically challenge and address policies that "undermine the success of people of color (Milner et al., 2013, p. 350).

Virginia Gifted Education Policy

Virginia mandates the identification of gifted students in either general intellectual or specific academic aptitude and allows divisions the flexibility to establish screening, referral, and identification procedures that follow state regulations. Provisions directly related to the identification or service of CLD students is nonexistent in the current policy documents. As described in Chapter 1, the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) recently released a report conducted by the Virginia Advisory Committee for the Education of the Gifted (VACEG) titled *Increasing Diversity in Gifted Education Programs in Virginia.* The document was created to assist divisions in evaluating their own gifted identification processes and to assist with the revision of policies to promote equitable identification across all demographic groups. A description

of the development of this document and suggested practices from the analysis of districts with the most equitable identification processes were detailed in Chapter 1; however, I will summarize them briefly. The VAGEC recommends that Virginia divisions looking to increase diversity in their gifted education programs could incorporate opportunities for talent development, actively promote an open-referral process inclusive of universal screening, change identification processes in an effort to understand the whole child, provide targeted professional development about gifted education and how it manifests in CLD populations for teachers, and provide educational opportunities for parents about the gifted identification process.

Given that the Virginia regulations require divisions to include multiple measures in the gifted identification process, it is important to understand the current research with regards to those measures. The next section will include a discussion of the literature related to talent development opportunities, the use of assessment and referrals, and portfolio use as it pertains to the identification of CLD students.

Identification of CLD students

The gifted identification process is typically a multi-staged process of finding students who are eligible for gifted education services (NAGC, n.d., glossary). This section will synthesize the literature relevant to the identification of CLD students as well as practices that are considered to be both equitable and inequitable. As noted earlier, in Virginia "[t]he process shall include the review of information or data from multiple sources to determine whether a student's aptitudes and learning needs are most appropriately served through the school division's gifted education program" (§ 22.1-16 of the Code of Virginia). The use of multiple sources refers to the use of talent

development opportunities, assessment, referrals, and student portfolios in the determination of eligibility for gifted services. While not all of these components are used in all places, examining how multiple opportunities ~~are they~~ are used and any issues surrounding their use will be explored in this section.

Talent Development Opportunities

In a recent article highlighting barriers to the identification of underserved populations, Seigle et al. (2016) proposed a model of identification and talent development for gifted students (See Appendix D for the full model). They note that one issue with identifying students from CLD populations is that their talent may not have surfaced because those students have fewer opportunities to acquire knowledge and skills that are rewarded in the formal identification process and the ways in which these students demonstrate giftedness could be different from traditional stereotypical characteristics of giftedness (Siegle et al., 2016). Thus, the authors proposed including a formal preidentification stage so that students can engage in a series of "talent emergent experiences" (p. 115). During the talent development, or preidentification stage, educators who are versed in how CLD groups present as gifted should take on the role of "talent scouts" who should actively look for those students who are exhibiting gifted characteristics (Brulles, Castellano, & Laing, 2011, p. 306). Although no two gifted children are alike, some characteristics, or attributes include the ability to problem solve, to learn quickly through experience, having a sense of humor, an exceptional memory, an understanding of relationships among seemingly disparate parts, or acquiring a new language quickly (Ford, 1994; Frasier, 1997). Providing teachers with the opportunities

to see the assets of their students as opposed to engaging in deficit thinking could be one way to see positive changes in identification practices for CLD students.

In a qualitative case study Briggs, Reis, & Sullivan (2008) examined the methods that gifted identification programs used to successfully identify CLD students. They collected data in four phases: 1) researchers solicited nominations for programs to be included in the study, 2) researchers invited all 46 nominated programs to provide more information about their programs using a standardized form, 3) researchers interviewed the 25 program directors of the programs who demonstrated some level of success in prior years with CLD students, and 4) researchers conducted extensive site visits with seven programs which had either seen an increase in the number of CLD students identified or which had CLD students demonstrate a measure of success during and after participation in the program. Success after the program was measured by subsequent identification for a gifted program or entrance to advanced level courses. Opportunities for talent development, referred to as "frontloading" by the authors, was one of the five categories that contributed to the successful identification of CLD students as gifted. They defined frontloading as, "the process of preparing students for advanced content and creative and critical thinking prior to the formal identification process or before advanced-level courses are offered" (Briggs et al., 2008, p. 137).

The researchers noted several ways in which gifted programs were successful in helping CLD students bridge the readiness gap they often face during formal identification processes. Programs highlighted by the authors all partnered with universities to provide supplemental learning opportunities such as offering several multi-week educational sessions during the fall, winter, and spring as well as summer

enrichment programs at the partner universities (Briggs et al., 2008). While this strategy was related to successful identification of CLD students, it is important to note that the school divisions were not providing the opportunities for talent development on their own; they had significant help in the form of human and financial resources via university partnerships. It is important for divisions to consider ways in which they can address the readiness gap, or can frontload CLD students with experiences and knowledge they may not have otherwise had exposure to, as well as the availability of financial and human resources.

Use of Assessment

One major barrier to the equitable identification of Black, Hispanic, low-income, and EL students as gifted is the reliance on assessments (Peters & Engerrand, 2016.) The use of assessment in the gifted identification process is widely used with a majority of districts using specific scores on intelligence or cognitive ability tests to determine eligibility for gifted services (Callahan et al., 2013). The wide use of testing, whether it is achievement, intelligence, or ability, is problematic for CLD populations because they score lower than their White or Asian counterparts due a variety of reasons including test bias and stereotype threat (Erwin & Worrell, 2012; Geissman et al., 2013; Peters & Engerrand, 2016).

In a recent qualitative case study, Allen (2017) explored teacher perceptions about the under-representation of CLD students in gifted programs. She interviewed six educators including two classroom teachers, two ESOL teachers and two gifted teachers at one elementary school. An overemphasis on testing was seen as a major barrier to the

identification of CLD students (Allen, 2017). The following quotes from two teachers in the study illustrate the problematic overemphasis on testing for CLD populations:

> **Quote 1.** Classroom Teacher: "I see so much potential, but yet, I know the CogAT (Cognitive Abilities Test) would hold her back" (Allen, 2017, p. 40).

> **Quote 2.** ESOL Teacher: "If you look at their STAR reading scores, they're all reading below grade level (referring to many of her ELL students). So then for me to go and say, "well I think this student might be gifted," they're going to look at that score . . . and they're never going to think that" (Allen, 2017, p. 40)

These quotes illustrate the fact that even when teachers notice emergent talent in students, they are unlikely to refer to them to gifted education if their test scores are not up to par, which is a more traditional, unidimensional conception of giftedness.

As evidenced above, the use of assessment in the gifted identification process is a hotly contested topic in gifted education with many scholars believing in one of two proposed solutions: use different tests, or use tests differently (Peters & Engerrand, 2016). The next two subsections will discuss the empirical studies and prominent conceptual pieces around these proposed solutions.

Use Different Tests. Some scholars in the field recognize that the use of typical intelligence and cognitive ability tests lead to differential scores based on demographics and therefore call for the use of other less-biased tests (e.g., Naglieri & Ford, 2003, 2005; Briggs, Reis & Sullivan, 2008). One suggestion often found in the literature is that nonverbal assessments could be used with CLD populations to ensure more equitable identification (e.g., Naglieri & Ford; 2003, 2005; NAGC, n.d., Tests and Assessments). The arguments for using nonverbal tests are that they do not demand students have a command over English and that they are not culturally loaded (Ford et al., 2008).

To support this position Naglieri and Ford (2003) conducted a study to examine the effectiveness of the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test (NNAT) in identifying Black and Hispanic students when their scores were compared with those of White students. The NNAT is a nonverbal measure of cognitive ability that does not require a student to read, write, or speak. The sample of students in this study consisted of 20,270 children from the "NNAT standardization sample tested during the fall of 1995" and were representative of a national sample according to their "socioeconomic status (SES), urbanicity, and ethnicity (Naglieri & Ford, 2003, p. 157). The researchers reported that the mean scores of White, Black, and Hispanic students were similar, 99.3, 96.1, and 97.3 respectively. Additionally, because many prior definitions of giftedness included a provision that gifted students perform at the top 5-10% of the nation, the authors also reported percentages of students by race and ethnicity who scored in the top 10%, 5%, and 2%. They found that similar percentages of White, Black, and Hispanic students scored at those levels, thus concluding similar percentages of these students would be identified as gifted.

Despite the arguments for using nonverbal assessment in gifted identification, others argue that they do not ensure proportional or equitable representation. For example, Geissman et al. (2013) conducted a study to determine how minority students performed, or scored on the Naglieri Nonverbal Ablility Test (NNAT) as compared to the Cognitive Abilities Test (CoGAT) in one school district. The district switched the test they were using in their screening procedures from the CoGAT to the NNAT in the fall of 2010 with the hopes of identifying more CLD students as gifted. The researchers compared data from the almost 6,000 second graders who took the CoGAT between

2005-2010 data with the data from the over 4,000 kindergarten, first, and second grade students who took the NNAT in the fall of 2010. They found that African American, Hispanic, ELL, and low-income students had lower scores on all forms of each assessment as compared to White and Asian students. One criticism is that their data was collected from one particular district; therefore, their sample is not representative of national trends (Naglieri & Ford, 2015). Despite this criticism, this data is reflective of national assessment trends (Erwin & Worrell, 2012). Given that NNAT and the CoGAT are among two of the most commonly used assessments in gifted identification (Callahan et al., 2013), it is imperative that divisions realize the possible ramifications of using these tests given that CLD students score lower than others. Without addressing the probability of entire populations scoring at levels that would preclude identification, it is unsurprising that "substantial underrepresentation" of CLD students is the result for divisions using these tests a major part of the identification process (Peters & Engerrand, 2016, p. 161).

A second argument against using nonverbal assessments for gifted identification is that they have poor content validity, meaning that they do not align well with the academic programming typical in most gifted programs (Lohman, 2005). Essentially, Lohman is arguing that most gifted programs require students to engage in advanced academic coursework (e.g., reading, writing, math); however high scores on nonverbal assessments do not mean that students will be successful with advanced academics in those subject areas. Instead, Lohman contends that nonverbal tests are better suited as a way to identify emergent talent and ability and those students should have access to educational opportunities aimed at helping them develop academic skills needed to

successfully engage in advanced coursework (Lohman, 2005). Ultimately, the measure

used to identify students should be as closely aligned as possible to the intervention (e.g.,

gifted program) for which students are identified (Lohman, 2009; Peters & Engerrand,

2016).

Use Tests Differently. Conversely, a different group of scholars champions using

the same tests differently, namely using local or group norms (Peters & Gentry, 2012;

Lohman, 2013). Many cognitive ability (e.g., CoGAT, NNAT) and achievement tests

(e.g., Iowa Test of Basic Skills) are nationally normed, meaning that an individual's

results are compared to a large, nationally representative sample of individuals who took

the same assessment. The primary limitation of using national norms is that they fail to

take local context, or "variations in ability of achievement" into account (Lohman, 2013,

p. 114.). Due to the local nature of gifted education in the U.S., determining who needs

different programming should be decided at the local level. Lohman (2013) illustrates

this point with the following example:

> In some schools, the average student scores at the 20th national percentile (NPR).
> In such a school, a student who scores at the 70th NPR is probably significantly
> mismatched with her peers. Conversely, in some very high-achieving schools, a
> student who scores at the 95th NPR may not be seriously mismatched with the
> instructional challenges in the classroom (p. 114).

The prior example presents an effective argument for the use of local norms when

determining eligibility for gifted services. Put simply, local norms are similar to national

norms except individual student's results are compared the local group of students who

took the assessment instead of a nationally representative group. This could result in a

more inclusive pool of students for identification reflective of the situated, contextual

nature of educational needs. For example, if a school division automatically refers

students who score at the 95th percentile on a nationally normed test, there could be schools within the division who have no students automatically referred. Whereas, if the division used local norms at the school-level, schools regardless of demographic makeup would have students automatically referred to the gifted identification process.

Despite the utility of local norms as described in the earlier example, the use of local rank orders or percentile ranks still fail to take the concept of "opportunity to learn" into account, meaning students should be compared to others who have had similar educational experiences or opportunities. While local norms could be used to identify a certain percentage of students in a particular school as gifted, the results could still be inequitable due to differences in opportunity to learn. To mitigate this some promote the use of group-specific norms in addition to using local norms (Lohman, 2013; Peters & Engerrand, 2016; Peters & Gentry, 2012). One way to do this would be to identify a certain group, such as EL students or students who receive free and reduced-price lunch and selecting the top 10% of students who are members of those groups and who are not. In fact, the Commonwealth of Virginia and the USDOE endorse the use of local and group norms within their definitions of giftedness, "Children and youth with outstanding talent perform or show the potential for performing at remarkably high levels of accomplishment *when compared with others of their age, experience, or environment*" (italics added for emphasis).

Peters and Gentry (2012) examined the use of local and group-specific norms in a single, diverse school to see how they affected the representation of students from low-income families. The school was purposively selected because it was diverse overall and the percentage of students receiving free and reduced-price lunch mirrored that of the

58

United States the year the study took place. They analyzed the number of students who would be identified from the top 5%, 10%, and 25% on the Midwest State Achievement Test according to general norms and income-group-specific norms (i.e., those students receiving free and reduced price lunch). The authors noted that they used these specific cut scores because they are commonly used in gifted identification processes, not because using a single cut score is considered best practice. The findings supported the use of local, group-specific norms over general group norms for identifying a more proportional percentage of students from low-income families. While the data from this study are from one specific school and a state-level achievement test which could be limited by a low ceiling, the authors demonstrate how using local, group-specific norms can be applied to locate and identify students who would often "go unnoticed" in the general population of the school (Peters & Gentry, 2012; p. 140.)

These issues underscore the importance of choosing assessments that will align with the district definition of giftedness as well as the type of services that will be delivered. Additionally, divisions should think about the ways in which assessments can be seen as hurdles for CLD students and determine ways to mitigate those either through the use of local or group-specific norms in order for the identification process to be more equitable. The next section will focus on another ubiquitous practice in the identification process: the use of referrals.

Use of Referrals

As mentioned previously, teacher and parent referrals are the most common entry points into the gifted identification process for students at the elementary level (Callhan et al., 2013). In places without universal screening procedures, referrals are the most

common way for a student to be entered into the pool for further evaluation. This section will describe the use of both teacher and parent referral and illustrate how both can operate to produce inequitable outcomes for CLD students in the gifted identification process.

Teacher referrals. A meta-analysis conducted in 2007 examined whether teacher expectations were different for racial minorities than they were for European-American students (Tenenbaum & Ruck, 2007). With regards to referrals, the researchers wanted to determine the differences in teachers' referrals based on the ethnic and racial background of their students. They found that teachers were much less likely to refer African American and Latino/a students for gifted programs than White students, with a difference of almost one full standard deviation (.92) (Tenebaum & Ruck, 2007). Additional studies had similar findings (Grissom & Redding; 2016; McBee, 2006).

McBee's 2006 study further illustrates how teacher referrals affect gifted identification of CLD groups. He conducted a study to determine how referral sources compared in terms of equity across racial and socioeconomic groups. His sample included all students in the state of Georgia from first through fifth grade and included data on automatic referrals (students who were entered to the eligibility pool due to a certain score on a standardized test), teacher referrals, parent referrals, self-referrals, peer-referrals, and other referral sources. The results were unsurprising. Students who received free and reduced lunch were three times less likely to be referred by teachers than students who did not receive financial assistance. Additionally, Black and Hispanic students received fewer automatic and teacher referrals than White and Asian students. If one accepts the assumption that ability is equally distributed across all demographic

60

groups, then it appears that the referral process is inequitable due to a statistically significant percentage of low-income, Black, and Hispanic students being referred to gifted services by their teachers.

Parent referrals. Parent referrals are also frequently utilized entry points into the gifted identification process (Callahan et al., 2013). In McBee's 2006 study Asian, Native American, and White students had much higher rates of parent nomination than Black and Hispanic students. Why those rates were higher for some groups than others were outside of the scope of the study; however, those trends can be theoretically linked to cultural and social capital. Some groups "enjoy distinct advantages over others in possessing more social capital and resources, resulting in or perpetuating group inequalities" (Yun Dai, 2013). This conjecture was supported by a qualitative case study that explored African American parents' perceptions of the underrepresentation of gifted African American students (Michael-Chadwell, 2010). The researcher interviewed 11 African American parents of students who participated in the nomination process. One of the themes that emerged from the data was that African American parents are unaware of gifted programs and their rights as advocates. This implies that the nomination process is beneficial for those "in the know", while possibly perpetuating underrepresentation of CLD groups.

The research presented in this section indicates that teacher and parent referrals are can be biased against CLD groups with many more parents and teachers referring White and Asian students as well economically advantaged students to the gifted identification process. While referrals and having assessment scores within a certain

range are a popular way for students to enter the identification process, portfolios are another avenue to gifted identification.

Student Portfolio

It is widely accepted that no single measure should determine eligibility for gifted services and multiple measures should be incorporated instead (VDOE, 2012; NAGC, n.d., Gifted Programming Standards). One of the ways in which divisions can consider multiple data points in their gifted identification process is to allow for the inclusion of a student portfolio. Portfolio use in the gifted identification process is fairly common with 35% acknowledging their use. Portfolios are typically a "collection of a student's work that demonstrates either (a) the student's growth, or (b) the student's best work" (Moon, 2013). Portfolios used in the gifted identification process contain samples that can contain performance-based assessments, student reflections on the included pieces, teacher comments on the pieces, and other assessment data (Moon, 2013).

Given the fact that Virginia, and JCPS specifically, accept portfolios as part of the gifted identification process, it is important to acknowledge possible drawbacks of this method for CLD populations. As noted in Chapter 1, student portfolios can and should be used with CLD populations as long as they are not perpetuating discrepancies in opportunities to learn. For example, students from low-socioeconomic status might lack materials at home to create artifacts to include in the portfolio. If that is that case, schools should ensure students time at school to create portfolios, have teacher support and attention, as well opportunities to improve upon work based on feedback (Matthews, 2018).

Chapter Summary

In conclusion, the review of literature indicates several ways in which CLD students lack equitable access to gifted programs. For example, early conceptions of giftedness were inextricably linked to scores on IQ tests and the fact that students of color and of lower socioeconomic status perform worse on intelligence tests ensured that they were significantly under-represented in the gifted education—a trend that continues today. Despite the more recent acceptance of broader conceptions of giftedness among scholars and practitioners, those beliefs do not always translate into practice. The gifted identification label is a form of cultural capital that is often reserved for those who embody the values, language, and behavioral customs of the dominant culture. As Barlow and Dunbar (2010) illustrated, the ways a local gifted identification policy is enacted can privilege those from White and middle to upper class backgrounds while effectively restricting access to CLD students. In this way, "racial inequity in schools can be seen as intentionally designed—not accidental or happenstance" (Milner et al., 2013, p. 345).

Furthermore, there are many ways in which the components of the gifted identification process hinder the identification of CLD students. For example, using arbitrary cut-off scores on nationally normed cognitive ability assessments as opposed to local, group norms leads to the gifted identification of fewer CLD students (Peters & Gentry, 2012). Moreover, teacher and parent referrals are biased against CLD students leading to fewer of them entering the pool of possible gifted candidates. Lastly, the use of multiple measures, including student portfolios, is seen as a way for the gifted identification process to be more inclusive of CLD students and students with disabilities; however, the use of non-standardized assessments is not a silver bullet to end the under-

representation of CLD students in gifted education. Portfolios require students to have

outstanding work that aligns with the local definition of giftedness, which could be

problematic because CLD students lack access to quality curriculum and academically

rigorous subjects (USDOE, 2016) in addition to possibly lacking appropriate materials at

home to complete quality products.

This review of the literature explored the ways in which gifted education and the

gifted identification process both hinders and facilitates access to equitable educational

opportunities for CLD students. This literature foregrounds the study in which I sought to

better understand how the gifted identification process is enacted at two elementary

schools and the ways in which the identification of CLD students is either hindered or

facilitated. The research questions are as follows:

1) How is the gifted identification process enacted at two Jenkins County elementary
   schools?

2) To what extent does the enactment of gifted identification process at the two
   schools align with the stated school division gifted identification policy?

3) In what ways does the school division's gifted identification policy and process
   facilitate the identification of CLD populations?

4) In what ways does the school division's gifted identification policy and process
   hinder the identification of CLD populations?

Chapter 3: Methods

I begin this chapter with a brief review of the purpose of the study and the research questions. Additionally, I share information regarding my interpretivist paradigm and the assumptions that go along with that paradigm and how it aligns with my research design. I then describe the research site and participants, data collection and analysis methods, and ethical considerations.

Purpose and Research Questions

As noted in the introduction and the review of literature in the previous chapters, CLD students face issues of educational equity both nationally and locally (USDOE, 2016). Specifically, CLD students are sorely underrepresented in gifted programs nationally (Siegle et al., 2016; USDOE, 2016), within the state of Virginia (VDOE, 2017a), and within Jenkins County[1] schools. Through the use of a multiple-case study, I focused on equity of education and educational opportunities for culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) groups. Specifically, as a consequence of my study I considered the ways in which the current gifted identification policy and process in JCPS is hindering and/or facilitating the identification of CLD students in two elementary schools. The research questions are as follows:

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[1] Names of all people and places are pseudonyms.

1) How is the gifted identification process enacted at two Jenkins County elementary schools?

2) To what extent does the enactment of gifted identification process at the two schools align with the stated school division gifted identification policy?

3) In what ways does the school division's gifted identification policy and process facilitate the identification of CLD populations?

4) In what ways does the school division's gifted identification policy and process facilitate the identification of CLD populations?

Methodology

Qualitative Multiple-Case Study Research Design

Due to the lack of federal mandates around gifted education, decisions about gifted education are left to the states, which leads to a process that is highly contextual (Clarenbach & Eckert, 2013). In order to answer the research questions, I employed a qualitative multiple-case study design, which involves collecting and analyzing data from two cases (Yin, 2014) in order to understand a particular collection of cases (Stake, 2006). The choice to employ a multiple-case study is due, in part, to the advantages of such a design over a single case study design. Yin (2014) notes that "the evidence from multiple cases is often considered to be more compelling, and the overall study is therefore regarded as being more robust" (p. 57). The choice of the two elementary schools, or cases, for this design stems from the idea that in a multiple-case study the cases can be similar in some ways (Stake, 2006). The similarities between the sites will be described in the next section. Further, as described by Yin (2014) a case study is appropriate "when a "how" or "why" question is being asked about a contemporary set of

events over which the research has no control" (p. 14). Case studies are also useful when the researcher desires to understand a real-world case where contextual conditions are pertinent (Yin, 2014). Conducting a multiple-case study was appropriate in this instance because I sought to understand how a process was enacted within two bounded but related systems, or schools, and the research was conducted within naturalistic settings and not in a research lab where variables can be manipulated by the researcher. Case study is an ideal research design for developing an in-depth understanding of the gifted identification process within two "urban-ring" schools with high concentrations of CLD students. Additionally, this approach was utilized in prior research studies examining gifted programs for their successful inclusion of CLD students (see Briggs et al, 2008).

The choice to employ a qualitative, descriptive approach stems from an interpretivist paradigm. As described by Lincoln and Guba (1994) qualitative research is appropriate when researchers are attempting to study a phenomenon in terms of the meanings individuals bring within their natural setting. I am operating under an interpretivist paradigm meaning that I believe that we "live in a world of potentially multiple, intersubjective social realities" and see research findings "as resulting from intersubjective, meaning-focused processes" (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012, pp. 40-41). I further believe that research must be done using naturalistic methodological procedures so that meaning making of participants within their own local context as well as within a wider societal context takes center stage (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Methods

I collected and analyzed data for this study during the spring semester of 2018 in Jenkins County Public Schools, specifically at two elementary schools: Appleton ES, and

Wilson ES in order to examine the enactment of the gifted identification policy and how both the policy and process facilitates and/or hinders the identification of CLD groups.

Researcher Access

As a former elementary teacher and instructional coach within JCPS, I have an existing relationship with many people within the school division, including the JCPS gifted administrator who came to me with the problem of practice. I took responsibility for securing my own access to sites and participants. Prior to making contact with anyone at the school level, I received approval by the University of Virginia's Institutional Review Board as well as approval from the JCPS Department of Accountability, Research, and Technology to conduct the study. Upon receiving approval from both institutions, I acquired the emails of the administrators and gifted resource teachers (GRTs) at each school from the JCPS gifted administrator. I first emailed the administrators at each school to get permission to conduct research within their particular buildings. Once permission was granted by both administrators, I then reached out to the GRTs at each school to get their consent to participate in my study. I also received consent from all other participants prior to conducting interviews.

Site and Sample

This study took place in JCPS, mainly within two elementary schools, each of which are in the "urban ring" of the division, or the most densely populated part of the division. JCPS is a medium-sized school division located in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The county encompasses over 700 square miles and has approximately 100,000 residents. The division currently has 15 elementary schools, which serve students in PreK-grade 5. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), JCPS is categorized as

rural fringe. NCES defines a rural fringe locale as, "Census-defined rural territory that is less than or equal to 5 miles from an Urbanized Area, as well as rural territory that is less than or equal to 2.5 miles from an Urban Cluster" (Geverdt, 2015, p. 2). Additionally, JCPS also operates under a site-based management philosophy, meaning that the principals at each school have significant autonomy to make decisions regarding the use of their allotted staffing, budget, curricular resources, classroom/building spaces etc.

The two elementary schools where I conducted my study are both centrally located and are within one mile of each other in the most densely populated area of the county. These two schools were sampled because of their close geographic proximity to one another coupled with the similarities in their demographic composition and patterns of under-representation of CLD students in gifted programs as compared to the rest of the school division.

The data in Table 3.1 and Table 3.2 show that even though both Wilson and Appleton have diverse populations, the percentages of Black, Hispanic/Latino, and multiracial students identified as gifted at those schools are not reflective of their overall populations at those schools. Additionally, White students are being identified as gifted at disproportionately higher rates given that White students comprise under 40 percent of the populations at each school.

Table 3.1.
Gifted Identified Students by Race and Ethnicity at Appleton ES

69

Race & Ethnicity	2015-2016		2016-2017		2017-2018	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Asian	1	3.8	1	5.3	2	11.1
Black	3	11.5	2	10.5	2	11.1
Multi-race	3	11.5	1	5.3	0	0
White	19	73.1	15	78.9	14	77.8
Total	26	100	19	100	18	100

Table 3.2.
Gifted Identified Students by Race and Ethnicity at Wilson ES

Race & Ethnicity	2015-2016		2016-2017		2017-2018	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Black	2	9.5	1	8.3	0	0
Hispanic/ Latino	2	9.5	0	0	0	0
Multi-race	1	4.8	1	8.3	1	20
White	16	76.2	10	83.3	4	80
Total	21	100	12	100	5	100

This purposive selection ensured that the cases shared similarities (e.g., demographics, location, underrepresentation of CLD students in gifted education) and allowed for the development of a better understanding of the enactment of the gifted identification process across similar contexts and how it may serve to facilitate or hinder the identification or CLD students (Stake, 2006). These two schools offered a unique opportunity to study the identification of CLD students because these schools have among the highest combined numbers of English Learners, African American/Black students, Hispanic students, and economically disadvantaged students in the division. Further, the CLD groups at these schools are underrepresented in the gifted program despite the fact that they comprise large numbers of the student body at each school. Figure 3.1 highlights the demographic similarities between Appleton ES and Wilson ES while also demonstrating how those two schools differ from the division as a whole.
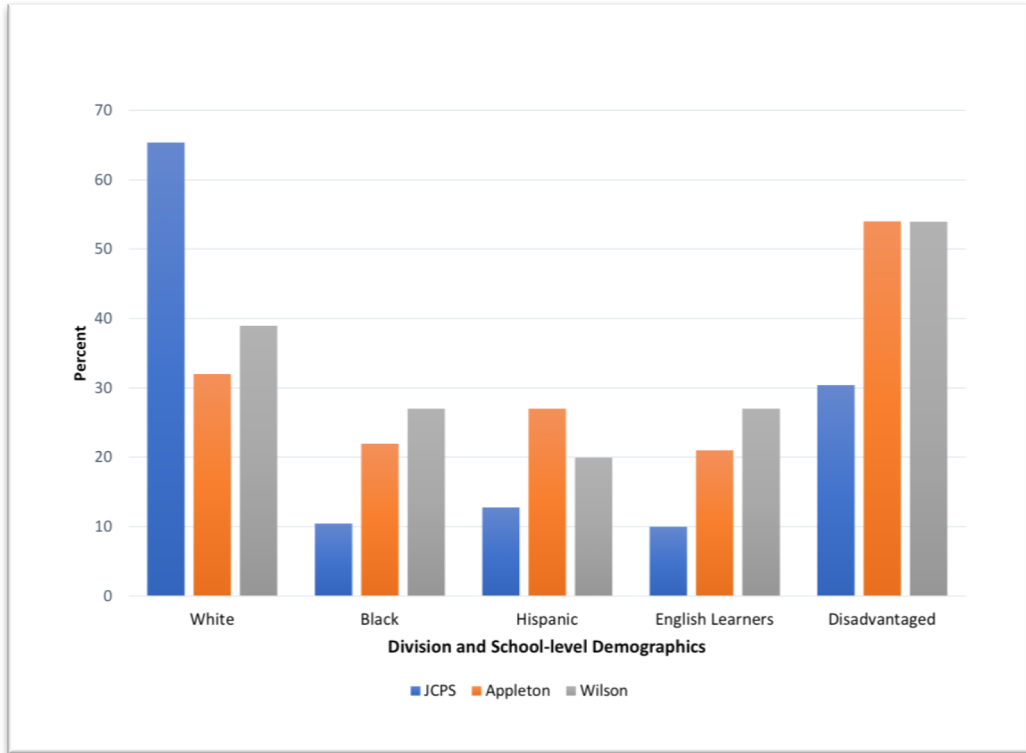
Figure 3.1. Demographic Data for JCPS, Appleton ES, and Wilson ES.

Appleton Elementary School. Appleton Elementary School sits within half a mile of a major route that cuts through Jenkins County. As of September 2017, Appleton had approximately 500 enrolled students across Pre-K through fifth grade. While there are single-grade classrooms at Appleton, there are also several multi-age classrooms where there are multiple teachers who serve a span of ages. For example, there are K-2 classes, K/1 classes, 2/3 classes, and 3-5 classes. It is also considered to be one of the most diverse elementary schools in JCPS with regards to socio-economic status and ethnicity with over 50% of their population qualifying for Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) and nearly 25% of students identifying as Hispanic and another 25% identifying as Black. Additionally, over 20% of students are ELs while only 1.6% of students are identified as gifted. According to school accreditation ratings Appleton is considered

fully accredited by the state meaning that their reading, math, science and social studies/history standardized testing scores met the required benchmark.

Wilson Elementary School. Wilson Elementary School also sits across the major route that cuts through Jenkins County, and is approximately half of a mile away from Appleton Elementary. As of September 2017, Wilson had between 300 and 400 students enrolled students across Pre-K through fifth grade. Similar to Appleton, Wilson Elementary has some multi-age classrooms (e.g. 1/2 classroom, and several 4/5 classrooms) and is also considered to have high levels of diversity within the student body. Over 55% of their population qualifies for Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) and nearly 20% of students identifying as Hispanic and another 25% identifying as Black with another 20% of students are ELs. Wilson is also Fully Accredited by the state.

Participants

For this study I focused on the enactment of the JCPS gifted identification policy at two elementary schools in JCPS. The main arbiter of the gifted identification process and provider of gifted services in JCPS elementary schools is the school-based GRT; therefore, I observed and interviewed the GRT at Wilson and Appleton. I also interviewed the JCPS gifted administrator in order to gain more context about the development of the division's gifted education policy and ancillary documents (e.g., the local gifted identification policy, teacher and parent input forms, portfolio guidelines, gifted services brochure etc.) used in the identification process at the two elementary schools. Lastly, I also employed snowball sampling in order to locate two to three other participants per school to further my understanding of the gifted identification process. Snowball sampling is an approach for locating information-rich informants who would be

good sources about the topic under study (Patton, 2015). I asked the GRTs at each school

to help me identify key informants both in person while conducting observations and also

in a follow-up email to GRTs where I asked the GRT to provide me with names of

teachers, parents, or administrators who could help me gain an in-depth understanding of

the gifted identification process at their particular site. Each GRT provided me with

several names, so I followed up with each one in person and in email once more to

reiterate the purpose of my study and to see if there were particular people on the list

whom they would recommend more highly than others. Upon that last interaction both

GRTs were able to recommend three people at their schools whom they thought were the

most knowledgeable about the gifted identification process, particularly as it relates to

CLD students.   More information about each of these participants is included in the

sections below as well as in Table 3.3, a copy of which is also in Appendix E.

JCPS gifted administrator. Lauren Williams, a White female in her late forties,

is currently in her third year as a division-level administrator. She oversees Gifted

Education, English/Language Arts, and the AVID programs and also co-supervises

instructional coaches alongside several other division-level administrators. She has been

in education for 22 years and has taught at the elementary school, middle school social

studies and English, and has also been a reading specialist, gifted resource teacher, and

instructional coach. She also has completed extensive coursework in the field of gifted

education.

Appleton Participants. Over the course of this study I interviewed and observed

the GRT and interviewed two other key informants, a classroom teacher and the

principal. Mrs. Grant also strongly suggested that conduct an interview with the English

Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teacher due to her experience in facilitating the gifted identification of English Learners at Appleton; however, she declined to be interviewed.

Appleton Elementary GRT. Ana Grant, a White female in her late forties, has been teaching for over 20 years and is in her fifth year as the GRT at Appleton. Prior to becoming a GRT, Mrs. Grant taught fifth grade at Appleton for several years and also taught other elementary grades both in Virginia and in Florida. In addition to her teaching experiences in public schools, she also taught at a Montessori school for two years.

Key Informants. In addition to working with Mrs. Grant, I also interviewed two other educators at Appleton: the principal and a third grade teacher.

The Principal. Lucas Taylor, a White male in his late forties, has been in education on and off for twenty years. Until coming to JCPS, Mr. Taylor worked as an educator exclusively in the fine and performing arts, namely as a band director at the middle and high school level. Over the past several years he has held varied positions including assistant principal at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, as well as been the division-level administrator who oversaw the fine and performing arts. He is also a member of the school-level gifted identification placement committee.

Classroom teacher. Jessica Stanley, a White female in her early thirties, is currently in her ninth year as an elementary school teacher. Though she is currently a third grade teacher, she has also taught several other elementary grades including first, second, and fourth. Mrs. Stanley also serves on the Appleton Equity Committee and has participated in several trainings lead by the head diversity resource teacher in the

division. Mrs. Grant recommended that I interview Mrs. Stanley because they have worked closely together in the past to identify students for gifted education.

Wilson Participants. Over the course of this study I interviewed and observed the GRT and interviewed two other key informants, a classroom teacher and the principal.

Wilson Elementary GRT. Jason Robinson, a Black male in his late twenties, is currently in his second year as the GRT at Wilson. Prior to moving to Wilson, he taught kindergarten for three years at a different elementary school in JCPS. He is currently taking coursework in gifted education so that he can receive the gifted endorsement. He serves as the chair of the Equity Team at Wilson and is also the technology coordinator for the school. He is also one of the JCPS Culturally Responsive Teaching Trainers and leads professional development about culturally responsive teaching for the division several times a year.

Key Informants. In addition to working with the GRT to conduct this study, I also interviewed three other educators at Wilson: the principal, a 4th/5th grade multiage teacher, and a 1st/2nd grade multiage teacher.

The principal. Susan Miller, a White female in her fifties, is in her seventh year as the principal of Wilson. Per the JCPS gifted identification policy, she is on the school-level identification committee, meaning she is actively involved in decided whether or not a child gets placed for gifted services. She has been in education for 30 years and prior to becoming a principal she was an assistant principal and an elementary school teacher. She has only worked in majority-minority school settings.

Classroom teachers. Alice Jones, a White female in her twenties, is in her second year of teaching. She currently teachers a 4th/5th grade multiage class and is the teacher who has worked with Mr. Robinson on the most identifications since he began his role as the GRT last year. Additionally, I also interviewed Julie Davis, a White woman in her early thirties, who currently teaches in a 1st/2nd grade multiage class. She is in her sixth year of teaching and has also worked as a reading specialist. Additionally, Mrs. Davis holds a Master's degree in curriculum and instruction and is currently working toward her administrative degree. She also serves on Wilson's Equity Committee with Mr. Robinson.

Table 3.3.

Participant Information: Name, Role, Demographics, Background Information

Participant Name	Role	Demographic Information	Background Information
Jenkins County Public School Division-level Employee			
Lauren Williams	JCPS Gifted Administrator	• White female • Age: Late 40's	• 22 years of education experience • Former elementary and middle school teacher • Former reading specialist and gifted resource teacher • Completed advanced coursework in gifted education
Appleton Elementary			
Ana Grant	GRT	• White female • Age: Late 40's	• Over 20 years of education experience • GRT for 5 years; elementary educator before that in public and Montessori settings • Holds a gifted certification
Lucas Taylor	Principal	• White male • Age: Late 40's	• 20 years of education experience • Appleton principal for 1 year • Prior experience as an assistant principal, division-level administrator, band director • No prior coursework in gifted education
Jessica Stanley	Third Grade Teacher	• White female • Age: Early 30's	• 9 years of education experience • Taught 1st, 2nd, and 4th grades • Sits on the Appleton Equity Committee • No prior coursework in gifted education
Wilson Elementary			
Jason Robinson	GRT	• Black male • Age: Late 20's	• 5 years of education experience • In his second year as GRT • Currently taking coursework in gifted education • Culturally Responsive Teaching division-level trainer.
Susan Miller	Principal	• White female • Age: Early 50's	• Over 30 years of education experience • Prior experience as an assistant principal and elementary educator • Has only worked in majority-minority schools
Alice Jones	4th/5th grade teacher	• White female • Age: Mid 20's	• Currenlty in her 2nd year of teaching • Has had no coursework in gifted education
Julie Davis	1st/2nd grade teacher	• White female • Age: Early 30's	• 6 years in education • Prior experience as a reading specialist • Serves on the Equity Committee • Holds a Masters' in Curriculum and Instruction and is seeking one in Adminstration and Supervision • Has had no coursework in gifted education

Data Sources and Collection

In order to conduct this study and answer each of the research questions I collected data from multiple sources including documents, interviews, and observations. These data sources will be discussed in the following subsections.

Documents. In order to learn about the enactment of the JCPS gifted education policy I collected documents at the division and school level. The documents that I collected from the Mrs. Williams, the JCPS gifted administrator are listed below:

- the Local Plan for the Education of the Gifted (i.e., the division gifted policy)

- State Regulations about Gifted Identification

- Division-created documents used to assist in the identification process (e.g., the overview of the gifted identification process, the JCPS gifted services brochure, elementary student portfolio guidelines, teacher and parent input forms, student profile form, spreadsheets used to track the gifted identification process, the K-2 Talent Development protocol, and teacher observation forms to be used in conjunction with the talent development lessons.

In addition to collecting division-level documents, I also asked each of the GRTs to provide me with any documents that they used in the gifted identification process. Most of the documents that I collected from the GRTs were the same as the division-level documents (e.g., the gifted services brochure, observation forms, parent and teacher input forms, and the portfolio guidelines). In addition, I also received newsletters, copies of instructional activities, photos of portfolio artifacts, and photographs/screenshots of student work from some of the lessons that I observed.

Interviews. In addition to documents I also interviewed several participants about the gifted identification process. I conducted eight one-on-one interviews: one with the JCPS gifted administrator, one with GRT at each school, and one with each of the key informants from each school during the course of the study. I conducted each interview using an interview guide approach (Patton, 2015). This approach ensures that similar information is gained from all of those who are interviewed but also provides the researcher freedom to interact in a more conversational style while collecting data about pre-specified topics (Patton, 2015). The interview guide consisted of a list of topics and questions about that those topics that were based on my conceptual framework and literature about the gifted identification policy and process with regards to CLD students.

Though they were very similar, I created three different interview protocols: one for the gifted resource teachers (Appendix F), one for the district administrator (Appendix G), and one for the key informants (Appendix H). The protocols included similar questions in order to address multiple perspectives about community values and demographic information about the site and interviewee, the gifted identification process (e.g., the referral process, data collection, talent development), gifted services, and equity in gifted education. Prior to using any of the protocols I sought feedback from a graduate research assistant who is familiar with qualitative research and who has a Master's in gifted education. I sent the protocols to this graduate student and she used the comment function in word to provide written feedback. Upon receiving her written feedback, I read it and then scheduled a face-to-face meeting in order to discuss the feedback. I then adjusted the protocols based on the written and verbal feedback. (See Appendices F-H for the three final interview protocols.)

I interviewed the district administrator first in order to gain a broad understanding of the context including the division's new outward focus on equity, as well as the creation of district policy and ancillary documents used to enact the identification process. I interviewed the GRT at each school at the completion of my observations of talent development lessons and other services to ensure any questions that arose from those observations could be answered. I then interviewed the key informants following the GRT interview except in one case because I had to reschedule my original GRT interview at Appleton due to a weather-related school closing. Table 3.4 (below) contains information about each interview including dates and duration.

Table 3.4.
Time and Duration of Interviews

Interviewee	Interview Date	Interview Duration
Laura Williams, JCPS gifted administrator	February 2, 2018	71 minutes
Jason Robinson, Wilson GRT	February 19, 2018	73 minutes
Susan Miller, Wilson principal	February 27, 2018	67 minutes
Julie Davis, Wilson classroom teacher	March 5, 2018	55 minutes
Alice Jones, Wilson classroom teacher	April 11, 2018	35 minutes
Ana Grant, Appleton GRT	March 26, 2018	73 minutes
Lucas Taylor, Appleton principal	March 15, 2018	64 minutes
Jessica Stanley, Appleton classroom teacher	March 28, 2018	30 minutes

Each of the interviews lasted between 30 and 75 minutes in length and were audio-recorded. During the interview I took detailed notes on the interview protocol to help note what follow-up questions I needed to ask as well to record any analytical or methodological notes. I had each interview professionally transcribed. Upon receiving the transcriptions, I listened to each recording and edited the transcription to ensure accuracy and that all educational jargon (e.g., acronyms) were transcribed as intended. Lastly, I

added any analytical or methodological notes from my interview protocol notes to the final interview transcription.

Observations. I also conducted observations of the talent development process (i.e., K-2 talent development lesson plans) at each of the two schools as well as other aspects of gifted services provided in the K-2 setting. The goal of these observations was to describe how the K-2 talent development lessons and other services were delivered, the engagement of the classroom teacher, and which types of data, if any, the teacher and GRT collect during the lesson. I conducted the observations from late January until end of February.

Prior to scheduling and conducting the observations I reached out to the GRT at each school and asked whether I could observe two to three K-2 talent development lessons as well as any other services provided to K-2 students. I received suggested times from both GRTs and set up a weekly observation schedule that allowed me to observe each of their scheduled lessons with kindergarten, first, and second grade students. I conducted ten observations at Wilson over the course of three weeks, and nine at Appleton over the course of four weeks. Table 3.5 (below) shows the date, place, and focus of the observations I conducted. Mr. Robinson followed the schedule I sent to him and I was able to observe at least one instance of every kindergarten, first grade, and second grade lesson he taught. Scheduling and observing at Appleton was much more challenging due to two weather-related school closing on days I was scheduled to observe several lessons and the fact the Mrs. Grant had a more fluid schedule than Mr. Robinson. I arrived at Appleton four separate times to find that the lesson I had planned to observe was either cancelled or had happened at a different time. Additionally, I observed a 2/3

multiage class project three times and found out from the classroom teacher during my last observation that the students involved in the project were all in third grade, and not in second grade as Mrs. Grant originally thought. During the course of my observations Mrs. Grant only worked with kindergarteners and first graders.

During the observations I took detailed field notes on my laptop guided by my observation protocol (see Appendix I). Immediately after leaving the observation I copied and pasted my field notes into a new document and then added further analytical notes, interpretations, and methodological notes to create a write up for each observation. The analytical notes from the write-ups formed the basis for analytic memos about the observations. Memos containing preliminary analysis were either recorded as a voice memo and later transcribed, written at the bottom of the write up in the form of a reflection, or included in the body of my methodological journal one to two times per week.

Table 3.5.

List of Observations by School, Grade Level, Lesson Type, and Topic

Site	Observation Date	Grade Level, Lesson Type, and Topic
Appleton	January 29, 2018	Grade 1: Talent Development –Minecraft lesson
	January 29, 2018	Grade K: Talent Development – math lesson
	February 1, 2018	*Grade 2/3: Pull-out –Project-based Learning Science and Minecraft
	February 8, 2018	*Grade 2/3: Pull-out –Project-based Learning Science and Minecraft
	February 15, 2018	*Grade 2/3: Pull-out –Project-based Learning Science and Minecraft
	February 19, 2018	Grade 1: Talent Development –Minecraft lesson
	February 21, 2018	**Grade 4/5: Enrichment –Virtual Fieldtrip cancelled
	February 22, 2018	Grade K: Talent Development –math lesson
	February 23, 2018	Grade K: Enrichment –Virtual Field Trip to the zoo
Wilson	January 30, 2018	Grade 1: Talent Development –Analogy lesson (PETS curriculum***)
	January 30, 2018	Grade K: Talent Development – Creative Thinking lesson (PETS curriculum)
	February 2, 2018	Grade 1/2: Enrichment –Nature Club
	February 8, 2018	Grade K: Talent Development – Creative Thinking lesson (PETS curriculum)
	February 9, 2018	Grade 1: Talent Development –Visual/Spatial Thinking (PETS Curriculum)
	February 9, 2018	Grade 1/2: Enrichment –Nature Club
	February 13, 2018	Grade K: Talent Development – Critical Thinking lesson (PETS curriculum)
	February 13, 2018	Grade K: Pull-out –Reading Group
	February 13, 2018	Grade 1: Talent Development –Visual/Spatial Thinking (PETS Curriculum)
	February 16, 2018	Grade K: Talent Development – Critical Thinking lesson (PETS curriculum)

* After talking to the classroom teacher during the final observation I found out that the only students being served during these lessons were 3rd grade students; therefore only 5 of the 9 observations at Appleton were limited to K-2 students

**According to Mrs. Grant a kindergarten lesson was scheduled for this time; however, when I arrived for the observation a 4/5 class was in her space for a virtual field trip that subsequently cancelled due an ice storm (Observation, A. Grant, February 21, 2018).

***The PETS curriculum is a JCPS-purchased curricular resource for K-2 talent development lessons.

Summary of data sources and collection. I collected several types of data in order to answer the research questions: documents at both the division and school level, interviews from a variety of stakeholders including the JCPS gifted administrator, GRTs, teachers, and administrators, and I conducted numerous observations at Wilson and Appleton. Table 3.6 shows the types of data I used to answer each research question.

Table 3.6.
Data Sources Used to Address Research Questions

Research Question	Documents	Interviews	Observations
How is the gifted identification process enacted at two Jenkins County elementary schools?	X	X	X
To what extent does the enactment of gifted identification process at the two schools align with the stated school division gifted identification policy?	X	X	X
In what ways does the school division's gifted identification policy and process facilitate the identification of CLD populations?	X	X	
In what ways does the school division's gifted identification policy and process hinder the identification of CLD populations?	X	X	

Data Analysis

Case studies are generally used to "understand a larger phenomenon through intensive examination" (Rossman & Rallis, 2012, p. 103). To better understand the gifted identification process at each school I engaged in "in rigorous sensemaking and personal reflexivity" in order to "mold interviews, observations, documents, and field notes into *findings*" (Patton, 2015, p. 521). When determining my data analysis strategy, I

considered the purpose of my study, which was to describe how the gifted identification policy is enacted and the ways in which that enactment hinders and/or facilitates the identification of CLD students. The JCPS gifted administrator is interested in holistic, or overall findings rather than site-specific findings that could support any proposed recommendations. Due to this overall purpose, I decided to engage in a form of modified analytic induction in order to look for patterns that cut across the data. I engaged in a "comparative case analysis that includes examining preconceived hypotheses", meaning that I used pre-existing literature and my conceptual framework as a basis for deductive coding, while also "remaining open to discovering concepts or hypotheses not accounted for" in my original conception (Patton, 2015, p. 592). In the next paragraphs I will describe my analysis process.

According to Creswell (2014) there are several steps that researchers take during data analysis and this was how I approached my own analysis:

1) Organize and prepare the data for analysis

2) Read all of the data

3) Begin coding the data

4) Generate themes or findings

5) Interpret findings.

During the first step of analysis, I created a series of folders on my laptop to help me organize my data. I had a folder labeled "JCPS" within which I saved all of the documents the JCPS gifted administrator gave to me as well as her interview transcript. Similarly, I had folders for Appleton and Wilson with subfolders for the field notes, interview transcripts, and any documents that I collected at each school. I then entered all

of those folders into a qualitative data analysis software program, MAXQDA 2018. Once the data were entered into MAXQDA I began second phase of data analysis, reading all of my data and applying initial codes.

Prior to reading through all of the data I developed a draft of my initial *a priori* codebook. To develop the initial codebook I revisited my research questions and purpose for conducting the study, conceptual framework, relevant literature from my literature review, and my interview protocols. I then shared that codebook with my peer reviewer, the same graduate student who provided feedback on my interview protocols. Again, she provided written feedback and then we met face-to-face to discuss her feedback and suggestions. During that meeting I revised my initial codebook and ended up with 27 *a priori* codes. A copy of this codebook is in Appendix J. I then read through the entire data corpus and applied my initial codes to the interviews, documents, and observation write ups. During this phase I also frequently memoed any questions or "general thoughts about the data" by using the memo function in MAXQDA. As I expected, codes other than ones on my initial list emerged. I added several "in vivo" codes as well as other codes to my initial codebook and recoded data as necessary. A list of emergent codes is in Appendix K. Upon my initial read and coding of the data I applied over 1,600 codes.

It took me several days to read through all of the data initially. While I did memo my thoughts and questions throughout the coding process, I also wrote a longer, more extensive analytic memo at the end of each day of the initial coding to capture my thoughts and questions on any emerging patterns or themes from the data. I then revisited my research questions and then read through each of these initial analytic

memos to identify any emerging initial findings. For example, upon reading all of my

analytic memos with the first research question in mind I noted that "talent development

experiences are differentially implemented" (Analytic Memo, April 14, 2018). From

there I pulled all data that I had originally coded as "talent development" including any

memos I had written within MAXQDA and exported it into a word document. I then

read and reread all of the talent development-related data and created a second-level

analytic memo which became the basis for a later finding about the enactment of K-2

talent development lessons. I followed a similar process for each research question using

both the initial analytic memos and the coded data to drive the creation of the findings for

each research question.

Prior to submitting a first draft of my findings and following recommendations

(i.e., Chapters 4 and 5), I shared my entire data analysis process inclusive of portions of

coded data and a draft of my findings with my peer reviewer. Upon reviewing my

proposed findings with supporting data, the peer reviewer agreed that my findings

aligned with my data. This was one step I took to ensure the trustworthiness of my

findings and I describe the other steps I took in more detail in the next section.

Trustworthiness

In order to ensure trustworthiness of my data collection, analysis, and subsequent

findings I engaged in several practices including: a) intensive data collection over a

course of several weeks, b) triangulation of data sources, c) the use of a critical friend, or

peer reviewer, and d) the use of a reflexive journal (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). I was in

the field intermittently over the course of several weeks which helped to ensure that I

presented more than a singular snapshot of the phenomenon under study. I also collected

multiple sources of data from multiple points in time in order to provide a richer picture of the gifted identification process at each of the elementary schools under study. Further, having a peer debriefer at every stage of my data collection and analysis ensured that my methodological and analytical decisions were justifiable and sound. Lastly, I also created an audit trail via the use of a reflexive journal throughout the process. In this journal I documented both my thoughts and methodological decisions in order to for the evolution of my research study to be transparent.

Ethical Considerations

There are several ethical considerations a researcher must make when conducting a research study. I followed the strict protocols set forth by the University of Virginia and the JCPS Department of Accountability and Research. For example, I have a signed informed consent form for every educator who participated in this study. As part of the consent process I made sure that all participants understood the purpose of this research study and the activities associated with it. Though there were no anticipated risks to the participants of this study, I made sure that the participants were aware of that I could not guarantee their anonymity given that the results will be shared with the division leadership. Moreover, I also took time to educate participants about their rights and explained that they could withdraw from the study at any point with no repercussions. To protect participants' identities, I assigned pseudonyms to all people and schools at the beginning of the study and used them on all documents (i.e., field notes, transcripts, memos etc.) as well as in the final report for the University of Virginia. The same pseudonyms will be on any documentation shared with the JCPS gifted administrator as

well. Additionally, all of the data was saved on my laptop and all files were password protected.

Researcher Reflexivity and Role

As a qualitative researcher I recognize that I am the instrument, meaning that I am not separate from the topic, the data collection, and the analysis. I bring my own lenses to a study based upon my own demographics, positionality, and lived experiences. I have been in the field of education for over a decade and during that time I worked both as a primary grades teacher and as an instructional coach for Pre-K through fifth grades. Some of the schools where I worked were similar in demographic makeup to Appleton and Wilson. Additionally, I am endorsed to teach gifted education K-12 in the state of Virginia. Though I have not specifically held the role of GRT, I have been involved in the identification of gifted students as a teacher and saw firsthand the under-representation of CLD students as gifted at the four elementary schools where I worked. Additionally, as a current doctoral student in the Curriculum and Instruction department and a member of a Javits Grant-funded research project, I have been exposed to literature and coursework related equity in education as well as gifted identification of CLD students.

I realize that my prior experiences coupled with my coursework and professional interests could lead to assumptions and skew my data collection and analysis process. Throughout the research process I engaged in abductive reasoning—consistently moving between my data and the literature to avoid superimposing conceptual frameworks that might not be truly reflective of the data. As Erickson, (1986) notes, researchers need to "become more and more reflectively aware of the frames of interpretation of those we

observe, and of our own culturally learned frames of interpretation we brought with us to the setting" (p. 140). I also sought to learn about the specific local contexts when I conducted my study and kept the problem of practice at the forefront of my research. Additionally I used a critical friend, also known as a peer debriefer, to serve as "an intellectual watchdog" to ensure my findings are appropriate given the data (Rossman & Rallis, 2012, p. 65). The peer debriefer had to meet certain qualifications, namely has an understanding of gifted education and the identification process broadly, an understanding of the qualities of and practices surrounding qualitative research, and was also unaffiliated with JCPS so that she could provide an external eye to the data and my conclusions.

Role of researcher. As a former employee within JCPS I had prior connections with some educators within the two schools, though I never held a position at any of the schools where I conducted research. Throughout the research process I strived to take a neutral stance and explained to participants and any other people with whom I came into contact that I was not there to be a personnel or program evaluator, rather I was taking on a role of critical analyst of the gifted identification process. I explained to any educators who had questions about my presence that I was there to provide a description of the current state of the gifted identification process so that the district leadership could make decisions internally about next steps with regards to the policy. Additionally, while observing in classrooms I maintained an unobtrusive observer role and avoided participating in classroom activities so that I could capture rich descriptions of the enactment of the talent development lessons and gifted services in kindergarten, first, and second grades.

Chapter Summary

Within in this chapter I presented detailed descriptions of the site and sample, the participants, data sources, data analysis procedure, as well as my role and researcher as intstrument statement. Though I collected data from two specific sites, Wilson and Appleton Elementary schools, I analyzed the data holistically and looked for overarching findings that cut across both cases. In the next chapter I provide a discussion of the research questions in the form of findings.

Chapter 4: Findings

In the previous chapter I outlined how I conceptualized and carried out this capstone study. In particular, I described my site and sample, data sources, and participants including their location, demographic and background information and their pseudonyms, as well as how I conducted data analysis. Although detailed participant information is included in the foregoing chapter in Table 3.3, I also provide an abbreviated version in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1.
Abbreviated Participant Information

Participant	Site	Role
Laura Williams	JCPS Central Office	Division Gifted Administrator
Jason Robinson	Wilson	GRT
Susan Miller	Wilson	Principal
Julie Davis	Wilson	Classroom teacher
Alice Jones	Wilson	Classroom teacher
Ana Grant	Appleton	GRT
Lucas Taylor	Appleton	Principal
Jessica Stanley	Appleton	Classroom Teacher

The study examined the enactment of the gifted identification policy, the extent to which the enactment aligns with the policy, and the ways in which the policy and process facilitates and hinders the identification of CLD students in a single school district. This chapter focuses on the following research questions that guided data collection:

1. How is the gifted identification process enacted at two Jenkins County elementary schools?

2. To what extent does the enactment of the gifted identification process at the two schools align with the stated school division gifted identification policy?

3. In what ways does the school division's gifted identification policy and process facilitate the identification of CLD populations?

4. In what ways does the school division's gifted identification policy and process hinder the identification of CLD populations?

The findings are discussed in two major sections: *Gifted Identification Policy Enactment and Alignment* and *Facilitation of and Barriers to the Gifted Identification of CLD Students*. In the first section, *Gifted Identification Policy Enactment and Alignment*, I discuss the first two research questions. The enactment of the gifted identification process and the extent to which the enactment aligns with the stated division policy is reviewed. I present a series of findings that emerged as I analyzed interview data, documents (e.g., the gifted services brochure, observation forms, parent and teacher input forms, and the portfolio guidelines, newsletters, copies of instructional activities, and some photographs/screenshots of student work), observational data, as well as the state and local policy (Patton, 2015). Each finding is presented as a subsection and describes the enactment of the gifted identification process as well as the extent to which the enactment aligns with the stated local policy.

In the second section of my findings, *Facilitation of and Barriers to the Gifted Identification of CLD Students,* I provide a review of the third and fourth research questions. Within that section I describe the ways in which the enactment of the policy

hinders and facilitates the identification of CLD students in two schools, Wilson Elementary School and Appleton Elementary School. Again, I present my results as a series of overarching findings as they relate to both schools. The last several findings are supported with data from each of the interviews, documents including the Local Plan, the state code, the JCPS Equity Dashboard, and calculations of Relative Difference in Composition Index (RDCI) and Equity Index (EI) using the procedures in Appendix C.

Gifted Identification Policy Enactment and Alignment

Background Information

According the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), local school divisions are required to identify and serve gifted students (2017b). While the state provides specific regulations regarding gifted education, including the identification process, each school division is required to author a local identification policy that aligns with the stated Virginia regulations. The school board must then approve the division gifted policy prior to its submission to the VDOE for review. The state also requires that each locality determine the areas of giftedness in which they will identify and serve gifted students. Currently school divisions must choose among the areas of: general intellectual aptitude, subject academic aptitude, career and technical aptitude, and visual and/or performing arts aptitude. JCPS has chosen to identify students in the area of general intellectual aptitude and the policy is written to align with that particular area of giftedness.

The JCPS gifted identification policy, a part of the Local Plan, was collaboratively authored by several GRTs and the JCPS gifted administrator. It spans over 20 pages of detailed information with regards to screening, referral, identification

and placement procedures as well information about the service options. In order to

provide an overview of the gifted identification process, division administrators created a

document with a simplified version of the steps to share with parents of nominated

students. This overview can be found in Figure 4.1 and a larger version is in Appendix L.

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An Overview of the Gifted Identification Process

Identification

The state requires that schools consider multiple indicators during the identification process. Information is gathered as follows:

1. **All** nominated students take the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT). Recent (within two years) scores on other tests of ability may also be considered.

2. The classroom teacher(s) completes the Teacher Information form.

3. Parents complete the Parent Information form or a written narrative on each nominated student.

4. The parent may submit a portfolio containing the student's best products that offer evidence of his/her creativity, problem-solving ability, and critical thinking skills. In addition, age-appropriate students may complete the Student Information form.

5. The Gifted Resource Teacher reviews the cumulative records of nominated students for evidence of exceptional performance (grades, achievement test scores, honors, and awards).

Selection

A school-based identification committee meets on each nominated student and determines his/her strengths in five areas: ability **test scores, performance, critical thinking skills, problem solving, and creativity**. The following criteria guide selection:

- If a student scores in the 95th percentile by age on two of three batteries of the CogAT (Verbal, Quantitative, Nonverbal) AND demonstrates strengths in two of the remaining areas for consideration, the student will be selected.

- If a student does not score in the 95th percentile by age on two of three batteries of the CogAT, the student must demonstrate strength in all four of the remaining areas to be selected.

Results & Placement

Recommendation of a student for gifted services does not guarantee that the student will successfully be identified. These guides and forms are tools to help the faculty of our school better understand the talents and abilities that each student already possesses. Students who take part in this process but are not identified by the committee are still an integral part of our school and will continue to be challenged through enrichment and extension activities that are provided to small classroom groups and the entire school.

Parents must give written permission for placement of an identified student.

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Figure 4.1 Overview of the gifted identification process in JCPS. This list was adapted from an internal document obtained from the JCPS gifted administrator.

My analysis yielded three findings with regards to the enactment of the gifted

identification process:

1. A variety of stakeholders can refer students to the gifted identification process;
   however, referrals are most commonly submitted by parents and teachers.

2. Multiple measures in multiple areas are collected and analyzed during the gifted
   identification process.

3. The vision for and implementation of K-2 talent development lessons varies
   across schools.

I explain and discuss these findings with more detail in the following subsections of this

paper.

Finding 1: A Variety of Stakeholders Can Refer Students to the Gifted

Identification Process; However, Referrals are Most Commonly Submitted by

Parents and Teachers.

> *"So, the process begins with a nomination and so a student is nominated by either a parent, a teacher, an administrator, community member, themselves if they want to; but it begins with a nomination" (J. Robinson, personal communication, 2/19/18).*

As noted above by Mr. Robinson, a student must be referred, or nominated, in order to

enter the official gifted identification process. Please note, within this section I will use

the terms refer, nominate, referral, and nomination interchangeably. The discussion of

this finding centers around data collected and analyzed from interviews, the Local Plan,

the division website, teacher newsletters and the JCPS gifted services brochure.

According to Virginia Code, school divisions shall "permit referrals from parents

or legal guardians, teachers, professionals, students, peers, self, or others" (8VAC20-40-

60A.3). JCPS translated this into their local gifted identification policy, referred to in this

document as the Local Plan. The language within the Local Plan with regards to referrals

is as follows:

> Referrals and nominations for gifted identification may be made at any grade
> level and at any point in the year from parents, classroom teachers, gifted resource
> teachers, administrators, or the student. Gifted resource teachers will actively
> solicit referrals through school-wide communication such as quarterly
> newsletters. Referral information will also be posted on school and division
> websites. Transfer students previously identified as gifted in another school
> division may be referred to the nomination pool with parent permission.
> Nomination forms are submitted to the gifted resource teacher who manages the
> process of collecting needed information and materials for the school-based
> review committee. Once a referral is initiated, the student's parents are notified
> and needed materials are collected (p. 6).

This portion of the Local Plan provides Jenkins County staff with information about who

can refer and when, the ways in which information regarding referrals is shared, to whom

the referral needs to be submitted as well as what to expect directly following a referral.

This information is available on the JCPS website; however, it is challenging to find. In

order for parents to access this information they would need to know that gifted services

exist to navigate to that particular page. Assuming a parent knows this information, they

still have to complete the following steps to navigate to the appropriate documents in

order to learn about the identification and referral process:

1. Navigate to the JCPS website homepage.

2. Click on the drop-down menu titled "Departments" and click the Department of
   Student Learning.

3. Scroll to the bottom of that page to the heading "Special Services" and locate the
   Gifted Education link and click.

4. Once on the Gifted Education homepage either need to click on the Local Plan link or the Gifted Services brochure link to learn about how to submit a referral.

Figure 4.2 (below) is a screenshot of the referral language from JCPS Gifted Services Brochure.

What is the process for identification?

1. There are three nomination cycles during the school year, and you can nominate your child at any time during the year.

2. Set up a conference with the GRT and/or classroom teacher to "officially" start the identification process. You may ask to have a translator present if that would be helpful. During the conference, you will be asked about what you have seen in your child that makes you believe he/she qualifies for gifted support.

Figure 4.2 *JCPS Gifted Services Brochure.*

Given the fact that nomination must occur in the JCPS gifted identification process for students to be considered for identification, it is important to know who is nominating them. Until last school year there was no systematic way to collect data on who was referring students to the process. As of the 2016-2017 school year, the JCPS district gifted administrator began attempting to collect data about all parts of the process in a more systematic way. She created an online data collection system using google

sheets to collect data on a child as soon as they enter the identification process via a referral. It was designed to be "a way for gifted resource teachers to track the process" (L. Williams, Interview, February 2, 2018). Despite having access to the google sheet data collection system, I was unable to determine how students were entering the process due to a lack of data entry. Figure 4.3 is a screen capture of the data collection spreadsheet for Appleton. In our interview I asked why the spreadsheet was empty and Mrs. Grant noted that it stressed her out and that she did not find it helpful for her. She realizes that it might be helpful for the county; however, it is overwhelming for her to fill out (Interview, March 26, 2018).

School	Grade	Cycle	Interstate Compact for Military Children	Sp. Ed	Prior Nomination	Nomination Form			Date Sent Parent Mailing	Rec'd Permission to Test	Rec'd Parent Input	Teacher Input		Portfolio	CogAT Score			
						P	T	O				1	2		V	Q	N	C

Figure 4.3 JCPS gifted identification data collection spreadsheet. This particular figure is a screen capture of the JCPS data collection spreadsheet for Appleton Elementary School as of April 18, 2018. Although there are columns to track how students are nominated, they are all empty.

Due to missing or incomplete data on the google sheets as to who was nominating students, I asked each of my interviewees to provide me with, to the best of their ability, information on who refers students to the gifted identification process. Table 4.2 (below) provides quotes from each of the interviewees in this study regarding their knowledge of nominations to the process. The data highlight the fact that although there is some disagreement among classroom teachers, GRTs, and administrators as to who is

nominating students with the highest frequency, they all agree that the overwhelming

number of nominations are coming from either parents or teachers. From the quotes in

the table below, it becomes clear that a variety of stakeholders including GRTs,

classroom teachers, and administrators believe that the parents and teacher are

responsible for the vast majority of student referrals to the gifted identification process.

Table 4.2.
Quotes Indicating Who Refers Students to the Gifted Identification Process

Participant	Quote
L. Williams, Division Gifted Administrator	"Students can be referred by parent, by teacher, self-referral—**but what the majority is, is parent, a parent**. I think if we actually look at how our data is collected on our google sheet, look how it happens, how the students are referred, most of it is likely by this parent. So it's the majority of referrals that go through are from that" (Interview, February 2, 2018, **emphasis added**).
A. Grant, Appleton GRT	"If I were to guesstimate, **I would say it's about 25% parents. The majority of nominations are from teachers**. I've actually had only one student actually nominate themselves in the 5th grade" (Interview, March 26, 2018, **emphasis added**).
L. Taylor, Appleton Principal	"I think parents, I mean in my mind you know …Ana probably can tell me, she would know, but my guess is probably **60%-70% of non-CogAT referrals come from parents asking for their kids to be identified. Could be more**" (Interview, March 15, 2018, **emphasis added**).
J. Stanley, Appleton Teacher	"**It's classroom teachers. Some parents inquire about it,** like at that first parent-teacher conference" (Interview, March 28, 2018, **emphasis added**).
J. Robinson, Wilson GRT	"**So I would say 95% of our nominations or gifted referrals come from parents and the other 5% come from me. Maybe it's 85% that come from them, 10% come from me**" (Interview, February 19, 2018, **emphasis added**).

J. Davis, Wilson Teacher	"**It's usually teachers; we discuss it at** PLC —the kids— and usually Jason is part of the conversation too of who we are watching. Sometimes, the principal Susan will recommend reading specialists, the ESOL teacher…" (Interview, March 5, 2018, **emphasis added**).

In addition to the above quotes, additional trends emerged regarding the demographics of parents and teachers frequently involved in the referral process.

    Parent Referrals. Perhaps due to their strong social networks and access to information, it is unsurprising that it was also widely reported in interviews that White, affluent parents are nominating their children. Table 4.3 provides a list of quotes by several interviewees regarding the race and/or socioeconomic status of those parents who either frequently or infrequently refer students to the gifted identification process. The quotes were in response to an interview question asking about how the nomination/referral process is enacted and who participates in that process. The quotes included in the table (below) indicate that while White, affluent parents are nominating their children for the gifted identification process, perhaps more troubling is how many other demographics are *not* nominating their children given the fact that both Appleton and Wilson are minority-majority schools.

Table 4.3.

Quotes Indicating Race and/or SES of Parents Who Refer Students to the Gifted Identification Process

Participant	Quote
L. Williams, Division Gifted Administrator	"And then of course, you know **there are more White parents nominating kids**" (Interview, February 2, 2018, **emphasis added**).
A. Grant, Appleton GRT	"A lot of times, **our ESOL—well not just ESOL—but, a lot of times our population doesn't know that they can nominate their child** or doesn't even think their child is gifted" (Interview, March 26, 2018, **emphasis added**).
S. Miller, Wilson Principal	"So, anyone can nominate the child. If you said typically how does it work ... I am just going to be on record here right now and be honest. **So, upper-middle-class White families at Wilson elementary school will often come in at kindergarten with the notion that their child is gifted**, "His pre-school teacher said that he is gifted and we should get him into the gifted program." That is a common statement from that demographic. **You do not hear that statement *ever* from somebody who is of color or someone who speaks another language, it just doesn't happen. Referrals of people of color do not happen at Wilson independent of the staff"** (Interview, February 27, 2018, **emphasis added**).
J. Davis, Wilson Teacher	"**White affluent only**. Mr. Robinson sends them a flyer explaining it all [the gifted identification process], only, White affluent are the only people that respond by and large" (Interview, March 5, 2018, **emphasis added**).

In addition to the above quotes, I had a conversation with a classroom teacher from

Appleton at the beginning of a classroom observation that provides more context for this

phenomenon. One day in February I showed up at Appleton to conduct an observation

and walked into the Gifted Resource room, also known as "The Portal" because of

technology in the room that allows for students to go on virtual field trips around the

world. When I arrived Mrs. Grant apologized for giving me the wrong time and invited

me into the class to meet two classroom teachers who had brought their class in for a virtual field trip. Mrs. Grant introduced me and after I explained the context of my study to one of the teachers who was African American, she began to share her opinions with me about the underrepresention of CLD students in gifted education. When Mrs. Lewis began to share her thoughts with me and I asked if I could type them as she shared. She obliged. I captured her thoughts to the best of my ability:

> Those "CLD" parents don't really care about it or even know about it. It is not a priority. Some of them don't even know or think of their own kids in that way. Other people from other neighborhoods see it as a club or a clique to get their kids into. It becomes a neighborhood club in some ways. And other teachers don't see giftedness in certain populations either. If a student has a behavior issue or an attitude problem or they live in a certain neighborhood then there is no way that they could be identified as gifted. Except those things don't have anything to do with being gifted or not. And another problem is that Black students do not want that label. They want to fit in with their peers and because of the issues with underrepresentation they don't have their peers in those classes. They want to be in the same classes and groups with their friends. The peer pressure is really a thing (Observation Field Notes, February 21, 2018).

From this quote it appears that this teacher believes that knowledge about the gifted identification process is connected to the social capital that some parents, most likely the White, affluent parents, have. Their membership in a particular group, such as living in a particular neighborhood, provides them with access to certain benefits, namely knowledge about how the gifted identification process works. By virtue of belonging to a specific group, White, affluent parents are able to leverage their knowledge to benefit themselves and their children with possible membership to the "gifted club". Conversely, those without access to that particular group, oftentimes CLD families, have restricted access to information about the gifted identification process, and therefore refer their children much less frequently if ever (Michael-Chadwell, 2010; Portes, 1998).

Teacher referrals. Additionally, specific teachers seem to be more involved in

the nomination process, namely second grade teachers. According to the Local Plan

JCPS universally screens all second grade students using the CogAT:

> [i]n second grade, the screener version of the Cognitive Abilities Test is
> administered to all students. Results of the screener assessment, as well as in-
> class assessments such as reading inventories, are used to create a pool of students
> for further observation and consideration (p. 6).

Due to the administration of the CogAT screener to all second-grade students and the

return of subsequent student score reports to the GRT and second grade teachers in the

spring semester, those teachers are often involved in the nomination process. A portion

of Mr. Robinson's newsletter is shared in Figure 4.4 (below). Notice how even though he

shares that nominations can occur anytime in a child's K-12 career, he has an entire

paragraph devoted to the fact that there will be *nominations* occurring in second grade.

The language in Mr. Robinson's newsletter supports the assumption that second grade

teachers will be making nominations once CogAT results come back in the spring as

opposed to just adding students to a "pool of students for further observation and
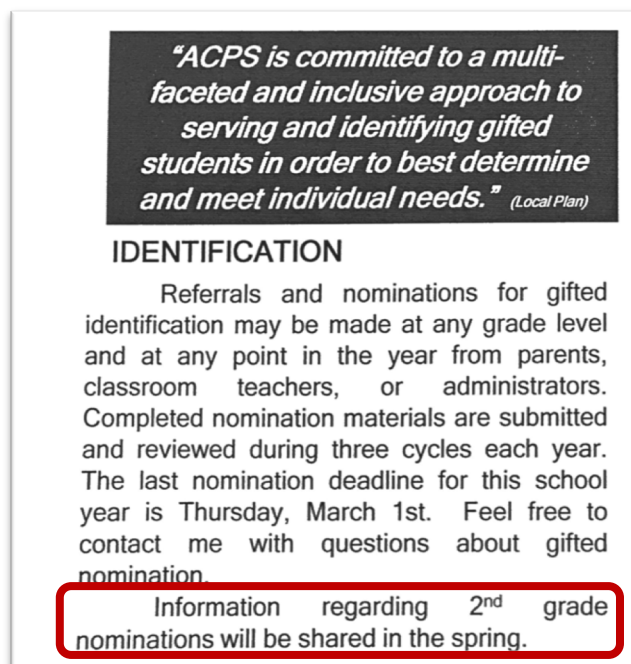
consideration" (Local Plan, p. 6).

Figure 4.4 A portion of Mr. Robinson's quarterly newsletter from Winter 2018. Please note, the red rounded rectangle was added by the researcher for emphasis.

In fact, the following excerpt from my interview with Mrs. Williams provides insight as to why second grade teachers are oftentimes involved in the nomination process.

> The CogAT scores come in and the teachers will go through them and sometimes nominations will come out of that. I can think of one school where they all sat down and they sort sorted them by percentile rank and then anybody that was above this mark automatically got nominated. That was a place where the GRT been there for a very, very, very, very long time. When a new GRT came in, we talked about how that should be different.

This example illustrates one of the reasons that second grade teachers are frequently involved in the nomination process. Despite the fact that the Local Plan calls for the use the CogAT scores to help create a pool of students for "further observation and consideration", second grade teachers are sometimes using the scores from the CogAT as a referral mechanism. Information regarding the use of CogAT data will be discussed further in Finding 8.

Policy alignment. In this section I discuss the extent to which the enactment of the referral process aligns with what is stated in the Local Plan. With regards to who is

able to nominate, the enactment of the referral process does align with the local plan. As a reminder, with regards to who is eligible to refer and when referrals can occur, the policy states:

> Referrals and nominations for gifted identification may be made at any grade level and at any point in the year from parents, classroom teachers, gifted resource teachers, administrators, or the student.

While parents and teachers represent the overwhelming majority of those who refer students to the gifted identification process, JCPS is not actively attempting to negate the referrals of others. So, while a variety of stakeholders *can* nominate students, knowledge of the process and social capital (or lack thereof) either allows or prevents people from making these referrals. So, while JCPS is technically following the policy, more education and outreach might be a consideration so that all stakeholders are knowledgeable about the referral policy.

Conversely, the enactment of the policy with regards to the timing of nominations is not in exact alignment with the stated policy. Nowhere in the policy is it written that nominations will occur in second grade; however, data that suggest (e.g., newsletters, interview quotes) nominations are happening in conjunction with the return of the CogAT scores in second grade. The privileging of the CogAT in the identification process is discussed further in Finding 8.

In the next section I discuss the ways in which multiple measures are collected and used during the gifted identification process.

Finding 2: Multiple Measures are Collected and Analyzed During the Gifted Identification Process. In this section I discuss the types of measures that are both able to be included and the measures which are required according to the Local Plan and state

code. Additionally, I provide evidence of the types of measures which are collected as part of the identification process through GRT and classroom interview data, photographs, and documents (e.g., parent input forms, teacher input forms, student portfolio guidelines).

Overview of Multiple Measures. Due to lack of consensus about a definition of gifted education in the United States, the criteria used for identification vary across states and localities. The Virginia Code states:

> The inclusion of a test score in a division identification plan does not indicate that an individual student must score at a prescribed level on the test(s) to be admitted to a program. No single criterion shall be used in determining students who qualify for, or are denied access to, programs for the gifted" (8 VAC 20-40-50).

In addition to the fact that one criterion cannot be used to deny access to programs, the state code also provides the following guidance to school divisions about what other types of measures are acceptable:

> The identification process used by each school division must ensure that no single criterion is used to determine a student's eligibility. The identification process shall include at least three measures from the following categories:
> a. Assessment of appropriate student products, performance, or portfolio;
> b. Record of observation of in-classroom behavior;
> c. Appropriate rating scales, checklists, or questionnaires;
> d. Individual interview;
> e. Individually administered or group-administered, nationally norm-referenced aptitude or achievement tests;
> f. Record of previous accomplishments (such as awards, honors, grades, etc.); or
> g. Additional valid and reliable measures or procedures (8VAC20-40-40).

By requiring three measures from this long list of options the state is providing guidance for localities while also providing them with some level of autonomy to choose measures that will work best with their chosen gifted identification designation. Due to the fact that JCPS has chosen to identify and serve students based on the general

intellectual aptitude designation, they are also required to include "an individually

administered or group-administered, nationally norm-referenced aptitude test" as one of

their three measures according to state code (8VAC20-40-40). JCPS is following state

regulations and within the Local Plan there is a list of possible materials for the

identification committee to consider. Figure 4.5 (below) is a chart from the Local Plan

that details all of the criteria that the identification committee can consider during the

identification process. The asterisks denote the required components that JCPS requires

collection of before the identification committee can convene.

The following materials are collected for review by the identification committee:
- Referral Form*
- Parent Permission for Nomination
- Parent Input (a parent may opt to meet with the Gifted Resource Teacher if completing the Parent Input form is a burden)
- Teacher Input*
- Student Portfolio
- Student Achievement Data*
- Permission to Test (if no current data from nationally norm-referenced aptitude test is on file)
- Results from Nationally Norm-Referenced Aptitude Test (administered within the last three years by a non-related certified professional)*

Required components

Figure 4.5. List of materials collected for review by the identification committee. This
list was taken directly from page 8 of the Local Plan.

One troublesome aspect of the data collection process is the fact that the number

of areas in which students need to demonstrate evidence is dependent upon the student's

performance on the CogAT as was shown the *Overview of the Identification Process* in

Figure 4.1 earlier in the chapter (highlight added for emphasis):

> A school-based identification committee meets on each nominated student and determines his/her strengths in five areas: ability **test scores, performance, critical thinking skills, problem solving, and creativity**. The following criteria guide selection:
>
> - If a student scores in the 95th percentile by age on two of three batteries of the CogAT (Verbal, Quantitative, Nonverbal) AND demonstrates strengths in two of the remaining areas for consideration, the student will be selected.
>
> - If a student does not score in the 95th percentile by age on two of three batteries of the CogAT, the student must demonstrate strength in all four of the remaining areas to be selected.

Because it has been documented that CLD students score differentially lower on the CogAT than their White or Asian counterparts, JCPS is inadvertently requiring CLD students to produce evidence of strength in more areas than groups who typically perform well on these assessments (Erwin & Worrell, 2012; Geissman et al., 2013; Peters & Engerrand, 2016). The ways in which the use of the CogAT results in barriers to the gifted identification of CLD students is discussed further in Finding 8.

Collection and synthesis of multiple measures. In order to learn about the data collection process, during interviews I asked the JCPS gifted administrator as well as the GRTs to explain the data collection process that occurs once a child has been nominated. The following quotes illustrate Mrs. Williams', Mr. Robinson's, and Mrs. Grant's understanding of the process.

> **Mrs. Williams (JCPS Gifted Administrator):** There is like a cycle, a time period, where the nomination is open where GRTs are collecting artifacts, collecting parent input, collecting teacher input, and putting this little kind of portfolio together. Closer to the end of the cycle the GRT gets a group together the GRT, usually the principal if we are talking at the elementary school level, and two classroom teachers. And they look at all of the pieces including test scores, adult input, and student work and make a decision if the student needs services. Then the letter goes home, one way or the other (Interview, February 2, 2018).
>
> **Mr. Robinson (Wilson GRT)**: After the nomination and testing you move into the evidence collection piece of it, so you can get parent input as well as evidence to support. Hard copy or picture or video… any type of evidence to support what the parents present that speaks on the potential or the abilities that student. And in

the same vein, teachers and I also reach out to specialists like the art and music teacher based on the child's interests and get input on the narrative form. We also ask them to present evidence that speaks to the child's potential or their ability. So, you get test scores as one piece of profile, then you get evidence from teachers and from the family, and then I also-- I typically do the back work of pulling up their academic process. So, if it's a fourth or fifth grader for example I might pull their MAP scores, pull their SOL data, but I'm also working closely with classroom teachers (Interview, February 19, 2018).

Mrs. Grant (Appleton GRT) So, basically, you're nominated and then it's like right now, I'm trying to pull teeth to get information from teachers to fill it out [teacher input form] because it's like I'm a bill collector. So, I'm looking for-- probably the biggest struggle through at least for me is getting detailed information from teachers. A lot of times what will happen not getting anything in here [she points to the space where teachers are asked to share written input an actual blank teacher nomination form to support a claim]; obviously they circle, they circle, they circle, they circle. So, that's a little frustrating so I have to go back and say, "Ok, I see that you said 'nearly always' but can you give me some examples and ideas maybe some school work or you know can I have something to build up on what you're saying here? (Interview, March 26, 2018).

These quotes illustrate the fact that GRTs are working to collect data from multiple

sources including parent input, teacher input, classwork, performance on assessments

including the CogAT, and other artifacts. The classroom teachers also spoke about how

they are an instrumental part of the data collection process during interviews. A couple

of excerpts from those interviews allow for a better understanding of what teachers are

collecting as evidence to support the identification of their students. In the following

exchange Mrs. Stanley, a third grade teacher from Appleton briefly discusses what she

looks for in terms of data.

Researcher: Were you collecting things here in your classroom or do parents send in things? What does the data look like?

Mrs. Stanley: It is both. It is things that I had collected. They [students] do a lot of technology things, so they have online portfolio so that's really easy to reference and they keep it year after year. So, we drop everything in a second grade folder and at the end of third grade I'll make a the third grade folder. It's just something I've done with the kids the last couple of years. And then one of my student's parents sent me pictures of a poster project that they wanted to do on

a Friday night. Instead of going out their friends, they wanted to do a project like we did at school together (Interview, March 28, 2018).

Though I was unable to see the online portfolios she referred to, this quote suggests that Mrs. Stanley collects a range of classroom assignments and is in communication with parents about data collection as well. Similarly, Mrs. Davis from Wilson also sees her role within the gifted identification process as a data collector.

Researcher: So, in thinking about the Gifted Identification Process, how would you describe your role in that?

Mrs. Davis: So, my role is really just to be—I see myself as kind of the data collector, where if I see as a student doing something exceptional that I'm taking a photo of it or making a copy of it and putting it…we have these orange folders. Sometimes, like a couple weeks ago, I designed this math extension that I knew would be something to put in these folders because it was doing higher order thinking skills and multi-step problems. And so, being intentional about when I'm creating tasks to create some every once in a while that would be very strong evidence for the gifted parameters.

Researcher: Talk to me about what would make something strong evidence.

Mrs. Davis: So, we have lots of different parameters that Mr. Robinson [the GRT] points out, the creativity and critical thinking, multi-step problems, that emphasize learning. And so basically, if you can see that the kid demonstrates one of those categories, I usually keep a lot of like the open-ended tasks, and often it seems like it's the more creative things that I'll save into their folders (Interview, March 5, 2018).

In addition to collecting information from school from teacher input forms (see Appendix M for an example), classroom assignments and assessments and test scores (e.g., the CogAT), GRTs also collect evidence from parents.

All parents are provided with an opportunity to share information about their child, though the data from the parent input form (see Appendix N for a copy) and via a student portfolio (often put together by parents). A copy of the parent input form is

available in Appendix N. The directions provided to parents on their input form are as

follows:

> Information you provide on this form will be used by the identification
> committee. Please provide specific examples for all statements that you feel
> describe your child. You are not expected to be able to document student
> achievement or ability in all areas. The evidence you provide is important, but the
> identification committee will evaluate the student using many sources of
> information (JCPS Parent Input Form, p. 1)

On the form parents are asked to report about their child's performance, creativity,

critical thinking, and problem solving. Under each of these categories there are several

statements and they must decide whether the child exhibits that behavior rarely,

sometimes, frequently, or nearly always. Under each statement there is space to share

specific evidence to support their claim. Additionally, once a child is nominated the GRT

sends home a copy of the Elementary Student Portfolio Guide (in Appendix O) to

families. The following directions are at the top of the guide:

> Parents of elementary students nominated for gifted services may provide a
> portfolio for the identification committee. These items are selected by the
> parent/student from accomplishments within the last three years and should reflect
> what the parent/student considers his/her best efforts.

In Figure 4.6 (below) I provide an example of a piece of student work submitted by a

parent for inclusion in her child's portfolio. According to the Wilson GRT, a parent

submitted a portfolio of documents ranging from kindergarten through fourth grade to be

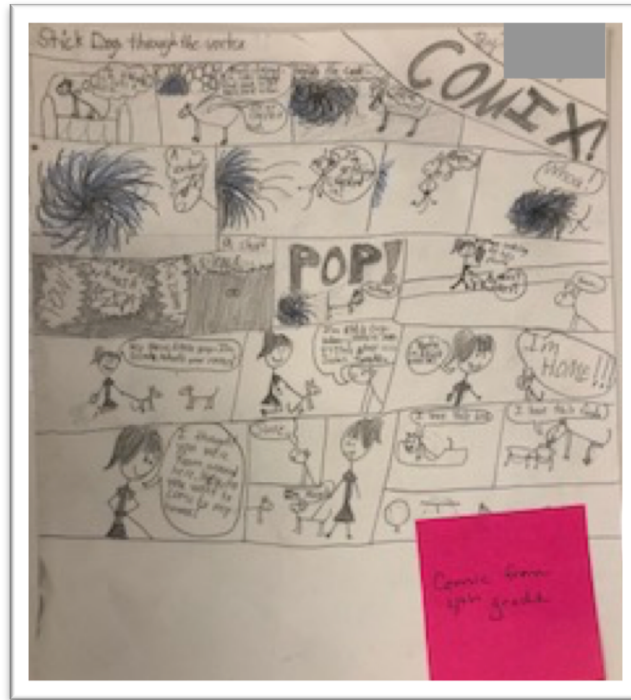considered for inclusion in the student profile created.

Figure 4.6. Student work from a parent-submitted portfolio. This comic was submitted as evidence of the child's creativity.

Once all of the requisite data is collected, the GRTs then synthesize the data into a student profile sheet (a blank profile template is in Appendix P). GRTs must provide an explanation of three pieces of evidence in two to four areas (e.g., performance, critical thinking skills, problem solving, creativity) on the profile sheet. Though I could not obtain copies of actual student profile sheets due to the identifying student information on them, the Appleton GRT shared text from the creativity portion of a student profile of a recently identified student:

> One example of a project that stood out in class was his Biography project. He chose Elvis and created a slide that incorporated animations chronicling his whole life. He was extremely creative in cropping and creating Photoshop images that portrayed an elaborate timeline. His mother shares that he spends most of his free time drawing comics, making elaborate crafts, and origami.
>
> He is a very good writer with a vivid imagination. He naturally leans toward projects that allow him to showcase his work using technology. He recently began

113

making his own films at home. His vivid imagination is evident in his writing prompts and journal work.

Notice how the evidence spans from in-class assignments to projects completed at home and also spans a variety of subjects from writing to using technology to showcase his learning.

Policy alignment. The Virginia code and the Local Plan both explicitly state that multiple measures should be used to identify a child as gifted and that "no single criterion shall be used in determining students who qualify for, or are denied access to, programs for the gifted". The enactment of the Local Plan aligns with the language of the policy. From interview data, evidence from student profile sheets, and photographs it appears that the GRTs at each school collect several pieces of data including CogAT scores, teacher and parent input, student work samples, other assessment data, and observational data to aid in the identification process.

Finding 3: The Vision for and Implementation of K-2 Talent Development Lessons Varies Across Schools

JCPS began the implementation of K-2 talent development lessons during the spring of the 2015-2016 school year. As described within the Local Plan, the introduction and implementation of talent development lessons are among a longer list of strategies to help JCPS meet the following goals:

- Provide a continuum of services K-12 to meet the academic and socio-emotional needs of gifted learners when their needs are not met by the general curriculum (p. 4).
- Use a variety of screening and assessment tools to create a diverse pool of candidates for gifted services (p. 5)

Additionally, talent development lessons are also intended to be one way that GRTs,

classroom teachers, and school administrators can create a pool of students for further

consideration for gifted identification. The language in the policy specifically states:

> In kindergarten as well as first and second grade, gifted resource teachers co-facilitate talent development lessons with classroom teachers each semester. These learning experiences provide an opportunity for teachers to observe all students in activities designed to elicit creative and critical thinking skills. (Local Plan, p. 6)

The exact language from the three parts of the Local Plan can be found in Appendix Q.

In addition to language from the Local Plan, the JCPS Gifted Administrator shared

her vision of the introduction and implementation of talent development lessons in JCPS.

A quote describing her vision is below:

> So, we have a very new talent development, I would like to—I don't want to say it's a program or plan—it's a protocol right now. It is understood by the GRTs that they are pushing in to co-teach particular lessons in K, 1 and 2 to look for specific behaviors around critical thinking, creative thinking, and problem solving to add students to a watch list, or start their little artifact portfolio so if nomination comes down the pike, *"I've started looking at, José already and here are the things that I have for him…"* So, the talent development is to get the watch list going, but talent development is also to get the teachers on the same page of what we're looking for and what we're meaning when we say "Gifted in Jenkins County". And, the lessons are specific Primary Education Thinking Skills lessons. It's a program. They are specifically designed to get the output that you're looking for so if the lesson and the child meet in the perfect spot you're going to get something from that child rather than any lesson that a teacher teaches.

> They might not be the greatest lessons, but it's better than taking our chance with hoping that there is critical thinking and creative thinking in the lessons that the teachers create. And, I don't think we can take that chance. I think we have to get a bit more standardized in those lessons that --that come through. We modified the checklist from the PETS program and in an ideal situation the GRT and the classroom sit down and plan together, know what they're doing, both have a clipboard with a checklist on it, both have the students' names listed there…and as their implementing the lesson both of them are looking for particular behaviors (Interview, L. Williams, February 2, 2018).

Of note, Mrs. Williams mentioned a talent development program in her interview: Primary Education Thinking Skills, or the PETS Program (Nichols, Wolfe, Thompson & Merritt, 2012). The PETS program consists of curricular materials that have been purchased for each elementary GRT in JCPS. The PETS materials consist of three books within which are lesson plans, observation checklists for teacher and or GRT use, and reproducible masters. There is one book per grade: *Kindergarten P.E.T.S., Primary Education Thinking Skills 2, and Primary Education Thinking Skills 3*. The various lessons and activities within each book encourage and elicit various types of thinking such as convergent, divergent, visual/special, creative/inventive, and evaluative. The teachers also have access to the content online.

Additionally, in the above quote Mrs. Williams explains the purpose behind and need for talent development lessons in kindergarten, first, and second grades. She also communicates her vision for how the lessons should be implemented, the curricular materials and checklists that GRTs and classroom teachers should use, and also describes the ways that those lessons are tied to the identification process. Additionally, she mentions that a protocol exists that further elaborates upon the implementation of the talent development lessons.

The protocol, a full version of which can be found in Appendix R, outlines the exact process a GRT would use to begin implementation of talent development lessons in all K-2 classrooms. To summarize, the protocol directs GRTs to do the following:

- Educate those within their buildings about the purpose behind the lessons.
- Schedule at least 2 lessons per year for all kindergarten, first, and second grade classrooms.

- Preplan, co-teach, co-observe, and debrief talent development lessons with every kindergarten, first, and second grade teacher twice during the school year.

- Collect student data for portfolios.

- Add students to the pool of possible gifted students as appropriate.

Because my interview with the JCPS Gifted Administrator occurred during my first week of observations, I assumed that I would observe systematic implementation of K-2 talent development lessons at both Wilson and Appleton Elementary schools. Despite the vision articulated by Mrs. Williams and found within the *Implementing the K-2 Critical and Creative Thinking Lessons Protocol*, it quickly became clear that the vision for and implementation of talent development lessons in K-2 classrooms varied across schools. Out of the nine lessons I observed at Appleton, four of them were talent development lessons according to Mrs. Grant. Of those four talent development lessons, she never utilized the PETS curriculum. Conversely, of the ten lessons I observed at Wilson, seven of them were talent development lessons. Mr. Robinson solely used the PETS curriculum (Nichols et al., 2012) to teach those lessons. The next subsections will describe the understanding and implementation of talent development lessons at Wilson Elementary and Appleton Elementary.

Understanding and implementation of K-2 talent development lessons at Wilson Elementary. In this section I share what the GRT, classroom teachers, and the administrator understand K-2 talent development to be at Wilson Elementary. I also provide a detailed description of how talent development lessons are scheduled and enacted. While it is clear that Mr. Robinson, the GRT, has a clear vision for what talent

117

development entails and a deep understanding of how talent development lessons fit within the greater educational context, other educators at Wilson have varied levels of understanding.

   The Wilson GRT's vision for and understanding of K-2 talent development. Mr. Robinson, who is in his second year in the role of the gifted resource teacher, has a clear understanding of his role at Wilson Elementary and feels talent development and enrichment are key parts of his job. When asked about his role he shared the following,

> With the division, my title is a Gifted Resource Teacher. Here at Wilson, I'm branded as Gifted and Enrichment Resource Teacher because we try to follow somewhat of a Schoolwide Enrichment Model, so we want Wilson to be seen as supporting gifted learners as well as **enriching the learning for all students here in the building** (Interview, J. Robinson, February 19, 2018, **emphasis added**).

One of the ways that Mr. Robinson successfully enriches the learning for all students is through his vision and implementation of talent development lessons. When asked to define the term talent development, Mr. Robinson said,

> So, my definition for talent development here at Wilson is about giving students opportunities to demonstrate their abilities… and I'm not going to say unusual ways, but they are non-traditional ways. So, the things that I look for heavily are thinking skills, like how do they present themselves as thinkers? So, critical thinkers, problems solvers, you know the creativity, the innovation. How do they deal with those types of things? And so, I try to give them opportunities that don't look like "*Here's a paper that's asking you to solve these addition problems.*" But how can I present things in a way that looks …not unfamiliar, but different than the norm, or what they see day-to-day to see if we get something different? That's my goal with talent development (Interview, J. Robinson, February 19, 2018).

Mr. Robinson also shares his vision for talent development with Wilson families. He provided a very brief overview of talent development in both of his newsletters home to all families as shown in Figure 4.7 and Figure 4.8 below.

> As the Gifted and Enrichment Resource Teacher, my role is multi-faceted and inclusive to all 328 students in our building! In primary grades, I work to develop the talents of students through hands-on classroom activities rooted in higher order thinking. In upper graders, I work with teachers to foster the gifts and talents of our students through differentiated learning experiences within and outside the students' homeroom.

Figure 4.7 Mr. Robinson's Fall 2017 Newsletter. Part of this paragraph briefly describes his enactment of talent development in primary grades.

TALENT DEVELOPMENT

> I work with classroom teachers in kindergarten, first and second grade to plan weekly and tri-weekly talent development lessons. These learning experiences provide an opportunity for teachers to observe all students in activities designed to elicit creative and critical thinking skills.

Figure 4.8 A portion of Mr. Robinson's Winter 2018 Newsletter. This paragraph briefly describes the schedule and purpose of talent development in the primary grades.

From the interview quotes and newsletter blurbs it is seems that Mr. Robinson able to articulate his definition of talent development in kindergarten, first, and second grade students. Additionally, Mr. Robinson also describes the way in which data from

those learning experiences can be leveraged during the gifted identification process, especially for students from diverse backgrounds. In this next quote, Mr. Robinson shares his working hypothesis for how the artifacts that he collects from students after each talent development lesson might possibly integrate into the gifted identification process at Wilson.

> I'm in a hypothesis state right now and I haven't been able to see it through, but my hypothesis is that talent development could be one of the things that helps us begin to identify students from more diverse backgrounds because I think relying solely on CogAT testing and in class performance got us in the situation that we're in presently. And so, I think when we give students—all students — opportunities that don't look like their day-to-day we may see something different. And so, my goal is that— and this is really crazy—my goal is that in three years, if I have evidence from talent development that speaks to a child's potential or their ability, that by the time I get to second or third grade, if for some reason I'm unable to get quality evidence from family and home or quality evidence from in class, I will have evidence that can speak in support of that child's portfolio. That's my big ole hypothesis (Interview, J. Robinson, February 19, 2018).

Despite his unique ability to describe his vision for talent development for primary-aged students, others in the school have varied understandings of it themselves.

Other Wilson educators' vision for/understanding of K-2 talent development.

Though Mr. Robinson is able to describe and define talent development, others at Wilson Elementary have varied understandings of what that means. For example, the principal, Mrs. Miller, likened talent development to the after-school clubs that are offered to second through fifth graders at Wilson. And while after-school clubs do offer students an enrichment opportunity by providing students with a chance to explore a topic that they are excited about or interested in—and are certainly one form of talent development— it seemed as though she was unversed in the implementation K-2 talent development

lessons specifically conceptualized and described in the Local Plan and the *Implementing the K-2 Critical and Creative Thinking Lessons Protocol*.

During my interview with Mrs. Davis, a second grade teacher, she was unable to define talent development other than noting that that talent development happens when Mr. Robinson comes "in with that book", referring to the PETS curriculum. Mrs. Davis was able to articulate what the lessons were targeting and how the lessons fit into the identification process,

> I think that they [artifacts from PETS lessons] are really great evidence definitely. Every lesson has some type of artifact that kids were producing too and that they're very clear— like you got it or you didn't. And if you got it like that, that took a lot of thinking and skill. And so, I thought they were good. We went we took photos and videotaped a couple of having kids like explain their thinking (Interview, J. Davis, March 5, 2018)

Enactment of K-2 talent development lessons. One of the ways that Mr. Robinson carries out his vision and supports all kindergarten, first, and second grade students is through a very systematic implementation of talent development lessons. He has created a system where he is able to see all kindergarten, first, and second grade classes several times a semester. Additionally, he uses the JCPS-suggested curriculum, Primary Education Thinking Skills (PETS), for the K-2 talent development lessons and collects data in the form of an artifact from *all* students after each lesson (Nichols et al, 2012). His previous quotes as well as the image of his schedule (Figure 4.6 below) are illustrative of how Mr. Robinson sees talent development as an integral part of his job, a necessary component of the gifted identification process, and a chance to enrich all students, especially at Wilson.

Schedule of implementation. He works with the teachers to create a schedule where he can implement the PETS lessons on a somewhat regular schedule. In

kindergarten he sees each class on a tri-weekly basis for 75 minutes. He sees the first

grade students in a combination of whole-class push in and small group pull out for 45

minutes per week, and also sees every second grade classroom 30 minutes per week. A

copy of his schedule is in Figure 4.9 (below) with the talent development lessons

highlighted in orange. Please note, during my time at Wilson ES, Mr. Robinson was

taking a break from talent development lessons in 2nd grade and was instead using that

time to teach 2nd graders how to log in to their division google accounts per his role as the

technology coordinator for the building.

Figure 4.9 Mr. Robinson's schedule. The K-2 talent development lessons are highlighted in orange.

Description of the enactment of K-2 talent development lessons at Wilson. The following vignettes provide a window into the enactment of talent development lessons at Wilson.

> *Mr. Robinson is standing behind his desk when I arrive. He stands and turns around to get a plastic bin labeled "Tuesday" from the bookshelf. Inside of the bin are all of the materials he needs to implement a lesson from the PETS curriculum including the PETS lesson plan book,* Curious George's ABCs *by H. A. Rey, and a composition book full of exemplars of the product students will be asked to make. He places all of the materials into a thick, large plastic folder and walks towards the doorway. As he gathers his materials he explains to me that he pushes into all of the kindergarten classes on a tri-weekly basis. He explains how he introduces an activity on Tuesday to the whole group, and then returns for their literacy block on Friday and leads a small group during their literacy rotations. In this way he is able to see all of the children in one class both in whole group and small group during the week.*
>
> *He walks down the hallway and enters the kindergarten classroom. The students are spread around the room working on various literacy activities either independently or with the teacher or teaching assistant in small groups. Upon Mr. Robinson's arrival the teacher looks up and acknowledges his arrival, rings a chime, and tells all of the students to head to the rug. As the students clean up Mr. Robinson sits on a chair at the front of the carpet, next to a dry-erase easel. He waits for the students to settle on the rug before starting the lesson.*

> **Mr. Robinson**: *It's been a long time since I've seen you. today I have a different story. Today we will read* Curious George's ABCs. *Show me a thumb if you know curious George. Last time the book I read to you had dots they turned into different kinds of pictures. Something similar is going to happen in this story today.*
> **Student**: *I have Curious George books at home!*
> **Mr. Robinson**: *Nice! Let's get started.*

> *The students are all seated quietly and are looking at the book as he begins to read. The classroom teacher and TA are both in the room, however they both walk around gathering laptops that were being used during literacy time. Upon cleaning up the laptops, they retreat to the back corner of the room and have a long conversation.*

> *Meanwhile, Mr. Robinson continues to read about the various letters of the alphabet that turn into different images. For example, he reads "D is a dinosaur" (shown in figure 4.10) and shows the page the students. As he does so, the teacher leaves the room.*

During the read-aloud, Mr. Robinson stops a few times to see if children know what the image is that goes along with a letter.

Mr. Robinson: Hmmm…J. What could it be? Let's think.
Student: Giraffe?
Mr. Robinson: Giraffe is a soft G sound, this a a /j/ /j/ jaguar.

He continues reading, "K is a kangaroo named Katie. L is a lion with four, long legs". When he finishes reading the book he tells the students, "When I come back on Friday you will be able to make your own letter pictures you will be able to say 'Mr. Robinson, I want the letter A.'". The students all begin excitedly talking to one another about the various letters they are going to request.
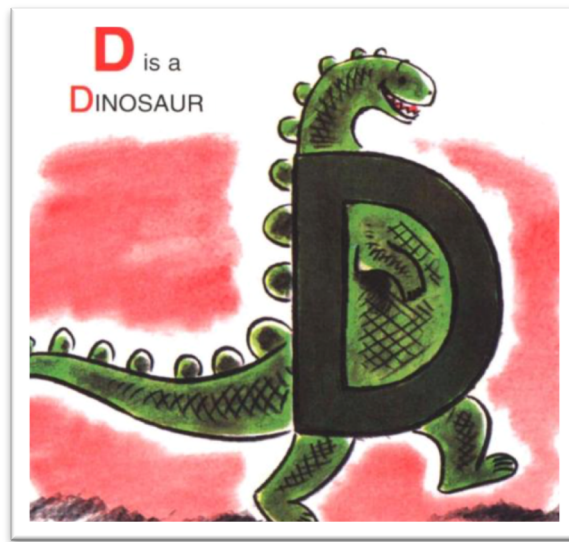
Figure 4.10 A page from *Curious George's ABCs.* The 'D' has been turned into a dinosaur.

Mr. Robinson gets the students' attention again and then models what they will be doing on Friday. As he begins, the teacher returns and goes to sit at her kidney table in the back corner of the room, away from the class.

Mr. Robinson: Let's think of the letter O. What are some things we could turn the letter O into?
Student A: A snowman. We need three O's for that.
Mr. Robinson: What else could we do?
Student B: We need a carrot nose.
Student C: Take a U and turn it into a smile!

As students call out various ideas, Mr. Robinson draws what they say on the dry-erase easel to his right. After a couple of minutes, he pulls the composition book from under the chair and shows the class some examples of student work from the

previous year. He shows how one student made the letter C into a caterpillar and another made the letter S into a snake. He closes the lesson by telling the students that he will return on Friday and they will get to pick their own letters to transform.

He quickly walks back to his room and gets out a large sticky note and begins to write down anecdotal records from the lesson. He notes that one African American girl was the only one in the class who knew what a yak was, and also writes that a boy who normally participates was not on-task during the lesson. He also writes down the names of students who were able to fluently come up with ways to use letters to create something new. He places the sticky note in a file folder with the teacher's name on it.

The vignette above exemplifies a typical whole group talent development lesson at Wilson. The teacher and the teaching assistant seemingly "hand off the baton", or the class, to Mr. Robinson and work on other things. It seemed as though classroom teachers used the push-in talent development lesson as an opportunity to leave the room, converse with other adults in the building or to check email. Of the seven talent development lessons I observed at Wilson, I only witnessed one talent development lesson where the teacher and TA both stayed in the room the majority of the time *and* engaged with students about the lesson. Also, in typical fashion, Mr. Robinson taught a lesson from the PETS curriculum.

Of note, Mr. Robinson often chooses to teach the introductory part of the lesson to the whole class and reserves the production part of the lesson for a small group setting later in the week. The following vignette showcases the small group portion of the lesson described above.

Mr. Robinson walks into the kindergarten classroom for the second time this week. He pulls out the "Friday" tub and gets out the yellow folder. Inside of the folder he has the PETS curriculum, the Curious George ABC book from the whole group lesson, white paper, and photocopies of black, bolded uppercase letters all paper clipped together.
Before we walk to the kindergarten room Mr. Robinson muses, "They always want 'A' because they have seen the A alligator thing so much.

Sometimes I don't bring A's or I only bring a couple. When they run out students need to get another letter. I wonder, am I messing up their ability to produce or am I forcing them to be more creative?"

When Mr. Robinson enters the kindergarten classroom the classroom teacher asks him if he can work on the rug with students because the reading specialist needs the other table in the room for her small group. He agrees, sits on the floor, and quickly scans over the PETS lesson while he waits for the students to return from music class.

When the students return the teacher lets them students know that there will be four groups today and that each one will be led by an adult. She calls out the names of various groups (e.g., the red group, the blue group, the green group) and tells them where to go. The classroom teacher is running a guided reading group, the TA is working on a birthday book with the students who rotate to her table, and the reading specialist teacher is working at the rectangle table. Mr. Robinson is on the rug. Mr. Robinson begins the lesson once his small group of six students get seated at the carpet around him.

Mr. Robinson*: On Tuesday we read this story,* Curious George's ABCs. *Who can remind me what Curious George did with his ABCs?*
Student A: *He turned them into animals.*
Mr. Robinson: *Did he turn them all into animals?*

The students look at the book while Mr. Robinson flips through the pages.

Student B: *He turned an H into a house.*
Mr. Robinson: *Is a house an animal?*
Students*: No!*
Mr. Robinson: *Remember when I said I was going to come back I was bringing letters and you could turn them into something else? I want you to think of a letter you can turn into a picture by adding on to it. Or think about a picture you want to make and what letter you need to make it."*

Students start calling out letters that they want. Mr. Robinson hands each student the letter or letters that he or she requests. He then asks them what they are planning do with the letter. These exchanges continued until all students had the various letters that they wanted. The students all take either one or two black letters. The students have clipboards, white paper, and all take turns using glue sticks to glue their letters down on their papers. Once they glue their letters, the students begin to transform the letters into something else.

Mr. Robinson sits with the students on the carpet and observes them as they work. At times he asks clarifying questions or encourages students to think of ways to add to their pictures. A couple of minutes into the rotation Mr. Robinson looks at a student to his left. She has placed an 'I' under an 'O' and is making a tree. He remarks, "I see that tree comin'" Likewise, one female student has glued two 'Ds' to her paper. He looks at the girl and says, "You've gotta start adding on to those D's to make them into a picture."

A few seconds later one student tells Mr. Robinson, "I made a house."
(She created a house by gluing two A's next to each other with an 'I' laid across the top as a roof). To push her thinking Mr. Robinson asks her questions.

Mr. Robinson: *Where is the house at? How can you add on that picture so that anyone who looks at it would know it's a house?*
Student: *A mailbox?*
Mr. Robinson: *That's a great idea.*

He also takes notes about what the students are doing as they work. He writes a "?" at the top of the paper and records the two little girls' names who have started to draw pictures without incorporating letters. One child has an 'R' and is draws a rabbit and the other student glues two D's on her paper is not incorporating them into the picture she is drawing of a dog elsewhere on her paper.
All students rotate through the station. At the end of the lesson Mr. Robinson places several pieces of student work on a table and snaps a photo (below in Figure 4.11). *After he takes the photo, Mr. Robinson collects all of the pictures that students produce and places them into his yellow folder. When he returns to his room, Mr. Robinson places all of the student work into plastic filing bins labeled by teacher. He also sits down and reflects on the lesson, writes down anecdotal notes and places those into the filing bin with the student work.*

Figure 4.11 Examples of student work: PETS curriculum. These photos provide examples of student work from the PETS kindergarten talent development lesson enacted by Mr. Robinson.The smiley faces were placed there by Mr. Robinson to block student names.

There are several key takeaways from these two vignettes. First, Mr. Robinson collaborates with teachers to create a scheduling structure that allows him to systematically teach talent development lessons to *all* kindergarten, first, and second grade students. He also collects all student work at the end of each lesson and files the work into a plastic filing bin along with anecdotal records he has written either during or directly following the lesson. Additionally, although Mr. Robinson is providing small groups of students with learning opportunities to build their creative and critical thinking skills, the classroom teachers are not aware of what he is teaching because they are working with their own small group groups during that time. The next section will

highlight how K-2 talent development is conceptualized and enacted at Appleton Elementary.

Understanding and implementation of K-2 talent development lessons at Appleton Elementary. Similar to the section above, in this section I share what the GRT, classroom teacher, and the administrator understand K-2 talent development to be at Appleton Elementary. I also provide a detailed description of how talent development lessons are scheduled and enacted. While Mr. Robinson clearly articulates a definition of talent development and how he enacts it at Wilson, a similar understanding and process is not evident at Appleton. The GRT at Appleton, Mrs. Grant, fully believes in developing the talents of all students, however, the implementation is far less systematic.

The Appleton GRT's vision for and understanding of K-2 talent development. Mrs. Grant calls the work that she does with kindergarten, first, and second grade students "Think Tank". When I initially asked Mrs. Grant about talent development she was unsure what I was talking about:

> **Researcher:** A couple of years ago it was written to the Local Plan that there would be more intentional K-2 talent development occurring. So, can you just talk to me a little bit about what talent development is here at this school and how you envision doing that?
>
> **Mrs. Grant:** I haven't really thought about that question like that. Can you give me an example of what you've seen? (Interview. A. Grant, March 26, 2018)

After she asked for clarification, I recalled that that Mrs. Grant brought up the fact that Think Tank K-2 was part of her job earlier in our interview. I responded to Mrs. Grant's above question with the following:

> **Researcher:** Sure! So, a few minutes ago I heard you say something about Think Tank K-2. So, when you say "Think Tank K-2", how would you describe that to somebody?

After prompting her, I got the following response:

> **Mrs. Grant:** So, I think I would describe being Think Tank and sometimes it's just simple PBL with a particular teacher depending what their needs are. So, I guess I would describe it as an opportunity for me to work with all the children. Sometimes it is minilessons where I'm working with the teacher. Or sometimes there are some teachers that just want to show up and be here. It depends on the teacher if they want to collaborate and work together or not. I do try to encourage that. But a lot of times especially the lower grades, they're excited just to come in here and do something like whether it's with Math Pickles or whether with Pebbles or whether it's with PETS or whether it's with something out of the box.
>
> What I what I typically see in the talent development—I never use that terminology—but it's like you get to actually see different students create something that you wouldn't normally see in the classroom or that I wouldn't normally see (Interview, A. Grant, March 26, 2018).

Mrs. Grant also asked me to stay one afternoon following an observation with a second-third grade group to see her fifth grade dance group, which she framed as talent development. Additionally, she described another talent development opportunity she started for a non-identified child to me in the following way:

> Because whenever I work with her fourth grade classroom, because she has a lot of anxiety and horrible home life…when she just sits there and is doodling and drawing, like that's literally, that's talent. She's so naturally talented. She's the whole reason I'm starting a graphic design club this year because she's a sad little girl and she lights up (Interview, A. Grant, March 26, 2018).

Mrs. Grant is a compassionate teacher and oversees many clubs during the school day such as the dance group and the graphic design group to give Appleton students a chance to build upon their interests and strengths. While this is certainly one type of talent development, it is reminiscent of the after-school enrichment at Wilson. Mrs. Grant does not seem to have a clear understanding of the suggested implementation of the K-2 talent development lessons or how they can be used as a part of the identification process.

Other Appleton educators' vision for and understanding of K-2 talent

development. Upon learning that Mrs. Grant did not have a clear understanding or

specific plan for systematically teaching talent development lessons in kindergarten, first,

and second grades I assumed that others in the building would not have a clear

understanding of how those lessons fit within the larger picture of gifted education and

identification process. For example, when I asked Mrs. Stanley, a third grade teacher

who had taught second grade the previous year at Appleton, to define talent development

she explained that it is, "taking something that you're good at and growing from it"

(Interview, J. Stanley, March 28, 2018). When I asked her what Mrs. Grant's role would

be in talent development she answered:

> Well, I'm more of like hands on visual learner and have to verbally process, so I
> would see Ana meeting with a small group of teachers to explain things or push in
> the classroom and do an example or if there's something that some sort of video
> that's been developed by she or team of people. Something like that.

Mrs. Stanley was assuming that Mrs. Grant's role is to teach teachers how to implement

various talent development lessons that would help students grow in their talents that they

already have instead of envisioning talent development as a way of cultivating creative

and critical thinking skills.

Mr. Taylor, the principal at Appleton, was also not versed in the division-wide

implementation of talent development lessons in grades K-2. Below you will find our

exchange:

> **Researcher:** So, one thing that the division started last year was implementing
> talent development lessons in K,1 and, 2. Do you know anything about that?
> **Mr. Taylor:** No. I have not heard of this. Do others know about it at other
> schools?
> **Researcher:** I think it all depends on what's happening at that particular school
> and what that GRT is doing because it seems there is flexibility in what it looks

like at schools. So, do you have any thoughts what talent development is and what role that would play in the gifted process?

Mr. Taylor: I'm presuming that you're putting out projects or problems for kids to solve, that you're looking for evidence of giftedness and that you're kind of testing the waters for kids outside of worksheet.

Interestingly, even though Mr. Taylor was unaware of the purported implementation of these lessons from a division standpoint, he actually seemed to understand what enactment could look like and the role talent development could play in the gifted identification process.

Although there is not a shared understanding of what JCPS envisions as talent development in grades K-2 at Appleton, talent development lessons do occur, though they are not systematic and the ones I observed did not utilize the PETS curriculum. The next section will describe the enactment of K-2 talent development lessons at Appleton.

Enactment of K-2 talent development lessons. When I originally reached out to Mrs. Grant I specifically asked if I could observe in grades K-2 and let her know I wanted to observe two to three talent development lessons. She replied with the following observation opportunities:

Mondays Think Tank Kindergarten 9:30-10:30am

Mondays Minecraft PBL 2nd grade 10:30-11:15am

Thursdays 1-2pm MultiAge 2-3 Minecraft Habitats in Minecraft PBL

Fridays I have Math Extention in 3-5 MultiAge at 9-10:30am

   (A. Grant, personal communication, January 25, 2018)

Given her description of talent development above as "Think Tank", it quickly became apparent to me that she was not systematically scheduling time with all kindergarten,

first, and second grade classrooms. Further, when I came to observe Think Tank

Kindergarten, I learned that we would instead be going to a first grade lesson at 9:30am

and then a kindergarten lesson at 10am. The vignettes that follow provide a snapshot of

what talent development looks like in kindergarten and first grade at Appleton. Despite

being on the list for possible observations, the second grade PBL never occurred during

my time at Appleton. The first vignette occurs in a first grade classroom where students

are using Minecraft to build virtual houses. Minecraft is an online, creation-focused

game in which students create an avatar that they control. Using their avatar in a virtual

world, they are able to collect and use various materials from the online world to build

and create.

Mrs. Grant sits at a large rectangle table in the middle of her classroom, otherwise nicknamed "The Portal". She glances at the clock and quickly opens up a web application called MinecraftEdu on her laptop. She scrolls through the list of virtual worlds that she has created for the students at Appleton and launches, or opens, the one that she created for the students in Mrs. Tanner's first grade classroom. Once she launches the virtual world, or makes it available for students to login to, Mrs. Grant walks down the hall to Mrs. Tanner's first grade classroom for a push-in, talent development lesson.

The students arrive from P.E. at the same time as Mrs. Grant. Upon seeing Mrs. Grant the children all run for the laptop cart at the back of the room, get their school-issued machine, and sit at tables around the room. While the students are logging in to their laptops, Mrs. Tanner and her teaching assistant are talking by the laptop cart about the schedule for the rest of the day.

As the children make their way to their tables, Mrs. Grant calls out, "I can't wait to see what you guys create!" She then proceeds to walk around and help all of the students who are having trouble logging in to their account. As she helps students she also peppers them with questions about their creations,

"Were you working with a partner?"
"Were you underground or above ground?"
"Is your avatar a soccer player?"
"Which one of these houses are yours?"
"How do you want to move? Arrows or mouse?"
She continues to help students log in and reset their controls for the first several minutes of the lesson.

One child, sitting at a table near the back of the room describes the assignment that they are working on, "It's supposed to be a community center but we made it all

houses. I was building a library for the community center. Other kids were making a mansion and I was like…oh this is not going to work. The bigger grades were actually making a community center and we just have a lot of houses." She gets back to building a garden next to the house she and her partner built out of virtual blocks.

Mrs. Grant walks up to a boy who has built a house with a large door. She watches him walk into his virtual house and exclaims, "Did you put a lever on there? Do you know how to do that?" She tells the student that she is going to highlight his work to the class. Mrs. Grant then walks to her laptop and calls out to the class, "Guys listen up, I am going to freeze you guys for just a second. If anyone wants to see what a lever looks like come and look over his shoulder. That is the next step to being a Minecrafter. You can actually start to do this. You can put a lever on the wall and open the door that way. You are all opening doors with your hands. If you want to you can try to put a lever on the wall." She clicks her mouse and freezes the virtual world. All of the students are now unable to move their avatars. They get up and walk over to look at the lever. After a minute Mrs. Grant unfreezes the world and the students get back to work.

While this happens, Mrs. Tanner sits at her desk and reads the teacher's manual for the division-adopted writing program. The teaching assistant is busy stapling things to the bulletin board in the classroom. Neither engage with the students for the first several minutes of the lesson. Eventually the classroom teacher picks up her laptop and moves to sit with a group of students. She looks over one student's shoulder and tells him his swimming pool is "really great." She then begins searching YouTube for a video to show the class later in the day.

Mrs. Grant continues to walk around and have conversations with groups of students about their creations and pauses to teach students how to build various things like walls, roller coasters, or swimming pools. At 10am Mrs. Grant tells the students that their time is up and freezes their world. Mrs. Tanner tells the children to put their laptops away. As she walks out of the room, Mrs. Grant calls out, "You are all great Minecrafters! I'll see you next week."

The vignette above exemplifies a typical first grade talent development lesson at Appleton at this time. Of the four talent development lessons I observed, two took place in first grade and both of them were Minecraft-related work time in the same classroom. Mrs. Grant typically spends the entire time walking around and talks with various groups about their creations, sometimes pausing to help students build or learn how to use their controls. The classroom teacher rarely engages in a meaningful way with the students about their creations, and often spent the time preparing for later lessons (e.g., reading teacher's manuals, looking for videos on YouTube) or doing clerical work (e.g., filling out recertification paperwork). Similar to what occurred at Wilson, the classroom teacher

seems to "hand off the baton" and uses the talent development lesson as a break from teaching to accomplish other tasks. Additionally, while children were obviously engaging in creative building, there was no further purpose for their time and the GRT and classroom teacher were not collecting any data on students during the lessons. When I asked whether the GRT ever used anything that students created in Minecraft as data she admitted she did not; however, after thinking it over said that she could probably take screen shots. To show what children were creating in Minecraft, Mrs. Grant sent me a screenshot of a student creation (shown in Figure 4.12 below).

Figure 4.12 Example of student work: MinecraftEdu.

The next vignette provides a snapshot of talent development lessons in kindergarten at

Appleton.

> *The door to the Portal swings open and 16 energetic kindergarteners, their teacher, and a teaching assistant enter the room. Mrs. Grant walks to the door and welcomes them to the room. She then walks towards the back of the room and sits on the floor in front of the white wall that doubles as a projector screen and whiteboard. She asks for the kindergarteners to walk to the front of the room and invites them to sit down on the carpet facing her. She introduces herself and says, "I am so excited that you will be coming to my classroom this year. This is the first of a lot of fun lessons you will be doing and we are going to call our time together Think Tank. What does think mean?"*

> *The students start explaining what the word 'think' means to them. One students says, "You are thinking about a project."*
> *After the introductions are finished, Mrs. Grant asks the class, "Are you guys ready to play a game?" The students all cry out, "Yes!"*
> *As soon as the lesson begins in earnest, the classroom teacher leaves the room and the TA stays behind and sits on a stool behind the class.*

> *On the whiteboard next to G the following words are written:*

Think Tank!

**Connect 4 in a row to win!!*

__ + _____ = 0   ←*Math sentence*

> *Mrs. Grant holds up a piece of paper with a gameboard printed on it. (See Figure 4.13.) She explains the rules. "You are going to get one of these boards and you are going to pick a partner and you need 2 dice and colored chips."*
> *She then models how play the game with one of the students acting as her partner. The student rolls two dice and then counts the dots on each die. Once he knows what the two numbers are Mrs. Grant encourages him to say the corresponding number sentence out loud. She helps him say, "three plus two equals five!" and writes the corresponding number sentence on the board, 2 + 3 = 5. She tells the students that they must say the number sentence out loud. Once they have the answer they cover the answer to the number sentence with a colored*

chip. She models one more turn and then sends the students to various tables around the room.

Once the students start moving to tables the classroom teacher returns and the TA helps students get all of their materials. Each adult (e.g., Mrs. Grant, the TA, and the classroom teacher) all sit at different tables to monitor and help students.

At one table the TA continually redirect students, "The answer to your number sentence is 8 not 9. You need to put your chip on the 8 not the 9."

Meanwhile Mrs. Grant sees one group has almost covered their board with chips in a matter of a few minutes. She asks the kindergarten teacher if she can move those students onto the subtraction game board; however, the teacher declines because she does not want to confuse the others. After a couple more minutes the kindergarten teacher rings her chime that she brought to the classroom. She explains that they need to get to art class and that they need to clean up and line up. The students follow her directions and the class leaves.

Figure 4.13 Example of materials used in talent development at Appleton. This Connect Four math game was used in a kindergarten talent development lesson.

This vignette presented a typical picture of what I saw in terms of kindergarten talent development at Appleton over the course of five weeks. Though I only observed two kindergarten talent development lessons, Mrs. Grant uses that time to do math lessons with those students. The GRT there was just beginning to work with kindergarten students starting at the end of January as evidenced by the introduction to her space and the concept of "Think Tank". Similar to the other vignettes shared in the sections above, the classroom teacher does hand over the instructional leadership role to the GRT and often leaves the room at the start of the lesson. While the kindergarten teachers and teaching assistants did ultimately help with materials management and classroom management, they were relegated to an assistant role. Additionally, I never saw either the Mrs. Grant or any classroom teachers collect any kind student data in the form of artifacts or even anecdotal records.

Talent development enactment summary. The four vignettes above demonstrate how varied talent development enactment is at Appleton, and particularly how it varies across both schools. For example, the GRTs use different curricular materials with Mr. Robinson utilizing the PETS curriculum and Mrs. Grant utilizing an online web application, a game from Pinterest, and other math-related websites. Both GRTs schedule talent development lessons very differently, with Mr. Robinson being much more systematic in his approach. Based on the schedule I was given and the conversations and interview that I had with Mrs. Grant, it seems as though talent development lessons are scheduled based on classroom teacher interest and not necessarily mandated for all kindergarten, first, and second grade students. For example, while I was at Appleton she only pushed into one of the six first grade classrooms. While

I cannot be sure that she does not work with the other students, it did not appear to be systematically scheduled. Moreover, while the Minecraft lessons provide opportunities for students to think creatively, the GRT does not seem to be using Minecraft as a way to explicitly develop specific creative or critical thinking skills.

Despite the many differences in the way that talent development is enacted at both Appleton and Wilson, there is one striking similarity: classroom teachers are rarely involved with the planning, execution, or data collection if any occurs. One Wilson teacher explained her role this way,

> So, we are usually more supervisor roles. Scaffolding the kids that needs additional help, but I don't think we're at the co-teaching level, yet. Usually, we honestly don't know what he's going to do until he comes through the door. So, that's just a PLC and lack of time kind of thing. In terms of data, I kind of leave it to him because he collects everybody's and then analyzes it (Interview, J. Davis, March 5, 2018).

In the next section I discuss the extent to which the enactment of the talent development lessons at Wilson and Appleton align with the stated policy as well as the protocol document.

Policy alignment. The Local Plan provides the following directions for those responsible for implementing the K-2 talent development lessons (with emphasis added by the researcher):

- Introduce talent development learning experiences K-2 for **co-observation of all students by classroom teachers and gifted resource teachers.**

- Implement talent development learning experiences in grades K-2 in order to **observe the potential of *all* students.**

- In kindergarten as well as first and second grade, **gifted resource teachers co-facilitate talent development lessons with classroom teachers each semester**.

These learning experiences provide an opportunity for **teachers to observe all students** in activities designed to elicit creative and critical thinking skills. Though the guidelines related to implementation of the K-2 talent development lessons lack specific information about the frequency of implementation of the lessons during the semester or a suggested curriculum, the following is clear: a) *all* kindergarten, first, and second grade students at each school should be receiving specific talent development lessons each semester, b) GRTs and classroom teachers should be co-facilitating the lessons, and c) GRTs and classroom teachers should be observing students during these lessons. Additionally, theoretically all GRTs have access to the *Implementing the K-2 Critical and Creative Thinking Lessons Protocol*.

Based on the evidence presented in above vignettes and quotes, the enactment of the K-2 talent development lessons does not completely align with the stated policy. Table 4.4 provides an overview as to which parts of the enactment of the stated policy are enacted. Even though the talent development lessons were implemented in a more systematic fashion at Wilson, the implementation was not fully aligned with the stated policy. While Mr. Robinson did share that he had teachers use observation checklists during the previous school year, he did not ask the teachers to do so this year.

Table 4.4.

K-2 Talent Development Policy Alignment

JCPS Policy Language	Enactment Alignment at Wilson	Enactment Alignment at Appleton
Introduce talent development learning experiences K-2 for co-observation of all students by classroom teachers and gifted resource teachers.	Partial; talent development was implemented in K-2 but not co-observed	Minimal; talent development K-2 was not implemented in all K-2 classes and it was not co-observed
Implement talent development learning experiences in grades K-2 in order to observe the potential of all students.	Partial; implementation of lessons occurred for all students, though observation was not systematic	Minimal; partial implementation of lessons, no observations were seen.
In kindergarten as well as first and second grade, gifted resource teachers co-facilitate talent development lessons with classroom teachers each semester. These learning experiences provide an opportunity for teachers to observe all students in activities designed to elicit creative and critical thinking skills.	Not implemented; no co-facilitation between GRT and classroom teacher	Not implemented; no co-facilitation between GRT and classroom teacher

Summary of Gifted Identification Policy Enactment and Alignment

Within this section I shared three findings that emerged after I engaged in emergent and

holistic data analysis. Within each finding I shared the local policy language specific to

the referral process, data collection, and talent development. I then described how those

components of the identification process were enacted and the extent to which the

enactment aligned with the Local Plan. I found that the referral process partially aligns

with the Local Plan. The plan states that anyone can refer a student at anytime and it

does not appear that JCPS precludes this from occurring, however parents and teachers

appear to be referring nearly all students. In addition the the CogAT test results seem to

be driving nominations in the second grade, although the policy specifically states that

those results should be used to create a pool for further consideration. Currently the

enactment of that part of the policy is not aligned with the language. I also found that the

policy states that multiple measures should be collected and used in the identification

process and this appears to be happening in alignment with the policy. Lastly, I

discussed how the enactment of the K-2 talent development lessons varies across schools

and does not fully align with the language of the Local Plan. In the next section I share

the patterns that emerged with regards to the ways in which the local gifted policy and

enactment of it facilitate and hinder the identification of CLD students.

Facilitation of and Barriers to the Gifted Identification of CLD Students

In this section I discuss the last two research questions:

- In what ways does the school division's gifted identification policy and process

  facilitate the identification of CLD populations?

- In what ways does the school division's gifted identification policy and process

  hinder the identification of CLD populations?

Background Information

In recent years, JCPS division administrators have been paying increasing

attention to issues of equity with regards to several student outcomes including rates of

gifted identification, special education identification, suspension, enrollment in higher

level courses, and standardized test scores across all demographic groups. Figure 4.14 is a

screen capture from the JCPS website which showcases "examples that typify equity gaps

persistent in JCPS…[t]hese data samples are representative of opportunities that some of

our demographic groups are not accessing; insufficient monitoring and accountability for lack of participation of some of our demographic groups in school and the learning process."

2016 - 2017 Equity Dashboard																
Demographic Group	**Student Count (PK-12)**		**Students Identified Gifted**		**Students with Disabilities (IDEA)**		**Students Chronically Absent**		**Students Suspended (Out of School)**		**Students Passing 3rd Grade Reading SOL**		**Students Passing 3rd Grade Math SOL**		**Graduates Earning Five or More Math Credits**		**Students Earning An Advanced Studies Diploma**	
All Students	13,832		1,351		1,735		1,399		531		742		737		512		659	
Black	1,532	11%	31	2%	350	20%	144	10%	140	26%	51	7%	47	6%	29	6%	45	7%
Hispanic	1,783	13%	39	3%	247	14%	246	18%	67	13%	70	9%	69	9%	22	4%	38	6%
White	9,006	65%	1,103	82%	989	57%	857	61%	280	53%	530	71%	531	72%	407	79%	507	77%
Asian	672	5%	99	7%	50	3%	44	3%	5	1%	43	6%	39	5.30%	32	6%	34	5%
Two or More Races	800	6%	79	6%	91	5%	98	7%	37	7%	45	6%	49	7%	21	4%	32	5%
Economically Disadvantaged	4,357	31%	77	6%	912	53%	733	52%	314	59%	140	19%	141	19%	45	9%	70	11%
Students with Disabilities	1,735	13%	15	1%	N/A	N/A	291	21%	172	32%	40	5%	40	5%	13	3%	25	4%
English Learners	1,433	10%	16	1%	168	10%	149	11%	48	9%	10	1%	8	1%	9	2%	8	1%

Figure 4.14. JCPS 2016-2017 Equity Dashboard. This is a screencapture from the division website taken on April 20, 2018.

The data points shared in the above image suggest that the identification of gifted students is not equitable. In Chapter 1 I shared that JCPS would consider gifted identification to be equitable when the population of the total division is reflected in the population of the students identified for gifted services. Table 4.5 presents the underrepresentation of CLD students in gifted education in JCPS according to a calculation of the Relative Difference in Composition Index (RDCI) and the Equity Index (EI). For further explanation of RDCI and EI see Chapter 1 and Appendix C.

Table 4.5
CLD Students: Under-representation in Gifted Education in JCPS

Race and Ethnicity	JCPS Enrollment	Gifted Identified	Under-representation Percent (RDCI)	Equity Index (EI)
Black	10%	2%	80%	8%
Hispanic	13%	3%	77%	10.4%
Economically Disadvantaged	31%	6%	80.6%	24.8%
English Learners	10%	1%	90%	8%

The EI calculation should theoretically be interpreted as the minimally accepted level of underrepresentation for each group because once the percentage of underrepresentation exceeds that designated threshold, it is beyond statistical chance, meaning policies and procedures may be discriminatory against CLD groups (Ford, 2014). For example, in JCPS currently 2% of Black students are identified as gifted. According to the Equity Index, at least 8% of Black students in JCPS should be identified as gifted. This means that Black students, Hispanic students, economically disadvantaged students, and English Learners are all statistically significantly underrepresented in gifted education in JCPS and that the policies and procedures warrant examination.

Conversely, Table 4.6 presents data indicating that Asian and White students are over-represented in gifted education in JCPS.

Table 4.6.
White and Asian Students: Overrepresentation in Gifted Education in JCPS

Race and Ethnicity	JCPS Enrollment	Gifted Identified	Over-representation Percent (RDCI)
Asian	5%	7%	40%
White	66%	80%	21%

The underrepresentation of students from CLD backgrounds is highly problematic. These numbers among others from the above Equity Dashboard coupled with a new focus on educational equity at JCPS, provided a rich opportunity for me to examine the ways in which the gifted identification policy and process facilitates and/or hinders the identification of CLD students. In the next section I discuss the ways in which the policy and process facilitates the identification of CLD populations.

Within this section I will address the ways in which the Local Plan and the enactment of that policy facilitates and hinders the gifted identification of CLD students. Evidence to support the findings come from each of the interviews as well as documents (e.g., the Local Plan, the state code, the Equity Dashboard). My analysis yielded five findings with regards to the ways in which the Local Plan and its enactment facilitates and hinders the identification of CLD students. Please note that findings four and five provide specific evidence as to how the policy and process facilitate the identification of CLD students while findings six, seven and eight in this section highlight the barriers CLD students face. The findings are:

4. Though the Local Plan provides guidance about how to facilitate the equitable representation of students, the enactment of the plan is inconsistent.

5. The identification of CLD students is often dependent upon the ability of the GRT to act as an advocate.

6. Many stakeholders within JCPS subscribe to traditional conceptions of giftedness, contributing to the underrepresentation of CLD groups in JCPS's gifted education program.

7. "I Just Don't See it": Deficit-oriented frameworks held by educators are barriers to the identification of CLD students in JCPS.

8. The high value placed on the CogAT within the Local Plan and use of the CogAT data in practice are barriers to the gifted identification of CLD students in JCPS.

I explain and discuss these findings with more detail in the following subsections of this paper.

Finding 4: Though the Local Plan Provides Guidance About How to Facilitate the Equitable Representation of Students, the Enactment is Inconsistent.

Though the Equity Dashboard (Figure 4.14 above) data points to the inequitable identification of CLD students in JCPS, the Local Plan provides some limited guidance rooted in practices that *should* facilitate the identification of CLD students. In the next section I will briefly discuss those specific components of the Local Plan.

JCPS Local Plan: Guidance on Equitable Gifted Identification Practices.

Though the Local Plan specifically addresses the equitable representation of students in one place, the division's operational definition of giftedness uses language that is supportive of an inclusive approach to gifted identification and service. The definition is below with emphasis added by the researcher:

Jenkins County Public Schools is committed to **a multi-faceted and inclusive approach** to serving and identifying gifted students in order to best determine and meet individual needs. From observation inventories to the use of nationally normed assessments, gifted resource teachers work collaboratively with colleagues and families to create a pool of candidates who show high levels of intellectual achievement **or who show the potential for such achievement**. Gifted resource teachers collect a portfolio of data and artifacts to develop a student profile for each student referred for identification. This profile is used by a school committee to determine if a student demonstrates or has the potential to demonstrate superior reasoning, persistent intellectual curiosity, exceptional problem solving, rapid mastery of concepts as well as creative and imaginative expression **beyond his or her age-level peers with similar backgrounds and experiences.**

146

This definition, though it does not specifically refer to CLD populations, demonstrates a

dedication to an inclusive approach that values potential for achievement and supports the

comparison of students who have similar opportunities to learn as opposed to simply

relying on age-based norms. This definitional distinction is important because relying

solely on age-based norms has been found to result in underrepresentation of CLD

populations in gifted education (Peters & Engerrand, 2016). From an equity standpoint,

this definition is promising. Additionally, there is an entire section of the Local Plan

dedicated to the representation of diverse students in gifted education shown below in

Figure 4.15. Each of the listed strategies, if leveraged effectively, could lead to more

equitable representation of students in gifted education in JCPS.

Equitable Representation of Students

Goal - Use a variety of screening and assessment tools to create a diverse pool of candidates for gifted services.

<u>Strategies to meet goal:</u>
1. Implement talent development learning experiences in grades K-2 in order to observe the potential of all students;
2. Standardize protocols for using student background information when analyzing student assessment data (for example reducing the weight of the verbal scores in the Cognitive Abilities Test for English Language Learners);
3. Maintain a flexible service model to ensure that delivery of gifted services is not limited to those identified and monitor the equitable representation of both students identified and served by a gifted resource teacher;
4. Provide professional development for gifted resource teachers on identifying and supporting underrepresented student populations.
5. Increase individualized communication between gifted resource teachers and parents to improve awareness of delivery of services and student growth.

Figure 4.15 Equitable Representation of Students section of the Local Plan. This figure was adapted from page 5 of the JCPS Local Plan.

Enactment of K-2 Talent Development. As described in Finding 3, implementation of K-2 talent development lessons is still in the early stages and is still highly variable across schools. Despite this, it is a promising strategy. It would be possible for GRTs and teachers to work together to create a more diverse pool of students to consider for services if the all schools systematically implemented K-2 talent development lessons per the protocol (found in Appendix R). As hypothesized by the Mr. Robinson, a GRT could use the student work collected during talent development lessons to develop a well-rounded portfolio of evidence that is not reliant on parental documentation from home. Using evidence from talent development lessons in the creation of a student portfolio mitigates the issues of parents who may have less social capital or "understanding of the system" and provides a pathway for students to be identified without requiring parent input or advocacy. By systematically implementing these lessons it could become a systematic part of a solution to the issue of underrepresentation because the lessons provide all students with an opportunity to learn.

Using student background information when analyzing assessment data. JCPS currently does not have any protocols to help GRTs effectively use background information when analyzing assessment data. While it is suggested in the Local Plan that GRTs could "reduce the weight of the verbal scores in the Cognitive Abilities Test for English Language Learners", there is not a specific protocol for GRTs to follow that would allow that to happen similarly across all schools. Although the JCPS gifted administrator wants gifted identification to be more "situational", or to be based more upon the particular needs of particular schools, she noted that the GRTs want "the plan to really back up their decisions". While looking through the Local Plan she paused at the

chart which delineates how the CogAT scores determine the amount of evidence that needs to be collected (see Figure 4.1 in above) and further postulated,

> How can we say, "Here are some other things to consider if a student is an English Language learner… you know things that we could put in the plan so the GRT's feel a little bit more comfortable stepping out of literally this box [*she points to the chart in the local plan*] because in schools where gifted labeled gifted is like some fabulous badge that GRT's feel very married to this [*chart*] and schools where it's not, it's nice they feel they can push out of this a little bit. So, I feel like we need to give them some division "OK" here on thinking about to push beyond these numbers (Interview, L. Williams, February 2, 2018).

While she recognizes that standardized protocols would likely help with more equitable representation in the pool of gifted candidates, until there is more direct guidance for how to do this effectively, the GRTs are left to either devise their own way to take students' background information into account or to not take it into consideration for fear of possible retribution.

Flexible services and monitoring demographics of those who receive them. Due to the scope of this research project and the fact that I only observed the implementation of gifted services in kindergarten, first, and second grades, I did not witness much in the way of services beyond talent development lessons—and those lessons were done within the classroom setting.

Professional Development for GRTs on identifying and serving CLD students. While I was not present for the professional development GRTs received, Mrs. Williams described how she uses her quarterly meetings with the GRTs to provide them with professional learning opportunities. Note how she she has shifted to professional learning and conversations from a more "hodge-pogde" of topics to a more concerted focus on identifying and serving CLD students.

So, I tried to align my professional learning in areas that I am responsible for in the division along with like division goals that are aligned with the school board. Rather than determine our own, what's the overarching goal for the division and how does PD for gifted resource teachers align? Last year it just felt this was equity and access. Dr. Horn encouraged people to submit proposals for like almost like mini grants in the area around equity and access. So, I wrote a proposal asking for a couple of different things just to sort of push things along. And mine didn't get funded.

But I realize that a lot of the stuff I asked for we—we can tackle anyway. We didn't need an influx of money to have the discussions that we are having. Last year was the first where we focused every meeting on something about equity and access.

The year before we touched on it, but we also talked about curriculum, and we also talked about instruction, and we talked about parent nights—all the hodgepodge. I think that sort of what's been happening in the GRT Meetings. In the past it has just been populate the agenda and we will talk about everything on there. But I thought, "Let's make it concerted effort on one thing and try to move the needle on one thing rather than just popcorn round to a bunch of things."

So, you know a lot, this has been an issue forever since the since gifted education started. It's about inequities in identification. But I think in the last couple of years, there's more light shed on it and the Virginia Department of Education came out last year with its paper on promoting equity and diversity and gifted programs in Virginia schools. So, that's sort of a touchstone text that we have. And we were able to send a bunch of teachers to NAGC [National Association for Gifted Children] so that's another PD option that we had. But I think a lot of it right now is like discussing and reading and discussing and thinking about our practice and going back and reading and discussing and putting some solutions out there— but realizing that the problems are a lot bigger than just a quick band aid. And I think we are getting to the point now where we're going to we've read and discussed a lot in the GRT meetings, and also got the Project Edge Group* going (Interview, L. Williams, February 2, 2018).
*Project EDGE (Equity and Diversity in Gifted Education) was a group of diverse stakeholders from the JCPS community that met over the course of the 2017-2018 school year to examine the gifted identification process and service model in JCPS.

The above quote illustrates Mrs. Williams dedication to providing the JCPS GRTs with

professional development opportunities around equitable practices in gifted education.

The "touchstone text" she referred to is the report released by the VDOE in 2017 titled

Increasing Diversity in Gifted Education Programs in Virginia, which I briefly

summarized in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2. It is important to note that although she is fulfilling this particular strategy listed in the Local Plan, it is ultimately up to the GRTs to apply the information they are learning to their own context in order to "move the needle" and facilitate the identification of CLD students.

Increase individualized communication between GRTs and parents. Due to my relatively short time in the field and my lack of baseline data about the communication between parents and GRTs, I am unsure whether communication among GRTs and parents has increased from some other point in time. Additionally, I have no data on individualized communication among GRTs and families. I only requested access to the communication sent via the school and/or GRT's website and quarterly newsletters.

Despite the inclusion of the specific strategies to create a diverse pool of students to consider for gifted services, of the ones I have data for, the strategies have been enacted inconsistently: some of the strategies have not yet been attempted (e.g., Strategy 2), others have been accomplished (e.g, Strategy 4), while others are in variable states of implementation (e.g., Strategies 1, 3, 5). In addition to the strategies above, one other pattern emerged in the data with regards to the facilitation of the identification of CLD students, in particular, the GRTs at Wilson and Appleton take on the role of advocate.

Finding 5: The Identification of CLD Students is Often Dependent Upon the Ability of the GRT to Act as an Advocate.

Based on gifted identification data from the division level (e.g, the Equity Dashboard) and school level (see Tables 3.1 and 3.2) along with interviews with stakeholders from both Wilson and Appleton (excerpts are below), evidence emerged that it is challenging for students from CLD backgrounds get identified as gifted.

When discussing his current identified caseload, Mr. Robinson highlighted the

amount of work it took for him to facilitate the identification of CLD students.

> So even here Wilson, I now have sixteen identified students in building. Three of them are from diverse backgrounds and all three of them are students who I really advocated for. One also had family members, but then the other two, I really had to advocate for. It was a lot of work. A lot of work. And so, if I'm thinking that everyone's putting in that same effort to get students from diverse backgrounds it's going to take a long time before we see any changes (Interview, J. Robinson, February 19, 2018).

The brief snippet from Mrs. Miller, the Wilson principal, below provides more insight

into the challenges the interview committee faced when attempting to identify one of the

two students referred to by Mr. Robinson.

> In the seven years that I've been here we've only identified 3 minority children. One of the most memorable ones was the time I sat down with a parent and the team to identify her son who did not present as a kid who liked school and who had gone through some pretty significant family trauma, like really significant family trauma.
>
> And I think that the reason that it's memorable, is that it solidified for me that the process we were using was extremely biased and because the mom felt badly that she didn't know how to talk to these pieces of evidence. She didn't know how to negotiate this thing that we are saying, or that we need to have pieces of here, here, here and here and the parent has to present as well as the school. And while I think the GRT did a really nice job of collecting data, the piece we fell short in was taking time to help the parent understand each of these things and to say: "So what are these things?" and what do they look like at home. Like to be able to really just have the conversations you need to bring somebody like this parent to this table with fairness.
>
> I think that one is memorable because we found him eligible despite his parents not being able to and I think it was memorable in a prolific way because it made me realize how biased the system is and that we have to change that (Interview, S. Miller, February 17, 2018).

These quotes suggest that the current policy and process is not necessarily conductive to

the identification of CLD students and that it takes advocacy and effort on the part of the

GRT.

In addition, the GRT from Appleton shared about a similar struggle she faced when attempting to identify a student of color. Due to the fact that he "did not fare so well" on his CogATs, it took an extraordinary amount of effort and advocacy on her part for the child to get identified.

> He had been on the radar for two years and I made a big push for him. And the teacher last year said that he "saw nothing" and refused to identify, "absolutely no way, no way". So, I waited for a different year for him to have a different teacher. I was able to get more information; not a ton but enough. Enough conversation from or sitting down like this, talking his mom, writing down what she said, building the case for him. And the mother and I pushed for it for two years. And then we sat down and met and looked at the CogAT scores and it was not great. So, you know we really pushed for him being identified, but had we relied on the CogAT scores he would not have been identified (Interview, A. Grant, March 26, 2018).

Both of these short interview quotes demonstrate the fact that GRTs are essentially required to act as fierce advocates in order for a CLD student without a high CogAT score to make it through the gifted identification process. Oftentimes it means that they will need to push for students to get identified in the face of adversity ranging from lower than desirable test scores, lack of parent understanding of the process, and lack of teacher support.

Conversely, the above examples are also illustrative of some of the barriers that CLD students face during the identification process. As noted at the beginning of this section, throughout the next three findings I discuss the barriers to the gifted identification of CLD students.

Finding 6: Many Stakeholders within JCPS Subscribe to Traditional Conceptions of Giftedness, Contributing to the Underrepresentation of CLD Groups in JCPS's Gifted Education Program.

"Underrepresentation stems from our schools, our attitudes and our values" (Frazier, 1997, p. 506).

The term "gifted" is a loaded one fraught with preconceived notions as to what it means. Historically, giftedness has been equated with a high score on an IQ test and gifted identification served as a lever to separate particular groups of students—typically White students—from others. Although the field is shifting towards broader conceptions and more inclusive definitions of giftedness, societal norms and traditional beliefs filter into gifted education policies and the enactment of those policies. For example, although JCPS claims to be "committed to a multifaceted and inclusive approach" to gifted education; the division has chosen to identify and serve students who demonstrate general intellectual aptitude—an area which closely mirrors a more traditional conception of giftedness. In the next paragraphs I discuss how various stakeholders—educators and parents in particular—hold traditional conceptions of giftedness, and those conceptions are related to the underrepresentation of CLD groups in gifted education.

The quotes below illuminate what it means for someone to hold a more traditional conception of giftedness. For example, some educators equate giftedness with academic achievement or cognitive ability.

> Teachers are still looking at the old model, looking at children in the old model where the straight A's, the data, and everything has to support it academically not just a portfolio (Interview, A. Grant, March 26, 2018).

> If you're up in the 99th percentile, that's one of the first things that I use to start thinking more about gifted (Interview, J. Stanley, March 28, 2018).

Others believe that giftedness is associated with economic means and familial resources and the only way for underserved populations to be identified is to provide them with those things. The following exchange highlights Mrs. Jones' notions of what it means to

be gifted. We had this exchange after Mrs. Jones looked over the JCPS Equity Dashboard

(see Figure 4.13).

> **Researcher**: If the division were to try to make changes to the percentages in the Gifted Identified column, what would you imagine would be some potential barriers and challenges to that?
>
> **Interviewee:** You can't change the fact that this number, our White students, more of them are gifted because more of them have support at home, more of them have resources that other kids don't have and we can't change the fact that they're getting that. But changing the fact that these guys, Black and Hispanic and disadvantaged, maybe they can change their amount of support they're getting? You can't change their home life but giving them some more resources. Somehow giving them these things that the other kids get. It's a big problem.

And lastly, there is a belief that giftedness is an innate characteristic, something that is

neurobiological. When I asked the Appleton principal about the students who were most

typically identified as gifted at Appleton, he responded:

> They're all White or Asian. We have some non-White, non-Asian minorities, but mostly from middle class, upper middle-class families. And…I think a lot of those other families have parents who are gifted and their parents are college professors and doctors and people who are intelligent but also, they're in this town for a reason. They're very gifted people and their children probably follow suit. There's a cognitive element to this… the way all their brains developed. It's neurobiological. Like, maybe all the kids in Lake Woebegone are above average, maybe that's the DNA, that's the pool, right? (Interview, March 15, 2018)

When these personal conceptions of giftedness are combined they point to a societal

conception of giftedness that if you are a White or Asian, high achiever who has access to

economic, social, and cultural capital, you are more likely to be considered gifted.

Parents in JCPS have similar conceptions of giftedness and those are discussed in the

next paragraph.

According to several interviewees (e.g., Mrs. Williams, Mr. Robinson, Mrs.

Davis), many parents from the dominant culture nominate and push for their students to

be enrolled into the gifted program because of assumptions they have about the label that

stem from either their prior experiences with gifted education in their own lives, or due to

the way gifted programs have operated at schools in the recent past. They are also

pushing because they desire to extend their own social and cultural capital to their

children in form of access to differential programs, and elite institutions. The following

two quotes below illustrate how parents hold more traditional beliefs about being

identified as gifted.

> Many people believe that you have to be labeled to get into AP or do dual
> enrollment courses and so that's why a certain demographic of parents really,
> really push through their kids getting identified in elementary school, because
> they're thinking that far in advance. That's not the truth. I mean that's not true, but
> then other people aren't even thinking about that, so it's like, who knows what and
> to what degree is what they know even correct? (Interview, J. Robinson, February
> 19, 2018).

> You know parents that honestly think that if their kid doesn't get labeled gifted in
> 2nd grade and then their track that they'll be on is subpar compared to what it
> would be they were on the gifted track…And, I think the whole thing is a whole
> mindset around gifted. I think if gifted wasn't equated to going to a better
> college—which is literally what a lot of parents think about it right now—that
> maybe we'd actually get the kids who are generally gifted in the program rather
> than these high achieving kids…. That it should be more diverse in reality
> (Interview, J. Davis, March 5, 2018).

The belief that a gifted label can be a tool for separation, or a ticket into a special class or

program is not an unreasonable one. Even at Wilson, a school in the process of

implementing a gifted education model rooted in talent development and enrichment,

institutional memory is likely alive and well with particular parent populations due to the

way gifted education was enacted a few years ago. The following quote shared by the

Wilson principal illustrates this.

> When I came here, gifted education was simply a pull-out program and I did not
> support that because historically like--- there was a trend. If you were white and
> you lived in Brickhaven, then you were identified gifted at Wilson. If you were
> pretty much anybody else you were not. And that was real telling to see when I
> came in and more importantly, those were the only kids that the gifted teacher

touched. It was all done by pull out. She literally, when I came into the building, the gifted teacher taught the highest group of readers in grades 3, 4 and 5. That was her whole job (Interview, S. Miller, February 27, 2018).

The previous quote is illustrative of the way some stakeholders within JCPS likely experienced gifted education as a child or envision it currently.

Additionally, giftedness seems to be synonymous with Whiteness in JCPS with significantly high numbers of White students being nominated and identified. To illustrate this, when asked if he could describe a typical gifted child at Wilson Elementary, Mr. Robinson quickly answered,

> It's a white child from one of our neighborhoods that is not an apartment complex, who was referred by a parent and got an 8 or a 9 on the CogAT. No, I take that back. Got 9's, all 9's on the CogAT (Interview, February 19, 2018).
> .

Additionally, gifted identification could be seen a vehicle for maintaining White privilege:

> So, I think parents are nominating based on their gifted experience in their schools, thinking it, what it was and what it meant and then I think they're nominating because they want, you know, they--there's some kind of like separation I think that their seeking from just the regular kids and they want to be able to say, "My kid's gifted" (Interview, L. Williams, February 2, 2018).

In addition to parents helping to perpetuate the overidentification of White students, teachers hold traditional conceptions of giftedness as well, and these conceptions are unquestionably related to the underrepresentation of CLD students. The following quote may provide some insight as to why traditional conceptions of giftedness are related to the underrepresentation of CLD students in gifted education.

> Let me say I think a lot of our Teachers are white middle class and I think they know what school and success looks like in their minds, so it's hard for them to think outside the box so they might not recognize the giftedness in a kid who's from a different culture (Interview, L. Williams, February 2, 2018).

One of the important issues that Mrs. Williams brings up here is that giftedness can manifest differently across cultures. Because those who make policies around gifted education are oftentimes a part of the dominant culture, as are many teachers it may be challenging for them to recognize behaviors as gifted if they fall outside of that more traditional conceptualization of giftedness.

Closely related to the ways teachers conceptualize giftedness are the ways in which teachers view their students. In the next section I will describe the ways in which teachers at JCPS think about their students can be barriers to the identification of CLD students.

Finding 7: "I Just Don't See it": Deficit-oriented Frameworks Held by Educators are Barriers to the Identification of CLD Students in JCPS.

As noted above in Finding 1, teachers are an integral part of the referral process in JCPS. Teachers have a great deal of power over whether or not a child is identified as gifted because they not only have the ability to refer, but they are also required to provide input on students as part of the identification process, and sit on the committee responsible for ultimately identifying a student as gifted or not. Furthermore, as noted in Figure 4.1, students must demonstrate evidence in the domain of performance as part of the identification process. Evidence in this domain could include information such as classroom grades and output on classroom assignments. For these reasons, if a teacher holds a deficit-oriented framework toward CLD students, then it is logical to assume that framework could contribute to the barriers of identification in multiple negative ways. Over the course of several weeks at Appleton and Wilson a pattern emerged that teachers, even those who have good working relationships with the GRT, have deficit-oriented

frameworks towards CLD students, meaning that they see differences as deficits or

attribute academic challenges to "internal deficiencies" or "familial deficits" (Ford et al.,

2008, Ford et al., 2017). In the next section I share how numerous teachers engage in

deficit thinking about CLD students, specifically English Learners.

Barriers faced by English Learners: Deficit thinking. Approximately 20% of

the students at both Appleton and Wilson Elementary Schools are English Learners

(ELs). Despite that, students from that population are rarely identified as gifted both at

those schools and across the division. In fact, only 1% of the gifted identified students in

the *entire division* are ELs, or to put it differently, there are only 16 ELs identified as

gifted in JCPS. The underrepresentation of ELs is likely due, in part, to deficit thinking.

The GRTs at Wilson and Appleton both shared similar stories highlighting how deficit

thinking about ELs is problematic for gifted identification.

While I was interviewing Mrs. Grant, the Appleton GRT, she reminded me of our

prior discussions during my time in the field about the frustrating nature of working to

identify ELs as gifted. Please note, ESOL stands for English Speakers of Other

Languages.

> I have shared this with you before. The ESOL teacher. She comes to me— she
> gets pushback from the classroom teachers…and it's not at that the classroom
> teachers are wrong, it's just that educating piece. I'm not putting down any
> classroom teacher, I'm just saying that the standard lens is, "Well the student is
> not getting straight A's" or "This student is struggling". So, I have this other
> student—this has happened I want to say three times in the last three years— that
> the ESOL teacher comes to be me and said, "This student…This student…This
> student."
>
> With one of them, the teachers were all on board because she was getting straight
> A's, and the last two, there was a struggle. And the one I'm thinking of right
> now— the ESOL teacher was nominating her. We were in a meeting with the
> teachers and there was disagreement. They say, "There is no way this child is
> gifted." And what we have to do is, we say, "He may not be gifted in the image

or role that you have in your head, but let's look at the whole picture. Let's go and get him tested, let's get everything together for his portfolio, and let's see where he lays, where he falls."

As noted in Finding 6, conceptions of giftedness are closely tied to the deficit-oriented frameworks held by some teachers. From this interview it seems that the particular classroom teachers referred to in the quote above seemingly have a conception that giftedness that children need to have straight A's and a strong control of English. Because the EL presented differently, those differences were seen as deficits and resulted in a lack of support for the nomination. In circumstances like this one, the GRT and ESOL teacher are thrust into the role of advocate and educator in order to overcome the barrier put up by the deficit-oriented frameworks of those classroom teachers. Note, I attempted to corroborate and elaborate upon this information by interviewing the ESOL teacher at Appleton; however, she declined my invitiation to interview her.

Mr. Robinson, the Wilson GRT, faces similar issues when attempting to nominate ELs for gifted services. His story is below.

> So, for example, I have a fourth grade student who I am following. I'm tracking her right now. She came to our country and within one year, she tested out of ESOL. And it's phenomenal at the rate in which she acquired English and acquired it in a proficient way with only being in the country for one year. That's like, wow! And so, to the average person you might look at her say she's just performing on grade level but I'm like...no! There's something about the ability to be able to do that. You can't put most people in a new country and in one year, they pass whatever test is required that says you can comprehend and speak and write and read sufficiently. But, her teacher is like, "I don't see gifted." So, it's that whole piece. So, how can we expect teachers to help us increase the amount of culturally and linguistically diverse students when they aren't even knowledgeable about what giftedness looks like in those populations?

The fact that classroom teachers operate under a deficit-oriented framework about ELs coupled with their traditional conceptions of giftedness is a barrier to not only the gifted identification of this group of students, but also makes it challenging for ELs to even

enter the pool of candidates for future consideration. In addition to the above examples, one Appleton teacher, while looking at the Equity Dashboard (Figure 4.14), explained why ELs were underrepresented in gifted education in JCPS, "I mean English language learners is obvious because even in third grade, those are the students that aren't passing any of the standardized testing" (Interview, J. Stanley, March 28, 2018). Teachers are seeing these students through the lens of what they are not able to do as opposed to having a more asset-based approach.

"I just don't see it": A summary. As illustrated by the examples above, teacher mindset is a barrier to the identification of CLD students. The following exchange with the JCPS gifted administrator points to the ubiquity of the issue of deficit-oriented frameworks.

> **Researcher**: What would you say would be a barrier of identification of students from diverse backgrounds?
> **Mrs. Williams**: Teachers. I think teachers. There's this, the line that I hear all the time in meetings-- "I just don't see it." And I don't know exactly what "it" is, you know, so they don't see it. But the GRT does, or somebody else does. And again, "I just don't see it." Some of them won't even sign the paper—"I just don't see it"—and that has to do with their values and belief systems, not a common one that we're all working off of so that is really hard to move that, to shift that.

To summarize, teachers have great power and often wield it to determine outcomes for students. Unless teachers' beliefs and conceptions about giftedness as well as deficit-oriented frameworks about children are addressed, they will remain barriers to the gifted identification of CLD groups.

Finding 8: The High Value Placed on the CogAT Within the Local Plan and use of the CogAT Data in Practice are Barriers to the Gifted Identification of CLD Students.

161

As discussed in Finding 2, the GRTs collect a multitude of data on each nominated student; however the CogAT tends to be privileged over other measures. In the next section I will discuss the ways in which the CogAT test results are more valued and hold greater weight during the overall process.

Even though Step 5 from the *Overview of the Gifted Identification Process* (Figure 4.1) states, "A school-based identification committee meets on each nominated student and determines his/her strengths in five areas: ability test scores, performance, critical thinking skills, problem solving, and creativity"; that is not always the case in practice. Part of the reason that the CogAT is so important to the identification process is because the age percentile rank a child receives is the sole determinant for how much more data must be collected and analyzed by the school-based identification committee. Students who receive an age percentile rank of 95 or greater on the CogAT screener or who receive an age percentile rank of 95 or above in two of the three sections on the full battery of the CogAT are only required to demonstrate evidence of giftedness in two of the four domains: performance, creativity, critical thinking, and problem solving. Figure 4.16 is a chart from the Local Plan that illustrates the type of guidance provided to those involved in the gifted identification process in JCPS.

Guidelines for Documenting Areas of Strength

Nationally Normed Aptitude Assessment	Score Range	Needed Areas of Strengths
CogAT - Screener	Age Percentile Rank of 95 or Above	Evidence of Strength in 2 Domains
CogAT - Full Battery	Age Percentile Rank of 95 or above in 2 of 3 sections/batteries	Evidence of Strength in 2 of 4 Domains
CogAT - Screener	Age Percentile Rank below 95	Evidence of Strength in 4 of 4 Domains
CogAT - Full Battery	Age Percentile Rank below 95 in 2 of 3 sections/batteries	Evidence of Strength in 4 of 4 Domains
Other Acceptable Aptitude Assessment*	Age Percentile Rank of 95 or above for composite score	Evidence of Strength in 2 Domains
Other Acceptable Aptitude Assessment*	Age Percentile Rank below 95 for composite score	Evidence of Strength in 4 of 4 Domains

*Examples include OLSAT, WISC-II, Raven, Naglieri.

Figure 4.16 Guidelines for documenting areas of strength. This figure can be found on page 11 of the Local Plan.

The enactment of this guidance in practice means that the pathway to identification is easier for a student if he has a composite stanine score of a nine on the CogAT screener or an age percentile rank of 95 or above because he needs to produce far fewer pieces of evidence over fewer domains than a student who scores below that threshold. Additionally, as illustrated by the quote below, the use of the CogAT feels "safer" for GRTs because it is seen as an objective measure of intellectual ability.

> I think that even though we say multiple measures, and that CogAT is just one piece that's not, that does not weigh more than others. In many GRTs' minds it weighs more than others because it's safe, it's a number--it's a number that they didn't create that was spit back to them, it's, you know, based on the student performance, not on some subjective conversation around artifacts (Interview, L. Williams, February 2, 2018).

Likewise, Mrs. Davis, a second grade teacher from Wilson shared similar thoughts about the importance and weight of the CogAT with regards to the identification process.

> I think that we put a lot of trust in that test; which I think it's interesting. Like basically, if you don't get a seven, eight or nine on that test, even if we're thinking, it's kind of a lost cause of them getting them diagnosed (J. Davis, Interview, March 5, 2018).

In essence, the value of the CogAT score is so high that in the eyes of a teacher it is impossible, or a "lost cause", to go through with the identification process for a child who may not show evidence of intellectual aptitude on that particular assessment. Additionally, one second grade teacher at Appleton explained that she uses the CogAT scores when she thinks about referring a child into the gifted identification process: "If you're up in the 99th percentile, that's one of the first things that I use to start thinking more about gifted" (Interview, J. Stanley, March 28, 2018).

Even the principals of Wilson and Appleton, each of whom sit on their school's gifted identification placement committee, echo the beliefs of others in JCPS who feel that the CogAT data hold unequal weight in the gifted identification process. For example, Mrs. Miller shared her thoughts about the CogAT at three separate times during our interview. Those three quotes are shared below:

> *Quote A*: I feel like the primary process is really...it really just kind of comes down to its second grade, it's time for CogATs, who scored eights and nines?

> *Quote B*: Because right now the only the tool you have is the CogAT and it's very possible that a kid can be gifted and not show it on the CogAT. So, if we were only using one tool to identify, I knew we were missing a lot of I knew we were missing in that opportunity to identify other kids who could potentially have gifts that we weren't developing .

> *Quote C*: At the end of all of that, we're not identifying a kid gifted if he doesn't have the stanines on the CogAT (Interview, S. Miller, February 27, 2018).

Mrs. Miller clearly believes that the CogAT is the primary "tool" used in the

identification process, or at least the key component of the student profile, despite the fact

that the Virginia code and the Local Plan note that no single criterion should be used in

identification. Mr. Taylor, the Appleton principal, also has a similar belief about how

important the CogAT results are in the identification process.

> It's hard if a kid is in the 5th stanine to put any portfolio together that would really
> convince most people in my mind. And we do have to live within the boundaries
> of the feeder pattern. We are in a school division and we want to be within you
> know the marks if we're sending kids to Baxter Middle. There's a gifted teacher
> there who doesn't want to have to work with kids who aren't gifted. It would make
> his life so it was complicated. So, you want to stay with the balance. Once a kid
> gets below a seven stanine we are probably really looking at… looking at a
> portfolio. We are always looking at the portfolio, but that's where you're trying to
> leverage that.

This quote clearly illustrates the perceived weight of the CogAT not just by him, but by

other teachers and schools which feed to the same high school, as well as the division as a

whole. By tacitly agreeing to "stay in the balance", Mr. Taylor is upholding the belief that

CogAT scores are the most important part of the student profile. Even though he notes

that he and his committee are "always" considering the components of a portfolio, one

could infer that it becomes less important—or is not "leveraged"—if a child scores above

the 7th stanine.

In addition, the GRT at Appleton shared the following vignette with me during

our interview about a particular child whom she had attempted to push through the gifted

identification process for two years. This vignette illustrates how important CogAT data

is when attempting get a child identified as gifted. Please note: I left out any identifying

information about the child, but otherwise the vignette is in Mrs. Grant's own words.

> OK, so one student I'm thinking of right now, this is the student I have worked
> with for the last 2 years. Not identified. So, this one student I've been working

with for 2 years, had her under my radar, and that was mainly because she is kind of like--- she comes across as ditzy.

But when you actually sit down and work with her, which I've luckily had the opportunity to do the last couple years, she's extremely bright. She creates these projects that are above and beyond everybody else in the class. She has great questions, she has great ideas.

So, I brought this up last year. I brought it up saying *"I would really like to nominate this student."*

I had a lot of pushback on that from the teachers. *"I don't see that. Are you kidding me? She does do well on her assignments and her grades but she's so flighty, she's so this, she's so that."*

But I was still allowed to work with her and this year I'd pushed again. So, I said, *"Let's go ahead. I really think we have to nominate her especially before she leaves us. I want to go to her to go to Mr. Wood next year."*

And again, the same kind of conversation came up, but I guess because it was two years in a row, I got the approval or the agreement where everybody was on board and was like, *"Let's go and give it a shot and see what comes up."*

And she did take the CogAT. Got all nines. It was incredible. I mean it was very validating. So, she's just one of these kids that I'm really rooting for but she doesn't stand out (Interview, A. Grant, March 26, 2018).

Even though the GRT attempted to nominate the child over a two-year period, the child was not seen as worthy of being identified until the CogAT scores validated the GRT's other data. The other data that the GRT collected was not valued as much as her CogAT score. Without what was seen as proof of her giftedness, or CogAT scores in the highest stanine, the GRT was unable to successfully get the child through the identification process.

This privileging of the CogAT in policy and practice is problematic because both nationally and in JCPS, CLD students score differentially lower on the CogAT than White or Asian students. Mr. Robinson recently started collecting data on the largest demographics at Wilson: White, Black, and Hispanic students. Though he lost his

spreadsheet due to a file transfer problem when he was issued a new laptop, he was able

to speak to the different groups' performance on the CogAT. He is referring to stanines in

the quote below.

> Looking at last year and the year previous year's CogAT scores… most of our Hispanic students average within six and seven and most of our black students average average right at a seven. And so with scores like that that on a big piece, that take up a big piece of the nomination process, you're going to always need a four pieces of evidence. And that's not necessarily always the case for many of those students. So, if I know that going into it, I can say, "Okay, forget about the CogAT because that's just …one thing— I have all of this." That's part of my reason for talent development.

By using the national norms on the CogAT, JCPS is putting CLD students at a

disadvantage because they will automatically need to produce multiple pieces of evidence

for each domain, while those who score higher on the test—typically White and Asian

students—do not. Mrs. Davis, a classroom teacher, shares why this is problematic in

practice:

> And I feel like the unspoken rule at least at Wilson, it seems like if you have to prove all four then it's pretty unlikely that we're going to find all four; unless this person is like out of this world, gifted in all of their interactions (Interview, March 5, 2018).

Furthermore, the GRT at Appleton also shared that one of her CLD students would not

have been identified based on his CogAT scores without her advocacy for over a two-

year period.

> And then we sat down and met and looked at the CogAT scores and it was not great. So, you know we really pushed for him being identified, but had we relied on the CogAT scores he would not have been identified (Interview, A. Grant, March 26, 2018).

These examples demonstrate the challenges that CLD students face due to the way the

Local Plan privileges CogAT scores and the way they are used in practice. Additionally,

when I asked those involved in my study what they perceived to be the barriers to the

identification of CLD students, the most frequent responses had to do with the use of the

CogAT. Mr. Robinson's quote below highlights the fact that the White students at his

school score higher, thus providing them with more access to the gifted identification

label.

> We see more white families who actually advocate for gifted identification for
> their students than other racial backgrounds. and if those are constantly being
> done, I think you're going to see a higher percentage **if you're not intentional**
> **about focusing on students from diverse backgrounds in the same regard,**
> **our measure of just testing with the CogAT as our primary test for giftedness**
> **tells one story and it's not the best story in terms of who is actually going to**
> **do well on that assessment which is not 9 times out of 10 and it's primarily**
> **White students. And so, they're going to score better on the test and they are**
> **going to have more access to the program. The label for a better word**
> (Interview, J. Robinson, February 19, 2018, **emphasis added**)

Similarly, Mrs. Miller also postulated that the dependence on the CogAT is creating a

pool of identified students who are not diverse.

> **At the end of all of that, we're not identifying a kid gifted if he doesn't have**
> **the stanines on the CogAT, if he doesn't have the academic achievement that**
> **goes with it**. But there are definitely kids sitting inside this building who I think
> have incredible gifts that deserve to be cultivated and when first recognized and
> then cultivated and then used to tap the growth of other areas and I think that's
> where we, **I think that maybe where we fall short on gifted identification. I**
> **think we do gifted the way that Jenkins County says to do gifted and I think**
> **they're really working on that because they think they realized that it's a**
> **very, very select few group of people who get identified that way and that,**
> **that group is not very diverse in its makeup** (Interview, S. Miller, February 27,
> 2018, **emphasis added**).

And, lastly, when I asked Mrs. Williams to determine barriers she answered immediately,

"That dang CogAT. That's it." (Interview, L. Williams, February 2, 2018).

When the policy is examined through the lens of CRT, the high value placed upon

the CogAT privileges those who score well on that test—typically White and Asian

students—and likely leads to the underrepresentation of CLD students identified for

gifted education in JCPS. The policy and enactment do preclude the sole use of the

CogAT score for identification; however, the other data sources do not seem to be as important as a student's score on the CogAT when examining the enactment of the Local Plan. From the above examples it seems that CogAT scores receive preferential treatment by administrators, GRTs, and teachers alike. For example, the vignette shared by the Appleton GRT above illustrates the fact that data other than CogAT results play a secondary role in the identification process, meaning that the policy enactment does not fully align with the intent of either the state or local policy.

When coupled with the way that CogAT scores are used in practice, it becomes challenging for a CLD student to become identified as gifted without extreme advocacy on the part of the GRT or some other person. Reinvisioning the way that the CogAT is presented in the Local Plan and reimagining how the scores can truly become one of many multiple measures used in the identification process should be a future consideration of JCPS.

Summary of the Facilitation of and Barriers to the Identification of CLD Students.
As acknowleged by the JCPS gifted administrator, the issue of underrepresentation of CLD students in gifted education is not only a problem at the national and state level, but it also mirrored within her division. It should be troubling that White and Asian students are sorely overrepresented in the pool of identified gifted students and that CLD students are underrepresented by between 77% and 90%. The facilitation of the identification of CLD students is occurring, albeit inconsistently. The K-2 talent development lessons could provide greater opportunities for CLD students to enter into the pool of potentially gifted students. This will only occur if the purpose and importance of talent development

for *all* students is understood by GRTs and classroom teachers couple with more systematic implementation.

Additionally, according to anecdotal stories shared in interviews with the GRTs from two JCPS elementary schools, CLD students are often identified due to the "hard work" and advocacy of GRTs who are willing to continually push for students to be nominated, tested, and identified despite pushback from others. That pushback is due in part to traditionally held conceptions of giftedess combined with deficit-oriented mindsets towards CLD students. Lastly, the high value placed on the CogAT within the Local Plan and the use of the CogAT data in practice has also serves as another barrier to equitable identification practices.

Chapter Summary

Within this chapter I described the gifted identification policy and process at two JCPS elementary schools and the extent to which the enactment of the policy aligned with stated policy. Next, I described the ways in which the policy and process facilitates and hinders the gifted identification of CLD students. In the next chapter I revisit the findings from this chapter and situate them within the bigger picture of under-representation of CLD students in gifted education. I also provide recommendations for JCPS along with further areas of study.

Chapter 5: Recommendations, Discussion, and Limitations

In previous chapters I discussed the array of educational inequities faced by CLD students in the U.S., one of which is the underrepresentation of those students in gifted education at the national, state, and division level. For this capstone, I sought to assist JCPS examine and address its current practices and policies with regards to gifted identification of CLD students. Based on division and school-level data, CLD students are being identified as gifted at statistically significantly lower rates than their White or Asian counterparts. For this capstone I described the enactment of the district gifted identification policy and process at two elementary schools in JCPS and then discussed the extent to which the enactment aligned with the stated division policy. Secondly, I examined how the enactment of the identification policy facilitates and hinders the identification of CLD populations. In this chapter I provide recommendations regarding the current gifted identification policies and practices in JCPS based on the information collected in my study. I conclude by discussing the limitations of the study and possible future research.

Recommendations

If JCPS is truly interested in educational equity, then the division needs to be serious about "interrogating, exposing, and challenging racist policies and practices" and

be willing to "change areas that undermine the success of people of color" (Milner et al., 2013, p. 350.). This study was conceived in partnership with the JCPS gifted administrator in order to help her address the issue of underrepresentation of CLD students in gifted education. Given the current challenges faced by JCPS in terms of educational equity across an array of measures (e.g., gifted identification, special education identification, suspension rates etc.) it is clear that changes are needed in order for the division to provide a more equitable education to CLD students. Upon my examination of the current JCPS gifted policy and implementation of that policy at two elementary schools, patterns emerged that became my findings. The recommendations in this chapter stem from those findings as well as related research.

Recommendation 1: Provide Educational Opportunities to a Variety of JCPS Stakeholders about the Following Topics: 1) The Disturbing Lack of Access to Gifted Programs that CLD Populations Face Nationally and within JCPS, 2) The Components of the Gifted Identification Process, and 3) The Ways Giftedness Manifests in CLD Populations

In order to increase diversity in gifted education programs, the following stakeholders need targeted educational opportunities:

- Parents and families

- GRTs

- Building-level educators and administrators

Those stakeholders need to be better versed in the issues surrounding inequitable access to gifted education faced by CLD students, the components of the gifted identification policy and process, as well as how giftedness manifests in CLD students.

Educational Opportunities: Inequities in Gifted Education.

While the VDOE and JCPS are committed to increasing diversity in gifted education, it is crucial that the aforementioned stakeholders understand the degree to which underrepresentation is occurring. Prior to making any of the forthcoming suggested changes in policy and practice, all stakeholders need to be aware of the issues surrounding the push to increase diversity in gifted programs and the reasons for the historical and continued lack of access to gifted education for CLD groups. I propose that the JCPS gifted administrator provide statistical evidence about the levels of underrepresentation by using the RDCI data from the Office of Civil Rights to demonstrate the fact that levels of underrepresentation are "significant beyond statistical chance" in JCPS and therefore need to be addressed in a multitude of ways (Ford, 2014, p. 146).

Educational Opportunities: The Gifted Identification Policy and Process.

Over the course of the study the data I collected suggests that the level of knowledge and understanding of the gifted identification policy differs greatly among stakeholders, with the JCPS gifted administrator and GRTs having the most nuanced understandings of the policy and implementation process. Others (e.g., classroom teachers, administrators, and parents) have varying degrees of knowledge and understanding of the various components of the policy, including the recent addition of K-2 talent development lessons, the referral process, and the use of multiple measures in the identification decision.

Parent education. Parent outreach and education, especially for CLD groups, is important. Time and again those involved in this study made mention that those

populations were unaware of the process. This same issue was echoed in a previous

study where African American parents were largely unaware of gifted programs and their

rights as advocates (Michael-Chadwell, 2010; Roda, 2017). According to the VDOE

(2017a) report *Increasing Diversity in Gifted Education Programs in Virginia,*

> Parent education has a significant role in increasing diversity within gifted
> education programs. Parent education informs parents about the gifted
> identification process, gifted curricula, extension and enrichment opportunities, as
> well as effectively advocating for their gifted child. In the statewide survey,
> school divisions mentioned a variety of effective practices being implemented to
> increase parent education of gifted students, services, and policy (p. 7).

Without knowledge about gifted education and how the identification process works,

parents cannot fully advocate for their child or become an active member of the

identification process.

As reported in the previous chapter, despite the lack of exact data points on the

JCPS spreadsheet on who is referring students to the gifted identification process, the

quotes from the interview data indicate that parents and teachers are referring students a

large majority of the time. Quotes from interview data suggest that White, affluent

families have a "feel for the game", while others do not (Reay, 2004, p. 79).

From interviews with each the principals and GRTs, as well as a classroom teacher (Mrs.

Davis) I gleaned information concerning who attends field trips, eats lunch with their

children, are the most active members in the PTO, and who refer their children to the

gifted identification process. According to interviews with various educators at the

division level and at Appleton and Wilson, it appears that White, or White affluent

parents in particular, are the members of the privileged group. In my interview with Mrs.

Williams, she postulated that,

Parents are nominating based on their gifted experience in their schools, thinking what it was and what it meant, and then **I think they're nominating because they want some kind of separation that they're seeking from just the regular kids**. And they want to be able to say "My kid's gifted." (Interview, L. Williams, 2/9/18, **emphasis added**).

When looking at this quote through the lens of Critical Race Theory (CRT), it seems as though the parental desire for separation from "regular kids" closely aligns with the tenet that racism is ordinary (Milner IV et al., 2013; Delgado & Stefancic, 2018). By attaining the gifted "badge of honor" for their children, those parents from the dominant culture are effectively using gifted services as a way to maintain and uphold their elite status and to keep students separated.

One way to address this issue is through parent education. The VDOE (2017a) suggests parent education can and should take many forms including a) opportunities to meet face-to-face at formal or informal events, b) via virtual communications such as websites and social media platforms, and, c) traditional paper communications. One division in Virginia even provides translated materials to families in 4 languages (VDOE, 2017a). I recommend that JCPS examine the ways in which they already provide educational opportunities to families and consider ways to broaden their reach. Additionally, I would further suggest that JCPS target outreach efforts for CLD families about any in-person events and provide interpreters as needed to ensure that those families have access to the information shared.

Education for JCPS educators. In addition to parent outreach and education, building-level educators (e.g., teachers and administrators) also need to be provided with educational opportunities so that they can be better versed in the JCPS Local Plan and

how it is implemented. For example, Mrs. Stanley expressed that she felt there was lack

of clarity around the process,

> I just don't think it's very like it's not very cut and dry at our school. It could be more of an actual program like I mean there are specific directions on interventions on what you have to do with kids before they can become special education— like it should be the same process but there's no clearly defined process (Interview, March 26, 2018).

Even though JCPS has a specified identification process with specific steps (summarized

in Figure 4.1) which include the creation of a pool of students through universal

screening and talent development lessons, the collection of multiple measures, the

creation of a student profile sheet, the use of identification committees to determine

placement, etc.; the above quote highlights a general lack of understanding of the gifted

identification process held by a classroom teacher in JCPS.

In addition to a lack of knowledge about the process generally, teachers and

administrators have misunderstandings about specific components of the process

including the purpose for and role of the K-2 talent development lessons and the CogAT.

For example, during one classroom observation a kindergarten teacher told me,

"Identification at this school is CogAT 2nd grade" (Observation, January 29, 2018). That

sentiment reflects a theme that reappeared many times during the course of this study

from newsletters to interviews. Without understanding how tools such as the CogAT can

and should be used as a tool for developing a talent pool for future consideration as

opposed to a major determinant of identification, underrepresentation of CLD students

will likely continue. When asked about the barriers to the gifted identification of CLD

students Mr. Robinson responded,

> Our division does little to no professional development for gifted education for just general education teachers. And so, if we are not even, or if teachers are not

well-versed in gifted education or have a working understanding of how do you meet the various needs of all learners—well then you can't push or advocate for all students to be a part of something that you're not well-versed in (Interview, J. Robinson, Feburary 19, 2018).

In order to effectively address systemic equity issues then JCPS needs to provide opportunities for teachers to learn about the policies, processes, and procedures that are negatively affecting a large group of students.

Educational Opportunities: The Ways Giftedness Manifests in CLD Populations. As noted in Chapter 4, one of the strategies that JCPS is employing to achieve more equitable representation in gifted education is to "provide professional development for gifted resource teachers on identifying and supporting underrepresented student populations" (p. 5). Though the JCPS division gifted administrator has been committed to providing readings and allowing for discussion around this topic, it needs to be ongoing. In addition to learning opportunities for GRTs, classroom teachers and administrators are also in need of education around this topic. According to the VDOE (2017a), it is imperative for divisions to provide professional learning opportunities:

> National research has found that adequate professional development is central to the effectiveness and success of a gifted program. The NAGC recommends that divisions and schools provide teachers with professional development training that stresses the learning characteristics of underrepresented gifted populations, awareness of cultural differences, understanding of students with multiple exceptionalities, and the use of equitable and non-biased assessments. Another essential component of identifying underrepresented gifted students is training teachers to recognize their own biases, enlightening them about local communities, and recognizing how talents appear in various cultures (p. 7).

 This sentiment was echoed by the JCPS gifted administrator,

> I think some professional learning around how culturally and linguistically diverse students and maybe even students from poverty—just understanding that context a little bit in relation to giftedness. So there has to be more of that but I feel like there's just this constant competing with getting in front of teachers (Interview, L. Williams, February 2, 2018).

177

It is crucial for teachers to have awareness and understanding of their students' stories, backgrounds, cultures, and circumstances outside of school as well as how talents manifest differently across cultures and circumstances. For example, giftedness manifests differently across all groups there several agreed upon indicators across the literature include the ability to solve problems, to learn quickly through experience, having a sense of humor, an exceptional memory, an understanding of relationships among seemingly disparate parts, or acquiring a new language quickly (Ford, 1994; Frasier, 1997). Further, teachers, many of whom are middle-class, White women, need additional training in recognizing their implicit biases and the ways in which those operate as barriers to educational equity for CLD students.

Education is one of the possible ways to shift teacher perceptions and mitigate the combination of unidimensional, traditional conceptions of giftedness and the deficit-oriented frameworks that many educators hold. The findings from this study suggest that educators subscribe to traditional conceptions of giftedness, meaning that they often equate giftedness with particular demographics, namely, White and Asian students, who score well on cognitive ability tests and have a strong command over the English Language. This coupled with deficit thinking leads to teachers acting as gatekeepers to gifted identification process as opposed to being advocates or "talent scouts" (Brulles et al., 2011, p. 306). Providing educational opportunities for teachers and administrators about the ways in which giftedness can manifest differently across cultures and economic status JCPS will enable more educators to advocate for the nomination and identification of CLD students. Increasing the number of other educators who can speak to the ways

that giftedness manifests could help relieve some of the "hard work" and pressure GRTs feel when they must advocate to identify CLD students.

Additionaly, should JCPS administrators decide to provide professional learning opportunities to staff about the gifted identification policy and process, the ways in which giftedness manifests across different populations, and about they ways in which implicit biases and deficit thinking can operate as barriers to educational equity they should consider the following:

- how to embed these learning opportunities within their current structures for professional learning, and

- the characteristics of high-quality professional development (e.g., embedded within the local context for a sustained duration, active learning opportunities, the inclusion of reflection and feedback) (Darling-Hammond, Hyler & Gardner, 2017).

Recommendation 2: Ensure All K-2 Students Have Access to the K-2 Talent Development Lessons by Revisiting the K-2 Talent Development Protocol with GRTs, Principals and General Education Teachers.

Although there are 15 elementary schools in JCPS and I only conducted observations in two, I assume that that the implementation of the K-2 talent development lessons varies across all schools based upon the wide variance I observed. This assumption is supported in part by this quote by Mrs. Williams:

> We have to get …I mean we've put it out there, the K-2 protocol and have implemented, now we need to like collect like informal data about that implementation. Because I will hear when I talk about this to like some K or 1 or 2 teacher and they say: "Oh, really? That's supposed to happen...Oh!" Now, those are schools that have over 600 kids, so I never hear that from a school that has 250. So, their school size really impacts the ability to do the K-2 talent

179

development lessons. We just need to go back and get that tighter. It's too loose (Interview, February 2, 2018).

If talent development lessons are supposed to be an important lever to combat inequities in gifted education it is imperative that *all* kindergarten, first, and second grade students get access to those lessons and curriclulum. The JCPS gifted administrator should situate the importance of enacting talent development lessons within the greater issues related to CLD students' access to gifted programs within the country, state, and JCPS. In order for the talent development lessons to fully integrate into the identification process, the JCPS gifted administrator should revisit the *Implementing the K-2 Critical and Creative Thinking Lessons Protocol* with all GRTs, principals, and general education teachers and should learn more about how each step of the protocol is being enacted—or not enacted—at each school.

If and when the vision for the K-2 talent development lessons espoused by Mr. Robinson and Mrs. Williams in Chapter 4 is fully implemented, then it could lead to a more diverse population in the gifted education program. In fact, Siegle et al. (2016) proposed that divisions should include a "preidentification stage" to the identification process, or provide opportunities for students to engage in a series of "talent emergent experiences" (p. 115). Through the act of co-teaching and co-observation of talent development lessons that focus developing critical and creative thinking skills, classroom teachers would have more insight into what those skills are and how they manifest in students. In fact, if classroom teachers engage in co-planning and co-teaching with GRTs, perhaps these opportunities could become one form of job-embedded professional development to address areas of growth described in Recommendation 1.

Additionally, GRTs would be able to collect artifacts from students over the course of three years because all students in kindergarten, first, and second grade would experience talent development lessons. According to Matthews (2018), schools have the responsibility to provide time for student portfolio creation, especially for those students who may lack the means or the families who lack the knowledge for what evidence looks like. The evidence in the form of student artifacts at the end of each talent development lesson could become instrumental in the creation of a holistic student profile and ultimately provide a pathway for CLD students to enter into the pool of students considered and identified for gifted services independent of evidence from home.

Furthermore, the systematic implementation of talent development lessons could also serve as a lever to educate primary classroom about the various characteristics of critical thinking and creativity and provide a time for classroom teachers to actively look for those in *all* students. Mr. Robinson captured this nicely in the quote below when I asked him how JCPS is facilitating the gifted identification of CLD students:

> I would say the bigger push for talent development is one because it's giving you as the GRT, but hopefully the classroom teacher, the opportunity to see students in a different light. Especially when it is done K-2 whole class with the gifted teacher in a leading role and the classroom teacher in an observing or a support role (Interview, February 19, 2018).

The VDOE further underscores the importance of implementing a robust talent development program. One of the reasons that CLD students are underrepresented in gifted programs in Virginia is due to a lack of access to talent development opportunities as well as a lack of longitudinal, qualitative data on students (VDOE, 2017a). While JCPS has instituted a system for addressing those issues raised by the VDOE, I recommend that the JCPS gifted administrator take time to fully explicate the issues

surrounding gifted identification of CLD groups and how talent development can be used as a lever to combat educational inequity in terms of gifted identification and services. Furhter, she should reiterate the importance of access to talent development for *all* K-2 students as she revisits the *Implementing the K-2 Critical and Creative Thinking Lessons Protocol* with all GRTs. Additionally, she needs to learn about how implementation is going and where issues are arising.

Recommendation 3: Phase Out the Use of Biased Assessments (e.g., the CogAT) in the Gifted Identification Process. Until the CogAT is Phased Out, JCPS Should Change the Way the CogAT Scores are Presented in the Local Plan and in Used in Practice.

Though JCPS administers the CogAT in second grade as a universal screener as a way to provide opportunity and access to gifted programs for all students, the CogAT tests has been found to be biased against students of color, ELs, and students from economically disadvantaged populations (Erwin & Worrell, 2012; Geissman et al., 2013; Peters & Engerrand, 2016). Schools have a moral obligation to provide all students with access to academically rigorous programming so that they can reach their highest potential. By using an assessment that is clearly biased against a large swath of the JCPS population, the school division is unintentionally creating barriers to gifted education for CLD students. JCPS should consider phasing out the CogAT as part of the gifted identification process for CLD students. Until JCPS can find more a more equitable assessment to use in identification, the division should change the way the CogAT scores are used in the Local Plan and in practice because the use of the results as presented in the Local Plan is problematic for CLD populations.

As discussed in Chapter 4, the high value placed on the CogAT scores in the Local Plan has had unintended consequences, namely it contributes to the underrepresentation of CLD groups in gifted education in JCPS. In order for the CogAT to be used as *one of many* measures as opposed to being seen as the *determining* measure, the division should consider the following two ideas with regards to the way the CogAT data is presented in the Local Plan and used in practice:

1) Lessen the "weight" of the CogAT in the Local Plan by either deleting or changing the "Guidelines for Documenting Areas of Strength" on page 11.

2) Implement local norms and group norms to help create a pool of students for consideration in the gifted identification process.

Lessening the "weight of the CogAT. As discussed in Finding 2 and Finding 8 in Chapter 4, the CogAT scores outweigh the other measures used in the identification process and the high value placed on those scores is related to the underrepresentation of CLD students in gifted education in JCPS. When examining the "Guidelines for Documenting Areas of Strength" (also in Figure 4.6) in Figure 5.1., it is obvious that a high score on the CogAT (e.g., an age percentile rank of 95 or above) results in an easier pathway for gifted identification because a student is required to produce fewer pieces of evidence in fewer domains than if they scored below the threshold. By allowing the age percentile rank to be the sole driver for how many domains in which a student must show strength. In turn, this determines how many strong pieces of evidence a student must have to be considered for identification. The way this table is written, and the way in which it is implemented in practice, creates additional hurdles for those populations that score differentially lower on cognitive abilities assessments, particularly Black students,

Hispanic students, economically disadvantaged students, and English Learners (Erwin &

Worrell, 2012; Geissman et al., 2013; Peters & Engerrand, 2016). In essence, this table

creates an overemphasis on testing in the identification process at JCPS, which is a major

barrier to CLD students (Allen, 2017, Ford, 2010).

Guidelines for Documenting Areas of Strength

Nationally Normed Aptitude Assessment	Score Range	Needed Areas of Strengths
CogAT - Screener	Age Percentile Rank of 95 or Above	Evidence of Strength in 2 Domains
CogAT - Full Battery	Age Percentile Rank of 95 or above in 2 of 3 sections/batteries	Evidence of Strength in 2 of 4 Domains
CogAT - Screener	Age Percentile Rank below 95	Evidence of Strength in 4 of 4 Domains
CogAT - Full Battery	Age Percentile Rank below 95 in 2 of 3 sections/batteries	Evidence of Strength in 4 of 4 Domains
Other Acceptable Aptitude Assessment*	Age Percentile Rank of 95 or above for composite score	Evidence of Strength in 2 Domains
Other Acceptable Aptitude Assessment*	Age Percentile Rank below 95 for composite score	Evidence of Strength in 4 of 4 Domains

*Examples include OLSAT, WISC-II, Raven, Naglieri.

Figure 5.1 Guidelines for documenting areas of strength taken from pg. 11 of the Local
Plan.

To make the application of the CogAT test results in the gifted identification

process more equitable I would suggest the following to those in charge of revising the

Local Plan: 1) delete the "Guidelines for Documenting Areas of Strength" table in the

Local Plan, and 2) require all students to present evidence in the same number of

domains. By making this adjustment then the consequential nature of the CogAT

assessment is lessened in the policy, and through education (see Recommendation 1),

could be lessened in practice as well.

An additional way for the use of the CogAT results to be more equitable would be to consider the implementation of local and group norms. This is discussed in more detail in the next subsection.

Implement Local and Group Norms. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the use of assessments in gifted identification is a hotly contested topic. The two proposed solutions presented in the literature are either to use different tests or to use tests differently (Peters & Engerrand, 2016). Given that CLD groups perform differentially worse on two of the most commonly used assessments in gifted identification (the Naglieri Nonverbal Abilities Test and the CogAT), I suggest using the tests differently (Geissman et al, 2013). Contemporary scholars in the field of gifted education champion the idea of using tests differently to create more diverse pools, namely by creating local and group norms (e.g., Peters & Gentry, 2012; Lohman, 2013). Though local and group norms are discussed more in-depth in Chapter 2, I provide the definitions of each below:

- **Local norms:** Similar to the definition of norm-reference tests, using local norms also refers to a "quantitative approach to show the position of an examinee in relation to his or her peer group (Fogarty, 1999). The norming group would instead consist of a group of individuals from the local area (i.e., school or division) (Peters & Gentry, 2012).
- **Group Norms:** This practice relies on comparisons of an individual's results with a group of individuals who have taken the same assessment and who are from the same group (e.g., students who receive free and reduced lunch). "For example, instead of identifying an arbitrary percentage such as the top 10% of all students in a given school as "the gifted," administrators might instead select the top 10% of achievers within the group of students eligible for free or reduced lunch and from those students not eligible for free and reduced lunch" (Peters & Gentry, 2012).

The VDOE (2017a) lauded the use of local and group norms as way to increase the representation of CLD students in gifted education programs. The following example

from the *Increasing Diversity in Gifted Education Programs in Virginia* illustrates the

way one division implemented their use:

> A gifted program should proportionately reflect the diversity of the community. An example of one division that has effectively addressed this perception concern did so through carefully creating identification guidelines that focus on each subgroup within its population. Through consultation with a university, the division developed a program to specifically increase the number of referrals from underserved populations. The consultant recommended that the division administer the CogAT to every first-grade student in the school division so that there was a common measure from which to develop local norms. The top ten percent of each subgroup were referred for gifted screening. For example, the top ten percent of African-American students in the verbal or quantitative category would be identified for talent development, the top ten percent of the Hispanic population in those areas, etc. The division also screened for poverty. They did not screen for twice exceptional learners, because this does not fit a statistical model. Once identified for talent development, these students receive enrichment from the gifted resource teacher assigned to the school (p. 6).

Given that all second grade students in JCPS already take the CogAT on an annual basis,

JCPS has the data required to begin the local norm development process. This is an idea

that is under consideration currently by the JCPS gifted administrator. When I asked her

how she wanted address the underrepresentation of CLD students, she replied

> Instituting local norms for sure. And thinking about identifying students based on their local community, you know rather than the entire division or a national norm…I would love to get something formal in the local plan as an addendum (Interview, February 19, 2018).

In order for the division to implement local and group norms, I would suggest that they

work in concert with someone who is well-versed in the process of developing and

implementing local and group norms, similar to the way the unnamed division did in the

example above. In order for JCPS to begin to address the underrepresentation of CLD

groups in gifted education the CogAT must not be used a gatekeeper. I suggest ending the

use of the CogAT for CLD populations. Until that occurs, the proposed changes to the

policy with regards to lessening the weight of the CogAT coupled with the

implementation of local and group norms could be instrumental in addressing the underrepresentation of CLD groups in JCPS.

Table 5.1 (below) provides a visual of which findings from chapter 4 correspond to the aforementioned recommendations. The findings are separated by research question, therefore more than one finding corresponds to a recommendation. For example, *Recommendation 2: Revisit the K-2 talent development protocol with GRTs* corresponds with both *Finding 3: The vision for and implementation of K-2 talent development lessons varies across schools* and *Finding 5: The identification of CLD students is often dependent upon the ability of the GRT to act as an advocate*. Because the implementation of the K-2 talent development lessons is so variable, revisiting the K-2 talent development protocol is a logical next step. Furthermore, revisiting the protocol could lead to a more distal outcome, namely that GRTs, classroom teachers, and administrators would have a better understanding of the purpose behind talent development and could become advocates for students they might not otherwise have noticed as having talent.

Table 5.1.

Recommendations and Corresponding Findings

Recommendations	Research Questions 1 & 2	Research Questions 3 & 4
1. Provide Educational Opportunities to a Variety of JCPS Stakeholders about the Following Topics: 1) The Components of the Gifted Identification Process, and 2) The Ways Giftedness Manifests in CLD Populations	• <u>Finding 1:</u> A variety of stakeholders can refer students to the gifted identification process; however, referrals are most commonly submitted by parents and teachers.	• <u>Finding 4:</u> Though the Local Plan provides guidance about how to facilitate the equitable representation of students, the enactment of the plan is inconsistent. • <u>Finding 5:</u> The identification of CLD students is often dependent upon the ability of the GRT to act as an advocate. • <u>Finding 6:</u> Many stakeholders within JCPS subscribe to traditional conceptions of giftedness, contributing to the underrepresentation of CLD groups in JCPS's gifted education program. • <u>Finding 7:</u> "I Just Don't See it": Deficit-oriented frameworks held by educators are barriers to the identification of CLD students in JCPS.
2. Ensure all K-2 Studentd have Access to the K-2 Talent Development Lessons by Revisiting the K-2 Talent Development Protocol with GRTs, Principals, and General Education Teachers	• <u>Finding 3:</u> The vision for and implementation of K-2 talent development lessons varies across schools.	• <u>Finding 5:</u> The identification of CLD students is often dependent upon the ability of the GRT to act as an advocate.
3. Phase Out the Use of Biased Assessments (e.g., the CogAT) in the Gifted Identification Process. Until the CogAT is Phased Out, Change the Way the CogAT Scores are Presented in the Local Plan and in Used in Practice	• <u>Finding 2</u>: Multiple measures are collected and analyzed during the gifted identification process.	• <u>Finding 5:</u> The identification of CLD students is often dependent upon the ability of the GRT to act as an advocate. • <u>Finding 8:</u> The high value placed on the CogAT within the Local Plan and use of the CogAT data in practice are barriers to the gifted identification of CLD students in JCPS.

*Note: Some findings correspond to more than one recommendation

Discussion

In the section above I presented a series of recommendations for JCPS to consider as those in division leadership attempt to address the underrepresentation of CLD students in gifted education. Those recommendations are possible ways for JCPS to address the division-specific problem of practice. It is important to remember, however, that the underrepresentation of CLD students in gifted education is part of a much larger issue regarding the inequitable education that students of color, English Learners, and students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds face.

When examining this larger issue through the lens of CRT, it is possible and probable that educational inequities will only be addressed when the interests of CLD students intersect or converge with the interests of Whites (Milner IV et al, 2013; Delgado & Stefancic, 2018). Derrick Bell famously applied this theory, known as interest convergence, to the Supreme Court's unanimous decision to *Brown v. Board of Education*. He hypothesized that "world and domestic considerations—not moral qualms over blacks'plight—precipitated the pathbreaking decision" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 23). Similarly, the new outward focus on educational equity in JCPS is undergirded by reasons beyond the moral obligation of schools to educate all students.

For example, a 2016 internal equity and diversity report illuminated the dismal truth regarding the educational outcomes of CLD students. Mrs. Williams shared,

> Well, I mean I think the first thing was looking at SOL scores and the realization that JCPS was third from the bottom on biggest gaps in data as far as White and nonwhite students. So, if you ranked all of the divisions in the state, you'd find Jenkins county third from the bottom with the third largest gaps.

Suddenly JCPS—a division often heralded as one of the most innovative divisions within the state and nation—was faced with data which could harm that status. Suddenly, the

interests of White elites, or the division leaders, converged with the interests of those working towards educational equity for years. Over the past two years the division leaders have decided to address equity issues not just in conversation, but through policy changes and financial backing. Mr. Robinson summarized the convergence of interests during our interview:

> There has been a core group that have been looking at equity and equity within education for 10 plus years now and so it's funny to hear you know, it's like new… no it's not new. We, some of us have been saying this for quite some time it just hasn't been heard. And our data has been telling the story for some time now and it just hasn't been seen. So I'm happy, I truly am happy and I'm hopeful that we will actually do some things a lot differently to truly make a difference and not just say we are doing things differently that won't make a difference (Interview, February 19, 2018).

As illustrated above, interest convergence theory suggests that in order for policies that actually place race and equity on the agenda, the interests of White elites and people of color, or CLD populations must converge. As noted above, if JCPS, or any educational organization, is truly interested in educational equity, then interrogation and exposure of and challenges to racist policies and practices is imperative. Without this the "undereducation" of CLD students will persist and scores of students will never have the opportunity to reach their full potential (Ford et al., 2017).

Limitations

In this section I discuss the limitations of this study. While I attempted to negotiate and mitigate the threats to the trustworthiness of my study, no study is free of limitations. First, this study is bounded by a particular context, namely two urban ring elementary schools in JCPS. While the findings and recommendations listed above are based on what I learned, the data informing those findings and recommendations is only representative of my time at Wilson and Appleton in addition to an interview with JCPS

190

gifted administrator and division level documents. It is possible that my findings, though representative of the data from those sources, may not represent the other elementary schools.

Secondly, the scope of my study was limited both by time and by the perspectives I chose to privilege. For example, I was in the field for approximately 6 weeks, though not daily. I also did not include student or parent perspectives, and these might be important to include in future studies, as the gifted identification process affects those stakeholders as well. Though I conducted observations of gifted services in kindergarten, first, and second grade, which allowed me to construct a more contextual understanding of the sites and how gifted services are implemented; I only observed a selective portion of the gifted identification process. For example, while I do have a strong sense of what talent development looks like at each school, I did not observe the delivery of services in upper elementary, or witness specific components of the process such as a referral or an identification committee meeting.

Lastly, gifted identification does not take place in a vacuum. Identification should align with the services that are offered to those students who are placed in gifted education. For this division, identification does not typically occur until the end of second grade or later. Due to the scope of my study I was unable to get a broader sense of what gifted services look like and whether they align with the identification process. Determining whether or not the process aligns with the services offered is an area of possible further exploration for the division.

Despite these limitations, I believe that the results and corresponding recommendations from this study will provide JCPS with a portrait of the gifted

identification process at these two elementary schools along with some action steps to take.

Reflection

I began this program three years ago without a clear sense of what I wanted to do or how I would ultimately use my newfound knowledge and skills at its conclusion. Over the course of my time both in the doctoral program and working on this project I realize that it is incumbent upon me to use my position of power and privilege as a White woman to push for equity, access, and justice for underserved populations. Through my research and examination of the gifted identification policy and processes in one school division, I now see how it is possible to tackle the larger inequities faced by so many students in a practical, though incremental way. Upon my return to a K-12 school division next year, I will take these lessons learned and begin the hard process of working to interrogate and challenge other policies and practices that lead to the undereducation of so many students.

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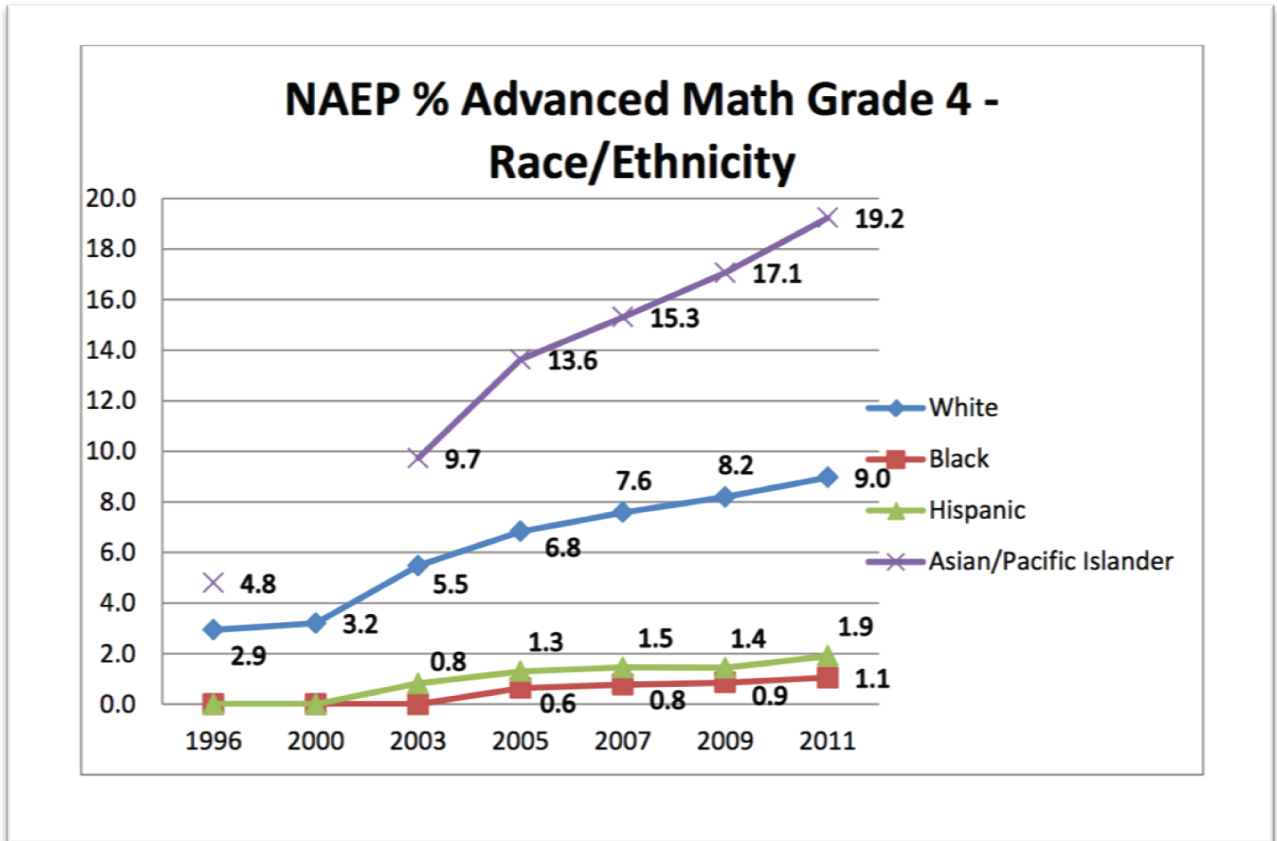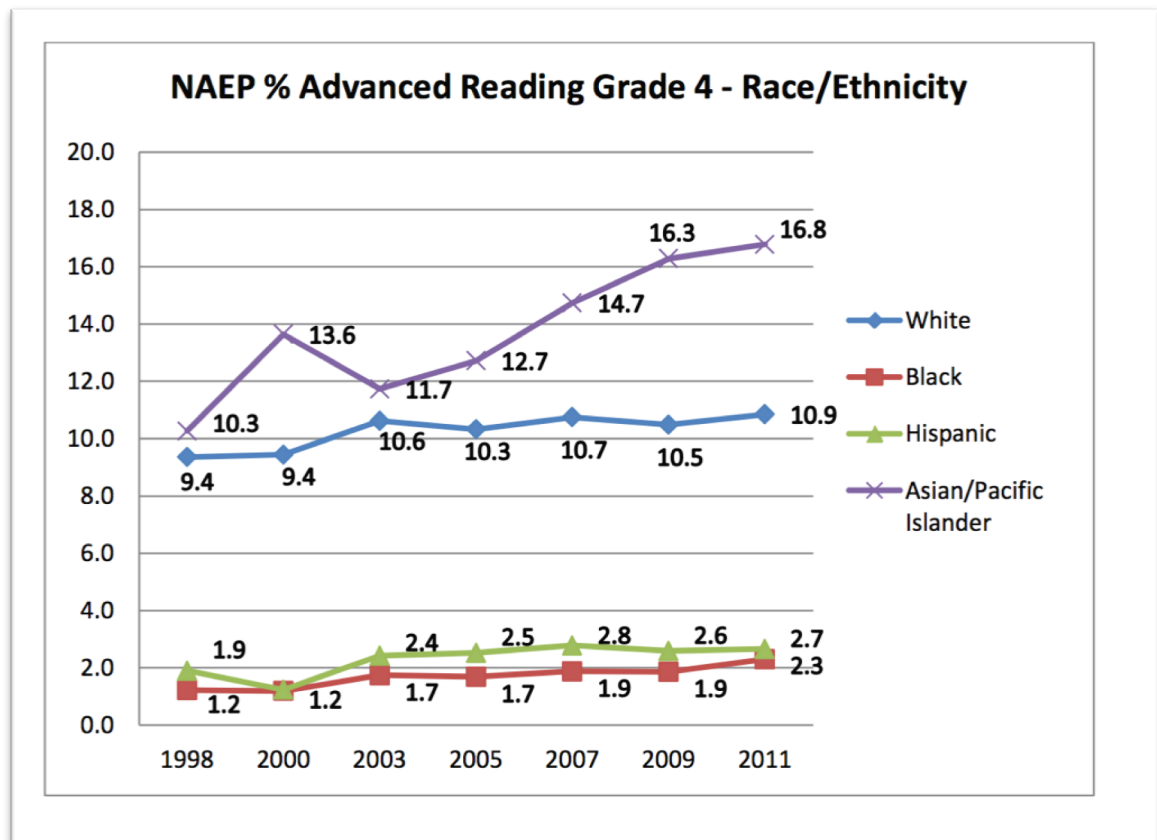
Appendix B

Excellence Gaps by Race/Ethnicity over Time on the NAEP Grade 4 Reading. From Plucker, J., Hardesty, J., & Burroughs, N. (2013) Talent on the Sidelines: Excellence Gaps and America's Persistent Talent Underclass: Center for Education Policy Analysis, University of Connecticut.

Calculations and Interpretations of RDCI and EI

RDCI Calculation and Interpretation

Donna Ford (2014) provides the following formula for calculating RDCI for

underrepresentation:

{[(Composition (%) of African American in gifted education) − (Composition

(%) of American students in general education)] / (Composition (%) of African

American students in general education)}∗ 100.

To illustrate this, we will use data from the Office of Civil Rights from 2011. During that

year our nation was comprised of 19 percent of African American/Black students. The

percentage of those students identified as gifted was 10 percent. To calculate the RDCI

you would do the following:

{[(10) − (19)] / (19)}∗ 100= -47.4

This means that there was a 47.4% discrepancy between representation in schools and

representation in gifted education programs for African American/Black students in

2011.

EI Calculation and Interpretation

Donna Ford (2014) provides the following formula for calculating EI.

 EI is calculated in two steps:

1. (Composition (%) of African American students in general education) ×

    Threshold of 20% = A. This is abbreviated as C ×T = A.

2. (Composition (%) of African American students in general education) − A =

  EI. This is abbreviated as C − A = EI.

From our prior example the EI for African American/Black students in 2011 would be

calculated as:

  1. (19) × Threshold of 20% = A, or 3.8

  1. (19) − 3.8 = 15.2

This means that the targeted goal for the minimum percentage of African

American/Black students identified as gifted in 2011 would have been 15.2%. However,

in 2011 the percentage of African American/Black students identified was 10%, therefore

leading us to the conclusion that "underrepresentation is significant beyond statistical

chance" (p. 146).

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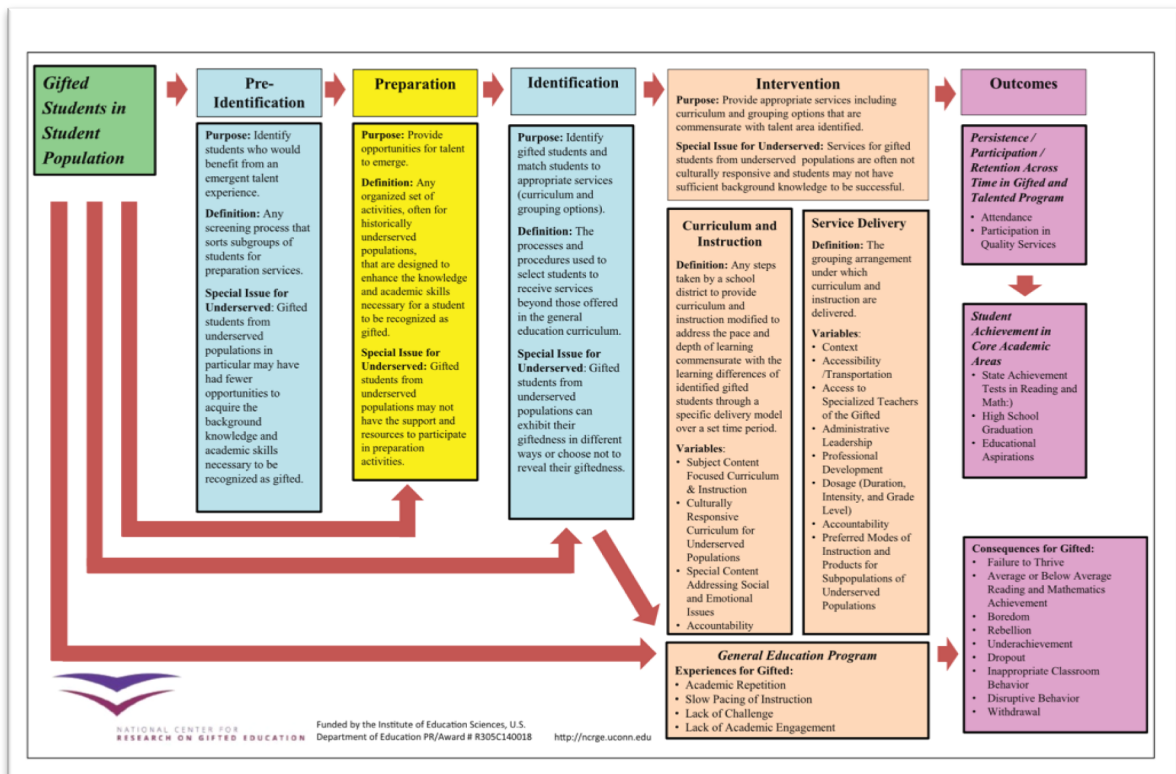
Appendix E

Participant Information: Location, Demographics, Background Information

Participant Name	Role	Demographic Information	Background Information
Jenkins County Public School Division-level Employee			
Lauren Williams	JCPS Gifted Administrator	• White female • Age: Late 40's	• 22 years of education experience • Former elementary and middle school teacher • Former reading specialist and gifted resource teacher • Completed advanced coursework in gifted education
Appleton Elementary			
Ana Grant	GRT	• White female • Age: Late 40's	• Over 20 years of education experience • GRT for 5 years; elementary educator before that in public and Montessori settings • Holds a gifted certification
Lucas Taylor	Principal	• White male • Age: Late 40's	• 20 years of education experience • Appleton principal for 1 year • Prior experience as an assistant principal, division-level administrator, band director • No prior coursework in gifted education
Jessica Stanley	Third Grade Teacher	• White female • Age: Early 30's	• 9 years of education experience • Taught 1st, 2nd, and 4th grades • Sits on the Appleton Equity Committee • No prior coursework in gifted education
Wilson Elementary			
Jason Robinson	GRT	• Black male • Age: Late 20's	• 5 years of education experience • In his second year as GRT • Currently taking coursework in gifted education • Culturally Responsive Teaching division-level trainer.
Susan Miller	Principal	• White female • Age: Early 50's	• Over 30 years of education experience • Prior experience as an assistant principal and elementary educator • Has only worked in majority-minority schools
Alice Jones	4th/5th grade teacher	• White female • Age: Mid 20's	• Currenlty in her 2nd year of teaching • Has had no coursework in gifted education
Julie Davis	1st/2nd grade teacher	• White female • Age: Early 30's	• 6 years in education • Prior experience as a reading specialist • Serves on the Equity Committee • Holds a Masters' in Curriculum and Instruction and is seeking one in Adminstration and Supervision • Has had no coursework in gifted education

Appendix F

Interview Guide: GRT

Interviewer: _____

Interviewee: _____

Date and time: _____

Location: _____

Consent
- Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview and this research project. This interview should take us between 60-75 minutes. The goal of the interviews is to learn about the gifted identification process at _____ elementary school.
- Before we begin, I wanted to let you know that you can end the interview at any point. If any of the questions or discussion makes you feel uncomfortable or you want to stop for any reason, please let me know.
- I will be audio-recording this interview in order to ensure accuracy in my write up of the interview. If you would like me to stop recording at any point or have any concerns about being recorded, please let me know. After transcribing the interview I will delete the recording and keep the transcribed file in a secure location (e.g .UVA Box).

Role and Community
1) How would you describe the school in which you currently work?
   a. demographics
   b. parent involvement
   c. how you think others view the school
   d. your role within the school
   e. relationships among teachers, admin, and parents

2) What does the term gifted mean to you?
   a. definition?
   b. characteristics of gifted children?
   c. describe a typical gifted child who is identified at your school.
   d. What does gifted mean to other stakeholders in your community?
3) How would you describe your role in the gifted identification process?

Identification/Referral Process

I am hoping to gain an in-depth understanding of the identification process at this school. The following questions are related to several parts of the process including referrals, data, talent development, and portfolios.

4) I would like for you to describe this process in as much detail as you can. Think about the data, documents, and activities/meetings involved.
    a. How do nominations/referrals happen?
    b. How often are students referred? How is the decision made to refer students?
    c. Who can refer students? Who actually refers students?
    d. What students are most frequently identified?
        i. Demographics
        ii. School factors (grade level, achievement)

Talent Development
5) What does talent development mean to you? Definition?
6) What portion of your time do you dedicate to talent development to providing services to identified students?
7) How does talent development fit within the gifted identification process at this school/district?
8) Describe the enactment talent development at your school.
    a. Teacher's role? *noticed differential involvement

Data/Portfolios
9) What types of data are used in the identification process?
    a. How is the CoGAT data used?
    b. What kind of documents do you collect?
    c. How do you organize/keep track of your data? (google sheet)
    d. How is it used for the purposes of identification?
10) I would like to know how portfolios are used during the identification process. If you have one could you show me how it would be examined in an identification meeting?

Gifted Services
11) Describe the range of gifted services you provide.
12) Elementary school GRTs often push in and pull out students. I have observed you doing both. How are students selected to participate in push-in or pull-out services?
13) What, if any, kinds of curriculum is used or provided by the division? Your school? Can you provide a copy of any these?

Equity in Gifted Education
14) The division has a fairly new focus on educational equity. For example, there is now an equity dashboard on the website which provides information about

equity gaps in the school division. There is also an increased focus on culturally responsive teaching.

   a. Why do you think the focus on educational equity came about?
   b. What are your thoughts about this focus on educational equity?
   c. In what ways is this focus reflected in the work you do?
15) Take a look at the gifted data from the division's Equity Dashboard. What stands out to you?
   a. What do you notice?
   b. Why do you think the percentages are so different?
   c. Should the division seek to make changes to these percentages? If so, how?
   d. What are potential barriers/challenges to making changes?
16) What do you perceive to be barriers in the identification of students from CLD populations?
   a. Policy
   b. community (schools/division)
   c. community (outside of school)
   d. gatekeepers
17) In what ways do you facilitate the gifted identification of students from CLD groups?
18) In what ways do other educators in the building or division facilitate the identification of students from CLD groups? Community members?
19) In what ways does the division policy facilitate the identification of students from CLD groups?

Personal Information
   20) How long have you been an educator? In this role?
   21) Have you taken coursework in gifted education? multicultural education? If so, tell me about it.
   22) Have you received any professional development about identifying and serving CLD gifted students? If so describe it.
   23) Have you lead any professional development about identifying and service CLD gifted students? If so describe it.
   24) Is there anything else you would like to tell me that I didn't think to ask?
Thank you very much for taking the time to participate and share your experiences

Appendix G

Interview Guide: Division Administrator

Interviewer: _____

Interviewee: _____

Date and time: _____

Location: _____

Consent
- Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview and this research project. This interview should take us between 60-75 minutes. The goal of the interviews is to learn about the gifted identification process at _____ elementary school.
- Before we begin, I wanted to let you know that you can end the interview at any point. If any of the questions or discussion makes you feel uncomfortable or you want to stop for any reason, please let me know.
- I will be audio-recording this interview in order to ensure accuracy in my write up of the interview. If you would like me to stop recording at any point or have any concerns about being recorded, please let me know. After transcribing the interview I will delete the recording and keep the transcribed file in a secure location (e.g .UVA Box).

Role and Community
1) How would you describe the division in which you currently work?
    a. demographics
    b. parent involvement
    c. how you think others view the division
2) What does the term gifted mean to you?
    a. definition?
    b. characteristics of gifted children?
    c. describe a typical gifted child.
3) How would you describe your role in the gifted identification process?

Identification/Referral Process
4) I would like for you to describe what happens when someone refers/nominates a student for gifted education. Please describe in detail then entire identification process. Think about the data, documents, and activities involved.
    a. talent development
    b. data collection and reporting
    c. How often are students referred? How is the decision made to refer students?

215

      d. Who can refer students? Who actually refers students?

Gifted Services
5) What are typical gifted services in elementary school like?
6) What, if any, kinds of curriculum is used or provided by the division? Can you provide a copy of any these?
7) Elementary school GRTs often push in and pull out students. How are students selected to participate in push-in or pull-out services?

Equity in Gifted Education
8) The division has a fairly new focus on equity. How and why did this come about?
9) Read the following statements and tell me what you think about them.
      a. To what extent do you believe these statements?
      b. Do you believe giftedness is equally distributed across all different cultures and demographic groups?
    *The researcher supplied a copy of the following statements:

Statement 1: Outstanding talents are present in children and youth from all cultural groups, across all economic strata, and in all areas of human endeavor

Statement 2: Equity in gifted identification exists when the population of the total division is reflected in the population of the students identified for gifted services.

10) Take a look at the gifted data from the division's Equity Dashboard. What stands out to you?
      a. Why do you think the percentages are so different?
      b. How might the division seek to make changes to these percentages?
11) What do you perceive to be barriers in the identification of students from CLD populations?
      a. policy
      b. community (schools/division)
      c. community (outside of school)
      d. gatekeepers?
12) In what ways is the gifted identification of students from CLD groups facilitated in the division?
      a. division policy?
      b. other educators in the building?

Personal Information
13) How long have you been an educator? In this role?
14) Have you taken coursework in gifted education? multicultural education? If so, tell me about it.
15) Have you received any professional development about identifying and serving CLD gifted students? If so describe it.
16) Have you lead any professional development about identifying and service CLD gifted students? If so describe it.
17) Is there anything else you would like to tell me that I didn't think to ask?

Appendix H

Interview Guide: Key Informant

Interviewer: _____

Interviewee: _____

Date: _____

Location: _____

Consent
- Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview and this research project. This interview should take us between 60-75 minutes. The goal of the interviews is to learn about the gifted identification process at _____ elementary school.
- Before we begin, I wanted to let you know that you can end the interview at any point. If any of the questions or discussion makes you feel uncomfortable or you want to stop for any reason, please let me know.
- I will be audio-recording this interview in order to ensure accuracy in my write up of the interview. If you would like me to stop recording at any point or have any concerns about being recorded, please let me know. After transcribing the interview I will delete the recording.

Role and Community

1. How would you describe the school in which you currently work?
   a. demographics
   b. parent involvement
   c. grade level assignments (multiage)
2. How would you describe your role in the gifted identification process?
3. What do you see as the role of the gifted resource teacher?
4. What do you see as the role of teachers in the identification process?
5. What does the term gifted mean to you?
   a. definition?
   b. Examples of how giftedness may manifest?
   c. characteristics of gifted children?

Identification/Referral Process
6. Describe what you know about the gifted identification process at this school.
   a. Referrals/nominations process
      i. Who refers? Who does not?
   b. Talent development

217

c. Data
7. I'd like for you to think about the last time you sat on a committee to determine whether or not to identify a student as gifted. Please describe in detail your entire thought process. Think about the data, documents, and activities involved.
    a. Teacher role
    b. Parent role
    c. talent development
    d. data collection and reporting
8. To your knowledge what students are most frequently identified?
        i. Demographics
        ii. School factors (grade level, achievement)

Talent Development
Provide some info about talent development (e.g., the school division began the implementation of K-2 talent development lessons last year.
9. What does talent development mean to you?
10. What role, if any, does talent development play in the identification process?
11. How does talent development fit within the gifted identification process at this school/district?

Data/Portfolios
12. What types of data are used in the identification process?
    a. How is the CoGAT data used? Who uses it? Why?
    b. What other kinds of data is collected and discussed? Who is involved in these discussions? (might be covered above)
    c. How is it used for the purposes of identification?
13. I know portfolios are used during the identification process. How is a student determined eligible for services?

Gifted Services
18) Describe the range of gifted services your GRT provides.
19) Elementary school GRTs often push in and pull out students. How are students selected to participate in push-in or pull-out services?

Equity in Gifted Education
14. The division has a fairly new focus on educational equity. For example, there is now an equity dashboard on the website which provides information about equity gaps in the school division. There is also an increased focus on culturally responsive teaching and SEAD teams were implemented this year.
    a. Why do you think the focus on educational equity came about?
    b. What are your thoughts about this focus on educational equity?
    c. In what ways is this focus reflected in gifted education here?

15. Take a look at the gifted data from the division's Equity Dashboard. What stands out to you?
    a. What do you notice?
    b. Why do you think the percentages are so different?
    c. Should the division seek to make changes to these percentages? If so, how?
    d. What are potential barriers/challenges to making changes?

16. What do you perceive to be barriers in the identification of students from CLD populations? Caseload?
    a. policy
    b. community (school)
    c. community (outside of school)
    d. gatekeepers?
17. In what ways do you at your school facilitate the gifted identification of students from CLD groups?
    a. other educators in the school?
    b. Community members?

Personal Information
18. How long have you been an educator?
19. Have you taken coursework in gifted education? multicultural education? If so, tell me about it.
20. Have you received any professional development about gifted students? If so describe it.
21. Is there anything else you would like to tell me that I didn't think to ask?

Thank you very much for taking the time to participate and share your experiences

Appendix I

Observation Protocol

Observer: _____

School/Teacher: _____

Date & Time: _____

Lesson Being Taught: _____

Context description:

Describe the classroom
- Physical space
- Class configuration, ratio of adults/children, demographics, schedule

Describe the enactment of the lesson
- What is the role of the GRT?
- What is the role of the classroom teacher? Other adults?
- How are students being called on/contributing to discussion?
- How are strengths/successes celebrated or ignored?
- What evidence is being collected?

Describe the instructional activities
- What lesson is being taught?
- Does the GRT use the county-adopted K-2 talent development lessons? Other curricular materials used?
- What are the activities?
- What themes are evident (e.g., critical thinking, creativity)?
- What types of teacher-student interactions are observed?
- What evidence is there of rigor? Of student support?

Term	Description/Example
Nomination/Referral	
Nomination/Referral	Any general reference to this part of the identification process. Could include filling out a form, verbal nomination, PLC discussion of a child.
Parent Nomination/Referral	Any mention of parent-specific referrals
Teacher Nomination/Referral	Any mention of teacher-specific referrals
Other Nomination/Referral	Referral to the gifted identification process by someone or something (e.g., CogAT test) other than a parent or a teacher.
Data/Assessment	
CogAT	Any mention of use of this assessment in the identification process
Classroom Assessments	Mention of how teachers/GRTS/Admin look at or use classroom assessments during the gifted identification process (e.g, QRI, SNAP, ACAMB, Rigby, teacher-created assessments)
Other Data	Student work other than an assessment referred to in the identification process. Could possibly be collected to aid in the creation of the student's profile for identification (e.g., projects, anecdotal notes, items sent in from home, photographs, classwork)
Organization	Any mention of how data are organized (e.g., google sheets, files)
Theoretical Framework	
Social Capital	Use this code when there is any mention of membership of people within certain groups or having a certain status that allows them access to information; *or* mention of how the absence of social capital, or membership in particular groups leads to restricted access of information.
Cultural Capital	Those with cultural capital embody certain behavioral styles and ways of speaking, while also knowing that their cultural preferences and cultural knowledge are valued. Additionally, cultural capital is institutionalized in form of degrees, credentials, grades, and test scores that serve to denote cultural distinction. In this case mentions of specific coursework (e.g., AP classes, pull-out classes) or the gifted label could be coded as cultural capital.
Critical Race Theory	A theoretical perspective of race and racism. Use this code when there is a mention of how structures, or policies, marginalize people of color.

CRT: Interest Convergence	Any mention of educational equity that aligns with the theory that white people will support racial justice only when they understand and see that there is something in it for them, when there is a "convergence" between the interests of white people and racial justice.
Gifted Services	
Push-in	Use this code when there is a mention of the GRT pushing in or teaching within a classroom teacher's space to the whole class or small groups.
Pull-out	Use this code when there is a mention of the GRT pulling a small group of students from the regular classroom. This type of service can be for identified students or ones identified as needing this service based on academic need.
Talent Development	Use this code when there is a mention of programs, curricula, or services that are meant to cultivate gifts and talents. Sometimes it is described as a way to identify students' specific talent strengths and focus educational services on these talents. Ex: K-2 talent development lessons
Roles	
Teacher Role	Use this code when a there is an instance of the role that classroom or specialist teachers play in the gifted identification process
GRT Role	Use this code when a there is an instance of the role that the GRT plays in the gifted identification process
Admin Role	Use this code when a there is an instance of the role that the admin plays in the gifted identification process
Parent Role	Use this code when a there is an instance of the role that parents play in the gifted identification process
Conceptions of Giftedness	
Traditional	Use this code when there is mention of "commonly cited characteristics" of giftedness (Moon & Brighton, 2008). Examples: above grade level readers, early language/vocabulary development, exposure to experiences outside of school, hereditary nature, high CogAT scores
Non-traditional	Use this code when there is mention of other characteristics of giftedness not found in "textbook indicators", or any mention of giftedness manifesting differently across cultures or different contexts.
Identification	
Placement Decision	Use this code when there is mention of whether a student was placed for services or not.

Portfolio	Use this code at the mention of the creation of a portfolio either by a teacher or parent.
Equitable practices	Methods or practices used to successfully identify CLD students (i.e., talent development, enrichment experiences, PD around how giftedness manifests in CLD populations)
Inequitable practices	Use this code when methods or practices serve as barriers to the identification of CLD students (i.e., use of cutoff scores, scheduling GRT pushin while ESOL students are not in the room)
Barriers CLD ID	Use this code to note where people/process/policy in JCPS is acting as a barrier to identification the ID of CLD students (e.g., overreliance on testing, deficit thinking)
Facilitation CLD ID	Use this code to note where people/process/policy in JCPS is actively trying to facilitate the ID of CLD students (e.g., gifted teacher as an advocate, mention of equitable representation in the policy)

Emergent Codes

Term	Description/Example
Policy Enactment	
Policy Enactment aligned	Use this code when the enactment of the policy aligns with the language of the policy
Policy Enactment not aligned	Use this code when the enactment of the policy does not align with the language of the policy
Description of sites/people	
Site Description	Use this code for anything that describes information about the context of a site (e.g., demographics, vignette about parent involvement, grade levels etc.)
Participant Description	Use this code for anything that describes information about the participants (e.g., demographics, information on teaching career, PD background etc.)
In Vivo Codes	
"Just don't see it"	Use this code when there is a mention of someone involved in the gifted identification process who uses that terminology.
"Old School Mentality"	Use this code when there is mention of specific viewponits around giftedness from an earlier timeframe. Likely will be co-coded with traditional conceptions of giftedness.
"Serving Two Masters"	Use this code when there is a tension between identification and providing flexible services/talent development opportunities
Other Emergent Codes	
Baton Hand-off	Use this code when classroom teachers "hand off" their classes to the GRT

Appendix L

An Overview of the Gifted Identification Process

Identification
The state requires that schools consider multiple indicators during the identification process. Information is gathered as follows:

1.   **All** nominated students take the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT). Recent (within two years) scores on other tests of ability may also be considered.

6.   The classroom teacher(s) completes the Teacher Information form.

7.   Parents complete the Parent Information form or a written narrative on each nominated student.

8.   The parent may submit a portfolio containing the student's best products that offer evidence of his/her creativity, problem-solving ability, and critical thinking skills. In addition, age-appropriate students may complete the Student Information form.

9.   The Gifted Resource Teacher reviews the cumulative records of nominated students for evidence of exceptional performance (grades, achievement test scores, honors, and awards).

Selection
A school-based identification committee meets on each nominated student and determines his/her strengths in five areas: ability **test scores, performance, critical thinking skills, problem solving, and creativity**. The following criteria guide selection:

-    If a student scores in the 95th percentile by age on two of three batteries of the CogAT (Verbal, Quantitative, Nonverbal) AND demonstrates strengths in two of the remaining areas for consideration, the student will be selected.

-    If a student does not score in the 95th percentile by age on two of three batteries of the CogAT, the student must demonstrate strength in all four of the remaining areas to be selected.

Results & Placement
Recommendation of a student for gifted services does not guarantee that the student will successfully be identified. These guides and forms are tools to help the faculty of our school better understand the talents and abilities that each student already possesses. Students who take part in this process but are not identified by the committee are still an integral part of our school and will continue to be challenged through enrichment and extension activities that are provided to small classroom groups and the entire school.

Parents must give written permission for placement of an identified student

Gifted Services Identification - Teacher Information

Student's Name: _____   **Grade:** _____

Person Completing Form: _____   **Date:** _____

Information you provide on this form will be used by the identification committee. Please provide specific examples for all statements that you feel describe your child. You are <u>not</u> expected to be able to document student achievement or ability in all areas. The evidence you provide is important, but the identification committee will evaluate the student using many sources of information. **In order for the committee to consider this information, please return this form to the gifted resource teacher** _____ **by** _____.

Section 1: Performance

Performance is evidence of accomplishment such as works of exceptional merit, selection for special programs, and products that reflect achievement *well above grade level*.

1. The student has a wide variety of interests or is intensely interested in a single area of study.	*Please circle one of the words below*			
	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Nearly Always
Example(s):				

2. The student learns rapidly and easily and may prefer to learn alone.	*Please circle one of the words below*			
	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Nearly Always
Example(s):				

3. The student seems to know many things that have not been taught.	*Please circle one of the words below*			
	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Nearly Always
Example(s):				

4. The student often works on materials that are two years above his/her current grade.	*Please circle one of the words below*			
	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Nearly Always
Example(s):				

Appendix N

First page of the Parent Input form

Gifted Services Identification - Parent Information

Student's Name: _____   **Grade:** _____

Person Completing Form: _____   **Date:** _____

Telephone Number: _____   **Email:** _____

Information you provide on this form will be used by the identification committee. Please provide specific examples for all statements that you feel describe your child. You are <u>not</u> expected to be able to document student achievement or ability in all areas. The evidence you provide is important, but the identification committee will evaluate the student using many sources of information. **In order for the committee to consider this information, please return this form to the gifted resource teacher** _____ **by** _____.

Section 1: Performance

Performance is evidence of accomplishment such as works of exceptional merit, selection for special programs, and products that reflect achievement *well above grade level*.

1. My child has a wide variety of interests or is intensely interested in a single area of study.	*Please circle one of the words below*			
	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Nearly Always
Example(s):				

2. My child learns rapidly and easily and may prefer to learn alone.	*Please circle one of the words below*			
	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Nearly Always
Example(s):				

3. My child seems to know many things that have not been taught.	*Please circle one of the words below*			
	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Nearly Always
Example(s):				

4. My child often works on materials that are two years above his/her current grade.	*Please circle one of the words below*			
	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Nearly Always
Example(s):				

Appendix O

Elementary Student Portfolio Guide

Gifted Services Identification – Elementary Student Portfolio Guide

Parents of elementary students nominated for gifted services may provide a portfolio for the identification committee. These items are selected by the parent/student from accomplishments within the last three years and should reflect what the parent/student considers his/her best efforts.

The portfolio should provide the identification committee with outstanding examples of **performance**, **creativity**, **critical thinking**, and **problem solving**. Portfolio items are not limited to written work but could include, for example, audiotapes of dramatic works written and performed by the child; videotapes of a skit, presentation, or play; photos, with an accompanying explanation, of a science project or invention; documents related to any special collection the child has; a cartoon developed as part of a school project. Portfolio pieces may have been done for school or for the child's own purposes. The committee does not expect a portfolio to be exceptional in all areas. The portfolio is not graded nor is it compared to other students' portfolios. The portfolio's primary purpose is to provide concrete evidence of performance, creativity, critical thinking and problem solving.

Portfolio Presentation and Content

Parents/students should present well-organized portfolios. Please follow these guidelines:

♦ When possible, keep the size of the portfolio to what can comfortably fit into a file folder. Large works of art, videotapes, and inventions are exceptions.

♦ Limit music, videotape, and other recorded performance submissions to five minutes or less. Starting and ending places should be clearly marked or explained. Computer programs should include information about the type of computer, booting instructions, and any special computer needs. Excerpts from lengthy written works are encouraged. Limit poetry submission to two or three short works representing one or more styles or one longer work. Artwork should be limited to examples of no more than three types.

Portfolio Procedures

Portfolio material will be returned. We will take care to keep portfolio materials safe but cannot be responsible for accidents. Please consider carefully the wisdom of submitting fragile or valuable items. Xeroxed copies of printed material are preferred.

Portfolio material should be delivered to _____ by _____.

If you have questions about portfolio development or the gifted identification process, please ask _____, the Gifted Resource Teacher at our school.

Appendix P

Student Profile Sheet

JENKINS COUNTY SCHOOLS – GIFTED PROGRAM IDENTIFICATION SUMMARY FORM/STUDENT PROFILE

Student's Name _____   Teacher's Name _____   Date _____

Current School _____   Grade Level _____   Student's Birthday _____

A CHECK (✔) IN THE RIGHT-HAND BOX INDICATES A QUALIFYING STRENGTH. A strength is checked <u>only</u> after three qualifying examples are listed.

Standardized Ability Testing			Risk Factors/Unusual Circumstances (ESOL, SES, Special Services)	
Test Administered	**Date**	**Score**		
Problem Solving		☐	**Critical Thinking Skills**	☐
Creativity		☐	**Performance**	☐

School-Based Identification Committee:

_____ Administrator

_____ Classroom Teacher

_____ Gifted Resource Teacher

Date Met: _____ Decision: _____ Placed _____ Not Placed

Jenkins County Public Schools
August 2010

Division-Level Identification Appeal Committee:

_____ Coordinator/Gifted Education

_____ Member of Prior Committee

_____ GRT/Administrator

Date Met: _____ Decision: _____ Placed _____ Not Placed

229

Appendix Q

Local Plan: Talent Development mentions

This document contains the segments of the JCPS Local Plan where talent development lessons are mentioned. Please note: The highlights were added by the researcher to call attention to the specific language about the K-2 talent development lessons.

B.   **Delivery of Services**
Goal – Provide a continuum of services K-12 to meet the academic and socio-emotional needs of gifted learners when their needs are not met by the general curriculum.

Strategies to meet goal:
- Introduce talent development learning experiences K-2 for co-observation of all students by classroom teachers and gifted resource teachers.

E.   **Equitable Representation of Students**
Goal - Use a variety of screening and assessment tools to create a diverse pool of candidates for gifted services.

Strategies to meet goal:
6. Implement talent development learning experiences in grades K-2 in order to observe the potential of all students;

A.   **Screening Procedures (8VAC20-40-60A.3)**

This section should provide screening procedures for each area of giftedness identified and served by the division. These procedures should include the annual review of student data used to create a pool of potential candidates for further assessment. Specific references pertaining to each area of giftedness identified by the division should be clearly indicated.

Screening Procedures for General Intellectual Aptitude

During the year, gifted resource teachers work with classroom teachers and school administrators to create a pool of students for further consideration. In kindergarten as well as first and second grade, gifted resource teachers co-facilitate talent development lessons with classroom teachers each semester. These learning experiences provide an opportunity for teachers to observe all students in activities designed to elicit creative and critical thinking skills.

Appendix R

Protocol
Implementing the K-2 Critical and Creative Thinking Lessons

1. Talk to your administrator about the new K-2 Critical and Creative Thinking Lessons.

2. Go to grade level PLCs (K-2) to explain the purpose and process of these lessons.

   Purpose: To observe the critical and creative thinking potential of all students

3. Set up implementation dates – one between September and December and another between January and April. At a minimum, every student in grades K through 2 experience at least two of these lessons per school year.

   The first lesson for 2015-2016 will be implemented in the Spring.

   For example:

Grade	Fall	Spring
K	Creative lesson	Critical lesson
1	Critical lesson	Creative lesson
2	Creative lesson	Critical lesson

4. Pre-plan with classroom teachers so they are familiar with the lesson as well as the observation checklist.

5. Co-teach lesson with classroom teacher. Each teacher has a checklist as they observe the students working.

6. Classroom teacher and GRT compare their observation checklists. Collect student work if you feel items would be solid portfolio artifacts.

7. Add student names to your gifted nomination watch list as appropriate.

8. Create portfolio system if appropriate.