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Gifted Education in Rural Schools

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Gifted Education in Rural Schools

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Honors Research Project

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Abstract

This report is a summary of the observations and data collected during twenty hours of field work and observation. This project focuses on one child, identified as gifted, in a rural school district with limited resources. The report discusses the student's current level of performance, analysis of the developmental domains (cognitive, language, social, emotional, and motor), accommodations and modifications used by the student's teachers, guidelines determined by the State of Ohio and the W. Local School District, alignment to the state requirements, and suggestions for the improvement of the student's educational experience. The report will explain how the student is developing at an accelerated rate and how the school district is accommodating those needs. This information will be used as a comparison for behavior and performance in school to determine the effect of the environment on the student's educational experience.

Keywords: Gifted education, rural schools, limited resources, developmental domains, accommodations, modifications, and improvement.

Gifted Education in Rural Schools

This project is an in-depth study into the inner workings of gifted education in a rural school setting. The project focused on one student in the fourth grade who demonstrates advanced knowledge and academic skills and was identified as gifted under the guidelines set by the State of Ohio and the Ohio Department of Education. This project will examine the student's environment and classroom settings. The guidelines and policies set by the State of Ohio will also be discussed as well as the district policies of the focus child's elementary school. Each area of development will also be examined to determine the student's overall abilities and levels of performance. The recommendations from the State of Ohio and selected strategies to aid in the instruction of gifted students will also be discussed.

Purpose

The purpose of this project is to examine how limited resources effect the development and learning ability of a gifted student. This project was designed to examine the student's environment and determine what is being done to accommodate the needs of the child while in the general classroom setting. By examining how this student develops and how individual needs are being met, an understanding of how gifted education is integrated into the general classroom setting will be determined. This project also gives insight into accommodations and modifications that can be done when there are limited resources. This project is only an insight into the role of gifted education in rural schools, but the research allows more for a more in-depth analysis to gain useful information for future implementation.

Data Collection Methods

For this project, several methods of data collection were used. The main collection method was observing the focus child in the classroom setting for twenty hours. Detailed

observation notes were taken during each visit. Interviews were also conducted with the focus child, the gifted coordinator for the school district, and the focus child's teachers. These interviews provided necessary and important information regarding the focus child and the policies of the school district. Research was also used to gather information on the definition of giftedness, the state and district policies surrounding the assessment and implementation of gifted services, and Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences. The focus child's academic records were also reviewed to gain information about the child's test scores and past assessments. All of the names used within this report are pseudonyms to protect the identity of the focus child.

What Does it Mean to be Gifted?

According to the Ohio Department of Education, gifted children are, “Students who perform or show potential for performing at remarkably high levels of accomplishment when compared to others of their age, experience, or environment and who are identified under division (A), (B), (C), or (D) of section 3324.03 of the Revised Code” (The State of Ohio, 2015, p. 1). Gifted students perform above the expectations for their grade level and biological age. There is a specific screening process outlined by the State of Ohio to determine if a child is gifted or not, there are also levels and areas of giftedness. A student can be identified as gifted in the Superior Cognitive category, the highest level of giftedness. A student can also be identified in any one or more of the following specific academic ability fields; Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Reading, Writing, or a combination of Reading and Writing, (Ohio Department of Education, 2008, p. 2). A student can also be identified in the Visual or Performing Arts category for drawing, painting, sculpting, music, dance, or drama (Ohio Department of Education, 2008, p. 2). Gifted coordinators have an approved list of assessments that they can choose from to screen and identify students in the various areas of giftedness (Ohio Department of Education, 2015).

The School and its Policies. The focus child of this project attends a rural elementary school in a school district located in Northeastern Ohio (W. Local Schools, 2009). The district has a total enrollment of six hundred and seventy-eight students (Ohio Department of Education, 2014, p. Report Card for W. Local School District). W. Elementary School has a total of two hundred and eighty-five students, with ninety-six point five of those students being of Caucasian descent (Ohio Department of Education, 2014, p. Report Card for W. Elementary School). The district serves two small communities that are located next to each other (W. Local Schools,

2009). Based on the report card given by the Ohio Department of Education, one hundred percent of the teachers in the elementary school have at least their Bachelor's Degree and eighty-one point three percent have at least their Master's Degree (Ohio Department of Education, 2014, p. Report Card for W. Elementary School). The report card also stated that all of the core subjects are taught by certified teachers (Ohio Department of Education, 2014, p. Report Card for W. Elementary School). The staff at this school appear to be highly qualified and certified to appropriately teach the students within the district.

Since the school district is fairly small, they only have one gifted coordinator. Her name is Mrs. Y and she is also the sixth grade Science and Social Studies teacher. Mrs. Y has a Bachelor's Degree of Science in Elementary Education and a Master's Degree of Science in Gifted Education, both were received from Youngstown State University. She also has her National Board Certification as a Middle School Generalist (Y, 2015). Mrs. Y handles all of the gifted screening and assessment for the district. She administers the approved assessments and reports her findings to the district and state as needed. However, there are no direct services available within the district. There are no Advanced Placement (AP) classes or accelerated programs for students who are identified as gifted (W. Local Schools, 2013, p. District Policy for the Identification of and Services for Students Who Are Gifted). The district does have an acceleration policy for advanced learners, there is an application on the gifted education section of its website. An educator, preschool teacher, pediatrician, psychologist, or parent can refer a child for acceleration (W. Local Schools, 2013, p. District Acceleration Policy). The student can be accelerated by specific subject, whole grade, or have early entrance into kindergarten (W. Local Schools, 2013, p. District Acceleration Policy).

To screen and assess the student who is being referred for giftedness, the district follows the definition of gifted by the state and uses a three stage process. The first stage is the pre-assessment where the general education teacher, parent(s) and peers are used as sources of information (W. Local Schools, 2013, p. District Policy for the Identification of and Services for Students Who Are Gifted). Their observations are used to gather data about the student regarding their academic ability and performance. Student work, such as a portfolio and academic records are also reviewed for pertinent information (W. Local Schools, 2013, p. District Policy for the Identification of and Services for Students Who Are Gifted). This screening process allows for all students, including those with disabilities and low socioeconomic backgrounds, to have equal access to screening and further assessment if needed (W. Local Schools, 2013, p. District Policy for the Identification of and Services for Students Who Are Gifted). The second stage is the assessment for screening, during this stage the data that was collected is examined and used to determine if further assessment is needed. The policy states, “School personnel examine all available information about a student to determine if an evidence of possible giftedness exists for that student and conduct necessary additional assessment” (W. Local Schools, 2013, p. District Policy for the Identification of and Services for Students Who Are Gifted). If the student meets the score cut-off for the assessment the district moves to the third and final stage, assessment for identification. The district uses the approved list of assessments to ascertain which tests to give and then determine the student’s level of giftedness based on this information. Western Reserve’s district policy states that, “Once the additional assessment has been completed, the data obtained throughout the stages of identification are evaluated, the identification decision is made and the student’s educational needs are determined” (W. Local Schools, 2013, p. District Policy for the Identification of and Services for Students Who Are Gifted). After testing, the

scores will determine the educational strengths of the child, these scores can determine what services the child will need. These services can include advanced placement or acceleration.

Focus Child- Annie

The focus child of this project is Annie, she is a ten year old girl enrolled in the fourth grade at W. Elementary School. She is the only daughter of Steve and Kathy. Steve is a police officer and Kathy is a pharmacist (W. Local Schools, 2011). Annie loves the color pink and anything to do with dragons. She is constantly reading books about them, drawing them, or creating her own dragon universe in which to play. Annie also loves her stuffed animals and her pet dog and cat. She enjoys spending time with her family. Annie participates in karate and dance class outside of school (Annie, 2015). Annie attended Ursuline Preschool for nine months when she was five years old before attending kindergarten during the 2011-2012 school year (W. Local Schools, 2011, p. Academic Records).

Annie was recommended for gifted screening in kindergarten by her primary teacher in the areas of Reading and Mathematics but also for Superior Cognitive Ability in November of 2011 (W. Local Schools, 2011, p. Academic Records). Annie was tested on January twenty-fifth of 2012 and identified as being gifted in the specific academic areas of Mathematics and Reading. She was given the Woodcock-Johnson test and scored in the ninety-ninth percentile in Reading and the ninety-eighth percentile in Mathematics. This test was used to determine her achievement and gather data. Annie was also given the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scales test that determined her Intelligence Quotient (IQ) at that time was one hundred and nineteen. This was below the score of one hundred and twenty-seven needed to receive the Superior Cognitive distinction but is above the average score of one hundred (W. Local Schools, 2011, p. Academic Records). There has not been any updated gifted information since that initial testing, the gifted coordinator felt that Annie was very young when she was tested and wanted to wait until the

fourth grade to test her again to allow her communication skills and ability to demonstrate knowledge develop (Y, 2015).

Annie also completed the Third Grade Reading Assessment required by the State of Ohio last year and received a score of four hundred and forty-eight, this score placed her in the advanced category (W. Local Schools, 2011, p. Academic Records). The test assessed four categories; acquisition of vocabulary, reading process, informational text, and literary text. In acquisition of vocabulary, Annie scored eight points out of nine. In reading process, Annie received the highest score of sixteen. For informational text, Annie received an eleven out of twelve and in literacy text she received a ten out of twelve (W. Local Schools, 2011, p. Academic Records). This shows that Annie is continuing to excel in the area of reading and is performing at a high level. This further indicates gifted behavior and will add to her further screening and reassessment.

Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences

Howard Gardner a professor of cognition and education at Harvard University's Graduate School of Education developed his theory of multiple intelligences in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Gardner, About Biography of Howard Gardner, n.d.). Gardner authored a book, *Frames of Mind*, that detailed his theory of multiple intelligences (Gardner, Multiple Intelligences, 2011). *The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* states that, "...individuals possess eight or more relatively autonomous intelligences. Individuals draw on these intelligences, individually and corporately, to create products and solve problems that are relevant to the societies in which they live (Gardner, 1983, 1993, 1999, 2006b, 2006c)" (Davis, Christodoulou, Seider, & Gardner, 2012). Gardner has determined that there are currently eight signs of intelligence; spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, linguistic, logical-mathematical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and

naturalistic (MI OASIS, n.d.). Spatial intelligence is, “The ability to conceptualize and manipulate large-scale spatial arrays” and bodily-kinesthetic intelligence is, “The ability to use one’s whole body, or parts of the body (like the hands or the mouth), to solve problems or create products” (MI OASIS, n.d.). Musical intelligence deals with an increased ability to work with singing, playing musical instruments or composing while working with musical elements such as melody, timbre, meter, tone, rhythm, and pitch (MI OASIS, n.d.). Linguistic intelligence is an ability in language, such as the order and meaning of words and how they interact with each other. Using rhythm, meter and inflection to write, such as a poet (MI OASIS, n.d.). Logical-mathematical intelligence is, “The capacity to conceptualize the logical relations among actions or symbols (e.g. mathematicians, scientists)” (MI OASIS, n.d.). Interpersonal intelligence is the effective interaction with other people, such as an understanding of their mood or feelings. Intrapersonal intelligence is the, “Sensitivity to one’s own feelings, goals, and anxieties, and the capacity to plan and act in light of one’s own traits” (MI OASIS, n.d.). The last intelligence, naturalistic is, “The ability to make consequential distinctions in the world of nature as, for example, between one plant and another, or one cloud formation and another (e.g. taxonomist)” (MI OASIS, n.d.). The linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligences appear to be Annie’s most affluent abilities. Since Annie was tested for superior ability in these areas, it hints at her being better skilled in these intelligences. Gardner states that each individual has all of these intelligences but excels in some of them more than others (Davis, Christodoulou, Seider, & Gardner, 2012). This aligns to the Ohio Department of Education’s areas of giftedness. A student can be identified in one or more areas, such as; Superior Cognitive Ability, Reading, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Writing, a combination of Reading and Writing, and the Visual or Performing Arts (Ohio Department of Education, 2008, p. 2). This similarity could

indicate that a child can have the ability to learn and express their gained knowledge in all of the subject areas, but at varying degrees of ability. Annie exhibits multiple intelligences perfectly, she has demonstrated that she can perform exceedingly well in Reading and Mathematics. Nonetheless, she also performs well in the other content areas, such as Science and Social Studies, her grades reflect a good understanding and level of performance (W. Local Schools, 2011, p. Academic Records).

Areas of Development

Language Development-Oral, Written, Reading, and Writing

Language, especially Reading, is one of Annie's greatest strengths in terms of academic ability. This is shown in her third grade state examination, with her advanced score. She is also demonstrating a high level of ability in the ninety-ninth percentile for Reading based on her gifted assessment (W. Local Schools, 2011, p. Academic Records). Annie also shows a love for reading. She constantly has a book on her desk and reads at every available opportunity. She also told me that when she grows up she would like to become an author and write books about dragons, which are currently her favorite animal. When Annie reads to a classmate, she uses different voices and has a lot of emotion, she also uses an appropriate volume. On the other hand, she reads very fast when reading out loud. During one observation, I timed how fast she read one page in her text and it was forty-seconds. For example, during Language Arts one day Annie chose to read aloud to a classmate, while she was reading her partner looked confused and then stopped paying attention all together (Yeager, 2015, p. October 12). It appeared that Annie was reading too fast for her partner to follow along.

Annie also demonstrates successful oral communication ability. She uses a large range of vocabulary and can communicate with her peers and adults. She does tend to communicate more easily with adults, she will go over and talk to her teachers when she is excited about something. Annie appears to be easily frustrated when her classmates do not understand her or do not want to complete an activity the way she does (Yeager, 2015, p. October 5). Her oral communication abilities may be too advanced for her peers to fully understand her so she often chooses to communicate with adults. When listening to others, peers and adults, Annie can remain very focused and intent. She follows directions and usually does not have to be told something more

than once. For example, when given instructions in class Annie sets to work right away even while listening to the rest of the directions (Yeager, 2015, p. September 28).

In terms of writing development Annie shows creativity and ability. During one writing session, she created a comic book about different types of cats with superpowers. She had all of the information organized and each cat had its own special ability. Some cats could see in the dark and some could fly. Each cat also lived in a specific place based on their ability and had their own name (Yeager, 2015, p. October 15). This writing was not an example of length but of Annie's growing knowledge base and her immense level of creativity. Annie also demonstrates little resistance to writing, when asked to do so by a teacher she does without noticeable complaint.

Cognitive Development

Annie has demonstrated a high level of cognitive development based on her previous and present academic performance. Her cognitive development was first noticed in the first few months of kindergarten, when she was referred for gifted assessment and screening (W. Local Schools, 2011, p. Academic Records). Since then her cognitive ability has been expanding and improving. For example, during Math class one day Annie was working on a problem and was struggling to find the answer. So she began trying other methods she had learned to solve the problem. After seeing the problem solved by a classmate she looked at her work and figured out where she was confused (Yeager, 2015, p. September 28). This shows that Annie has developed the ability to learn multiple processes and adapt her thinking to allow for more than one method of doing something. This demonstrates a high level of cognitive ability and understanding.

One of the most recurring and noticeable cognitive related behaviors that Annie demonstrated was organizing her things. Every time she would change lessons or classrooms,

Annie had to get everything she needed out and put in a certain order on her desk. If she forgot something she became very frazzled and upset (Yeager, 2015, p. October 19). It appears that Annie has a routine for every part of her day. One morning there was a fire alarm and Annie came in late from a doctor's appointment and did not get to unpack her things. Annie was so worried about it that her teacher let her leave their bathroom break early to go back to the room and unpack her things. She was very intent on getting things in order and once they were Annie calmed down and was ready to get to work. Annie will also say an answer to herself instead of raising her hand to participate and share in class (Yeager, 2015, p. October 19). These behaviors can sometimes interfere with Annie's daily routine or learning experience. She is focusing on what is bothering her and not what is going on in class. These behaviors seemed very similar to Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD). The Mayo Clinic defines these behaviors as compulsions, "OCD compulsions are repetitive behaviors that you feel driven to perform. These repetitive behaviors are meant to prevent or reduce anxiety related to your obsessions or prevent something bad from happening" (Mayo Clinic Staff, 2013). These behaviors that Annie is demonstrating could be indicators that she is experiencing above normal levels of anxiety and is using them as a way to comfort herself and decrease her anxiety. For example, occasionally during instruction when she is not paying attention, Annie will take out the lens cleaning cloth from her glasses case and fold it or play with it. She will also play with an eraser that she drew on to look like a cat. She will wrap the eraser in the lens cleaning cloth and play with it. This behavior only occurred when Annie was not focusing on the lesson being taught, either because she was bored or because she felt that she already knew the information. These organizing and sorting behaviors occur outside of school as well, Annie will sort her blocks by shape or color.

She used to line up similar candles and small toys as she played with them. These behaviors could possibly indicate OCD compulsions related to an anxiety that Annie is experiencing.

Social and Emotional Development Social and emotional development are where Annie seems to struggle the most. She has friends and seems willing to work in groups. However, she easily becomes frustrated when her classmates do not want to do things the way she would like. During Language Arts one day, she was working in a group with three boys and she wanted to do things in a certain order, but they did not. She became frustrated and began raising her voice. Annie will also tell students to get back on task if she sees that they are talking or fooling around. This in turn makes her classmates confused or mad at her behavior (Yeager, 2015, p. October 19). Even in group settings, Annie tends to work individually if able, such as completing a worksheet. When another student contradicts her or teases her, Annie does not tell them to stop or defend herself. She makes a frustrated face at them and then returns to her work (Yeager, 2015, p. October 19). Based on my observations, it appears that Annie has a difficult time dealing with confrontation and does not know how to handle her emotions fully. She does not lash out at her peers but she also does not address the issue at hand. Annie is an only child so she may not be used to children her own age who do not think the way that she does. When she plays or works on an assignment at home, it is only her doing it so she is used to doing things a certain way. She may also be unsure of how to interact fully with her peers because her home environment is mainly adults.

Motor Development Annie's motor development is also adequate for her age. She is able to walk and run without difficulty. Annie participates in karate and dance lessons outside of school (Yeager, 2015, p. September 21). These activities help Annie exercise and improve her muscle control. In terms of her fine motor skills, Annie is able to hold a pencil correctly to draw

or write. She is also able to use scissors successfully and use a glue stick or any other utensil without issue. Annie loves to draw and construct various projects (Yeager, 2015, p. September 28). These activities demonstrate Annie's ability to use writing utensils and craft supplies successfully, indicating she has well developed fine motor skills.

Accommodations and Modifications in the Classroom Setting

Miss M's Classroom

Miss M is Annie's primary general education teacher for Math and Science. Annie begins and ends her day with Miss M and only transitions to Mrs. S's classroom for Language Arts and Social Studies instruction each day. Miss M's classroom is brightly decorated with instructional and motivational posters. The students sit in L-shaped rows, there is a semi-circle table in one corner and four computers on the opposite side. Miss M also has a Smartboard that she uses for various lessons (Yeager, 2015, p. September 21).

Miss M demonstrates various methods of differentiation in her classroom. Part of her daily Math lesson is an application where students work through grade level activities at their own pace (Yeager, 2015, p. September 21). This allows students to take the time they need without pressure from a time constraint or a speed that does not suit their needs. She also modifies her instruction so that all of the students are given opportunities to participate at a level she knows they can perform well. For example, she assigned a handful of students different problems to solve, she knowingly gave Annie a more difficult problem because Miss M knew that Annie could solve it successfully (Yeager, 2015, p. October 5). Miss M even structures her questions to help students perform at their best level. She will also restate her questions if needed for the students to comprehend (Yeager, 2015, p. October 5).

Miss M also takes the time to make sure her students are engaged. She is constantly walking around the room and making sure everyone is on task. She also changes her voice to capture the students' attention (Yeager, 2015, p. October 5). This method works very well with Annie, she tends not to pay attention when she already knows the information or has completed her work. By using the different voices Miss M makes the learning experience fun and engaging.

This way Annie is engaged in what is going on even if she is just listening to her teacher. On the other hand, Annie is still completing the same work as the other students. There is no advanced course load for her to work on. As a result of this, Annie usually finishes her work quickly. Miss M noticed this and allows Annie to read her book whenever she is finished; this is the general rule for the classroom.

Mrs. S's Classroom

Mrs. S is Annie's Language Arts and Social Studies teacher. Her room is decorated with colorful and informational posters all over the entire room. She also has a large collection of books all over the room on shelves and in bins. In her room, the students sit in groups of four to five desks. There are four computers in her room but there is also a shared cart of iPads for the students to use (Yeager, 2015, p. October 5). Mrs. S uses a lot of direct, clear instruction with her students. There is a known order and system to the classroom that the students follow with ease. Mrs. S integrates Language Arts and Social Studies together in many lessons. For example, the students were learning about the different eras of Native Americans in Ohio. Each group was assigned a different era and they were tasked with creating a short skit about their era with character and props. The students are taking their knowledge of writing and creating characters and combining it with their knowledge of Native American groups (Yeager, 2015, p. October 5).

In terms of modification to meet Annie's academic needs, there is not much that can be done. However, Mrs. S allows the students to choose their own books to read. This allows Annie to select more challenging books and read them at her own pace. Each student also writes a letter to Mrs. S every week about the book they are reading to explain to her what they are reading and what they think about it. This allows the students to show their depth of understanding of their selected text. Mrs. S also meets with her students one-on-one to discuss their letters which also

allows the students to explain what they are reading orally if they have difficulty writing down what they are thinking (Yeager, 2015, p. October 5).

Annie responds well to Mrs. S and shows no signs of resistance or reluctance to do her work. On the other hand, Annie participates less in this class and tends to not pay attention more often. It appears that Annie is less comfortable in this environment. She is usually on task and wants to get her assignments done as quickly as possible. There is very little social interaction in Mrs. S's room. However, Annie will go up to Mrs. S to tell her something she is excited about (Yeager, 2015, p. October 19). This translates back to Annie feeling more comfortable with adults than her peers. Annie might feel out of place in this different environment, sitting with different peers and learning with a different teaching style. Yet she still feels a strong connection to her teacher (Yeager, 2015, p. October 19).

State Recommendations for the Instruction of Gifted Students

State Recommendations

In the *Operating Standards for Identifying and Serving Gifted Students*, Ohio Revised Code 3301-51-15, there are recommendations for the instruction of students who are identified as gifted. The Code states that, “Gifted and talented students need differentiated curriculum and instruction and support services in order to fully develop their cognitive, academic, creative, and artistic abilities or to excel in a specific area, including opportunities to exceed grade level academic indicators and benchmarks” (Ohio Department of Education, 2008). The gifted student can receive these services in many places; general education setting, resource room, self-contained classroom, magnet schools, Advanced Placement classes, dual enrollment opportunities, honors courses, educational options, advanced online programs, and internships (Ohio Department of Education, 2008). The Ohio Revised Code also lists the types of instruction that gifted students should receive, these include; differentiated instruction, high level thought, oral, written, and artistic expression, independent study, in depth study, exploration of career opportunities, acceleration, and mentorships (Ohio Department of Education, 2008). Each of these services and instructional methods are preceded by the word “may”, this indicates that they are suggested but not required by school districts to implement.

How Instruction Aligns to the State Recommendations

The instruction that Annie is receiving aligns to the state recommendations of differentiation, high level thinking, and multiple forms of expression. Her teachers make an effort to challenge Annie appropriately. They do this by having her complete more difficult equations and selected higher level books to read. This helps to ensure that Annie is using developmentally appropriate thinking skills. They are making sure that Annie is getting the right

amount of challenge so that she is learning and expanding her knowledge base. Even though there are no Advanced Placement classes or accelerated programs, Miss M and Mrs. S are encouraging Annie to learn and develop at her own pace. They are doing their best to try and meet Annie's needs. An advanced program could potentially help Annie, but fourth grade and the next few years introduce many foundational techniques and knowledge that Annie will need when she reaches high school and college. Annie's teachers also encourage multiple activities and responses for each lesson, such as the Mathematic application that lets students work at their own pace. The students are taking their gained knowledge from the lesson and applying it in another situation. The weekly letters that the students write also allow for self-expression and varying forms of writing beyond the more formal classroom setting. These skills can be taught outside the classroom but Annie is best served in the general setting where she feels comfortable and confident.

Suggestions to Improve Instruction

Through my observations and investigation into the field of Gifted Education there are some ideas or strategies that I would suggest to Annie's teachers to help them give her the best educational experience possible. The first of these is making sure that she is engaged in the learning process. Miss M and Mrs. S are already aware of this and have done things in the past to try and engage Annie. The most difficult aspect of this is trying to help Annie stay engaged and focused during lessons where she feels that she already knows the information. The Ohio Department of Education has a webpage dedicated to suggesting strategies and resources for educators to use with gifted students. One suggestion, from *Strategies for Gifted Learners*, states that, "Gifted students may need to work individually or in a small group if they have an increased knowledge of a topic or need a faster learning pace" (Ohio Department of Education Office for Exceptional Children, 2011). Annie has demonstrated frustration when her classmates cannot keep the same learning pace as her, working in a smaller group or individually may allow Annie to feel more at ease in the classroom setting. This strategy may also help her focus more on the task at hand since she will be working at a pace of her choice.

Annie also demonstrated some difficulty with social interactions between her and her peers. Usually this frustration or difficulty was the result of a disagreement about an assignment or task that the students were completing. Annie also demonstrated reluctance to communicate with her peers while in the classroom, instead trying to focus solely on the task at hand. Annie's social interactions may be strained because she feels different than her peers and is unable to fully communicate with them. Sabrina Blaas writes that:

Gifted students are known to be sensitive, perfectionists, and experience social isolation, which are all considered risk factors for poor social-emotional difficulties and

underachievement (Blatt, 1995, Dixon & Scheckel, 1996; Jackson, 1998). Furthermore, gifted students are believed to be at risk of both internalizing and externalising problems, including depression, anxiety, anger/frustration, irritability, failure-avoidance behaviour, and low self-esteem (Reis, Neu, & McGuire, 1995; Rimm, 1995). (as cited in Blaas, 2014)

Students who have social difficulties may eventually suffer from underachievement as a way to compensate or deal with their emotions. To prevent Annie from underachievement or further social difficulties, encouraging social interaction and group work in controlled settings may help her to strengthen her social skills. An increase in social skills may help Annie to feel more confident interacting with her peers, this will translate to feelings of safety and acceptance in the classroom. This positive feeling and environment will continue to encourage Annie to perform at the best of her ability and maintain healthy friendships with her peers. Checking in with Annie and asking how she is feeling and interacting might reveal what issues she may be having and can allow for the teacher to give advice or counseling as needed. A report from the 2002 Gifted Task Force, *Gifted in the 21st Century A Report of Findings and Recommendations*, defines an appropriate learning pace, “For a gifted child, the appropriate learning pace is moving through educational material at the child’s level of ability; usually it is rapid pacing, a form of acceleration that creates less risk of stress or emotional problems for the child” (2002 Ohio Gifted Task Force, 2002). This balance of rapid pacing and support is essential to the well-being of the student. An education is not only informational learning, it also has social and emotional aspects.

Conclusions

This project provided an insight into how gifted education is being addressed in a school with limited resources. It showed that despite limited funding and resources, children who are identified as gifted are receiving instruction that benefits them. If educators are willing to adapt their teaching method to fit the needs of a gifted child, then that child can grow and develop at their accelerated pace. Even without the funding or additional resources for an advanced program or resource room, the curriculum can be differentiated to fit the needs of not only gifted students but all students. Seemingly small steps, such as asking various levels of questions during a lesson, can have a lasting impact in the development of a gifted child. This project also revealed that students who are identified as gifted can also have difficulties in different aspects of their development, such as Annie socially. Educators have to remember that even students who are gifted are not perfect and may need assistance academically or personally. Resources are not always required to be paid for, a resource can be found from a reliable source and incorporated into the classroom. If a teacher is willing to put in the time to research and integrate different methods, a positive learning environment can be created for all children. Although a rural school district might appear as a hindrance to a gifted child, in reality the child receives more individualized attention. This results in a higher awareness of the child's needs and a chance to fully meet those needs. A lack of resources is in the eye of the beholder, resources can be found if one is willing to look for them and work to implement them.

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