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Identification Process of Black and Hispanic Students in Elementary Gifted Education

Verschello Maria Nelson
Walden University

Walden University

College of Education

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Verschello M. Nelson

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Review Committee
Dr. Cathryn White, Committee Chairperson, Education Faculty
Dr. Glenn Penny, Committee Member, Education Faculty
Dr. Dan Cernusca, University Reviewer, Education Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost
Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University
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Abstract

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Verschello M. Nelson

MSA, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2010

BS, North Carolina A&T State University, 1992

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

A substantial disparity exists between the proportion of students of color, (SOC), compared to White students in gifted and talented (GT) education. The problem of SOC not being proportionately identified for the GT program relative to the total school population at a Southeastern U.S. suburban school district was the problem addressed in this study. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to identify educators' perspectives of how the GT identification process supports or hinders the identification of SOC. Using Warne's theory of GT identification, and Renzulli's theory of intelligence, the research questions focused on educators' perspectives of how the GT identification process supported or hindered the identification of SOC in local, exemplar districts. Using an appreciative inquiry approach, an approach that is used to strengthen leadership and institutional change processes, 7 exemplar school districts that met the criteria of being geographically near and similar to the target district, and that proportionally served 10% or more SOC in GT than the target district were identified. Interviews of 11 purposefully sampled educators who had: (a) knowledge of the identification process for GT students, and (b) taught or supervised GT students for at least 1 year were interviewed. Open coding, and a priori were used to identify codes, categories, and themes. Educators' perspectives were synthesized into four themes that GT identification was supported by service designs systems that were (a) multifaceted, and (b) student-centered, and GT identification was hindered by (c) institutional culture, and (d) parent language and experiences. The project, a policy recommendation, contributes to social change by providing recommendations to cultivate GT identification and services to promote greater inclusivity and support for SOC in their educational journeys.

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Dedication

This study is dedicated to the three most important people in my life. First, to my late husband, Donald Spencer Nelson. Your unconditional love and support are the reasons why I can complete this journey. You always believed that I could do anything, and your belief in me keeps me going without your earthly presence. Next, I would like to thank my sons, Julien Tyreese, and Elijah Jevon. I am so honored to be your mother. Julien and Elijah, you both inspire me to be the best that I can be every day and all day. I love you both very much. Finally, I would like to thank my Heavenly Father for giving me the strength and perseverance to finish this journey. “God is within her. She will not fail,” Psalm 46:5.

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Table of Contents

List of Tables

Section 1: The Problem

Background

Equitable access has been the foundational ideal of the American education system. Yet, a substantial disparity exists between the proportion of students of color compared to White students in gifted and talented (GT) education (Crabtree et al., 2019). One of the reasons for this underrepresentation of students of color may be the identification system used to classify students for GT education. The Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children, a commonly known intelligence test, has yielded lower scores for students of color (Ecker-Lyster & Niileksela, 2017). Nonverbal examinations were also found to contribute to identification errors and did not identify a larger number of students of color students compared to standard IQ tests (Ecker-Lyster & Niileksela, 2017). Nationally, Blacks and Hispanics represent 42% of students enrolled in schools offering GT education programs, yet only 28% of these students are enrolled in GT education. The National Center for Education Statistics reported 3,202,760 public students are enrolled in GT programs nationally (Siegle et al., 2016). The National Center for Education Statistics annual report indicated that 1,939,266 White students were enrolled in GT education programs nationally, yet only 281,135 Black students and 538,529 Hispanic students were enrolled in the same programs (Siegle et al., 2016).

This educational trend is a national problem (Crabtree et al., 2019; Peters et al., 2019), as underrepresentation of minority students is a “tragic waste of human potential as well as a societal tragedy” (Coleman & Shah-Coltrane, 2015, p. 71).

Regardless of race, gender, or ethnic origin, nurturing the potential of a child in the early years and sustaining such potential have been found to improve student achievement through a focus on an equitable access to opportunities for higher level thinking and learning (Coleman & Shah-Coltrane, 2015; National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2019). Card and Giuliano (2016) and Crabtree et al. (2019) found that traditional identification processes for GT education tend to miss many qualified students. Wright and Ford (2017) found that even though U.S. public schools are increasingly diverse, students of color, particularly Black and Hispanic students, attend homogeneous and multicultural schools where GT education and GT services are limited or nonexistent. Students' access to International Baccalaureate or Advanced Placement courses in their later educational years is important to developing the critical thinking skills needed for university success. Researchers have found that limited or nonexistent opportunities for GT education is problematic because the scarcity of services and opportunities for strengthening students' critical thinking is diminished (Crabtree et al., 2019; Wright et al., 2017).

Renzulli and Reis (2018) focused on GT students as those who, due to their exceptional accomplishments and innovative efforts, have gained recognition. Renzulli and Reis considered a well-defined set of three intertwining clusters that characterize GT students: (a) superior general ability; (b) mission dedication; and (c) innovation, although not inherently superior. Renzulli and Reis concluded that no single cluster is a gift. Rather, the three clusters work together—imagination, above-average skill, and project dedication—to shape a given student's talent.

According to Grissom et al. (2017), researchers consistently have indicated a failure to represent students of color in GT programs. The reasons for disparities in the representation of students of color are complex and include various teacher perceptions of student giftedness across student groups and the use of culturally biased tests to evaluate giftedness as a one-dimensional idea. Identification of GT students of color can vary from school to school. Some differences are credited to state-to-state differences in the definition of giftedness and differences in the identification process of GT students. Even within states and school districts, variation in the implementation of policy can lead to substantial disparity in GT identification (Grissom et al., 2017). Research is limited on district-specific inequity in GT education (Crabtree et al., 2019). The current study investigated educators' perspectives related to the identification process of students of color served in GT programs in one district and how the process may affect the identification of students of color.

The Local Problem

Variations in the GT identification process have resulted in identifying students of color at different rates in school districts. A substantial disparity exists between the proportion of students of color, (SOC), compared to White students in gifted and talented (GT) education. In a southeastern U.S. suburban school district, the local problem addressed by the current study was that students of color were not proportionately identified for the GT program relative to the total school population in the target district. For the purpose of this study, students of color pertained to Black and Hispanic students. The problem represents a gap in practice because it is unknown how the identification

process for GT education results in the disproportionate representation of students of color based on student demographics in the district. The GT identification process can be designed individually by school districts, thereby accounting for the variations in percentages of students of color identified (Peters et al., 2019). GT identification should be based on ratings that are psychometrically sound and objectively accurate to the population being measured, with proven construct validity and reliability. Scores should provide clear inferences regarding the type of product or program being provided (Worrell et al., 2019). According to the guidelines in the GT plan for a district in this southeastern state, the local school district staff strives to meet the needs of GT students from all diverse cultures and backgrounds. In the district GT plan for 2019–2022, the creators of the GT plan acknowledged that a lack of inclusiveness continues to occur in the target school district, and steps must be taken to decrease the underidentification of ethnic minorities in GT education by including multiple criteria for GT student identification. The GT program manager of the local school district (personal communication, November 2, 2018) indicated that the local school district needs to ensure that the GT screening is responsive to traditionally underrepresented student populations.

The identification of underrepresented students for GT services should include more than the traditional assessments of student aptitude and achievement. The National Association for Gifted Children (2019) recommended that the process of identifying students for the GT programs must be based on a variety of assessments, including the selection of psychometrically sound assessments that align with the GT education

program and its objectives. National nontraditional assessments based on research and theory need to be considered in GT student identification, as noted in the target district GT plan for 2019–2022. Nontraditional assessments may include student grades; student performance on authentic assessments; and student portfolio samples, observations, and teacher input (Target District GT Plan, 2016-2021).

School district leadership can influence the design and identification process for GT students. In Tulsa, Oklahoma, school district officials and staff worked to increase the identification of more students from commonly known underrepresented groups for the GT program (Sparks & Harwin, 2017). The Oklahoma school district staff used more diverse testing to decrease the equity gaps in the district's GT education program. The Tulsa school district leadership required every second-grade student to take the Cognitive Abilities Test for verbal and nonverbal ability. The school district leadership also added the Nagilieri Nonverbal Ability Test to help identify potentially GT students who have lower-level English language skills (Sparks & Harwin, 2017).

According to Sparks and Harwin (2017), as students' academic potential increases, their opportunity of being identified as GT should increase also. However, the rate of identification as GT is significantly lower for students of color. In other words, identification as GT does not necessarily mean equal opportunity within schools. In the Oklahoma school district Sparks and Harwin studied, students of color made up 7% of the district population in 2014 but only 2% of GT student population. Similarly, in the target district of this study, in 2019-20, Hispanic students represented 24.5% of the

student population but only 7.6% of the GT identified population; Black students represented 28.5% of the population but only 7.2% of the GT identified population.

Problem in Larger Educational Context

This local problem is representative of a larger educational issue within the United States. In a global society, citizens with advanced and rigorous academic backgrounds are needed (Ford et al., 2016). Underrepresented students miss this important educational opportunity to learn these advanced skills in the classroom (Crabtree et al., 2019; Ford et al., 2016). According to McBee et al. (2016), as well as Peters et al. (2019), student recognition must be matched with the program and services to promote giftedness. The goal of GT recognition for students is to identify students who would benefit from GT services. McBee et al. (2016) and Peters et al. (2019) found that most GT identification and programming policies are at the state level, with some states mandating identification or services and some funding these mandates in whole or in part.

Rationale

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

In a southeastern U.S. suburban school district, the local problem addressed by the current study was that students of color are not proportionately identified for the GT program relative to the total school population in the target district. Specifically, the student enrollment for general education was over 54,000 for the 2019-20 school year. As shown in Table 1, the overall demographic breakdown, as provided in the district student demographics report for 2019-20, does not match the percentage of students identified for GT services. The identification of Black and Hispanic students for GT services is not

representative of the overall enrollment for these student populations. Table 1 reflects the difference regarding the underidentification of Black and Hispanic GT students served in the local district compared to the overall district demographics. Black students represent 28.5% of the general education population but 7.2% of the GT student population. By comparison, White students comprise 40.2% of the general education population but 75.6% of identified GT students. Hispanic students are underrepresented in the local GT education program also. Hispanic students represent 7.7% of the GT student population yet 24.5% of the general education student population.

Table 1

Percentage of District Students and Students in Gifted and Talented (GT) Enrollment by Ethnicity, 2019-20 School Year

Ethnic group	% of student enrollment	% of GT enrollment
Black	28.5	7.2
Hispanic	24.5	7.7
White	40.2	75.6

Note. Total student enrollment = 54,984; GT enrollment = 4,854.

Two identification pathways lead to receiving GT education services at the elementary level in this local school district. Students qualify as GT in reading and math, GT in reading only, GT in math only, or highly academically gifted (HAG) based on the sum of standard aptitude and achievement percentile score, starting at a combined score at 195. GT education services begin in Grade 3 at the elementary level. Currently, the Cognitive Abilities Test is used to obtain the aptitude, and the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills are used for achievement in determining eligibility for GT education services at the

elementary level. Two criteria may qualify students as GT in reading and math. The first criterion to determine eligibility is aptitude only, in which the student scores in the 95th percentile on group or individual IQ test or 95th percentile on achievement test with minimum of 75th percentile on the aptitude test. The second criterion to determine eligibility to receive GT education services in both reading and math is the sum of aptitude and achievement percentile scores of 180 or higher. These criteria are based on the district GT identification pathways document from 2018.

To determine eligibility to receive GT education services in either reading or math, the following criteria for the most recently completed school year, 2019-2020, were used: minimum aptitude of 75th percentile on group or individual IQ test and 95th percentile on math or reading/written language composite, battery, index, total, or cluster percentile achievement test with aptitude at the 75th percentile. Students who meet this criterion are identified as either GT reading or GT math and may receive GT education services for either content area starting in Grade 3. The last criterion is used to determine eligibility to qualify to receive HAG services. Students who score in the 99th percentile on the aptitude test and 95th percentile on the achievement test are identified as HAG. Students also may be identified as HAG if their combined score on the aptitude and achievement tests is 195 or higher. Whereas GT students receive instruction that is one grade level beyond theirs, HAG students receive instruction that is two grade levels beyond their assigned grade level in an all-day self-contained setting.

According to the local school district GT plan, district leaders desire to increase the student enrollment in GT education to include underrepresented student populations.

A specific goal for the GT plan is to provide schools with underrepresentation within GT education the resources to develop enrichment programs and to track the increases in identification of students of color based on participation (district lead GT contact, personal communication, December 14, 2018).

State laws related to identification of students for services affect the how, and respectively which students are identified. Mandates and proportionality are not aligned, according to Peters et al. (2019). Peters et al. (2019) stated that standardized tests may unfairly penalize underrepresented students through potential bias based on race and socioeconomics. McBee et al. (2016) conducted a study that found school districts that relied on teacher nomination for the identification of GT students overlooked more than 60% of GT students compared to school districts that screened all students at least once. As a result of this finding, Oklahoma school districts require every second grader to take the Cognitive Abilities Test (Sparks & Harwin, 2017). The Oklahoma school district also added other tests, namely the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test, to increase the representation of students of color (Sparks & Harwin, 2017).

Assessment practices have been considered a factor when discussing the underidentification of some student groups in GT education. Worrell et al. (2019) found that underidentification in GT education is due in part to assessment practices. Often, teachers are asked to nominate students who perform outstanding academic work and demonstrate giftedness based on standardized achievement test scores. The major problem with GT nominations is historically Black and Hispanic students are passed over because their standardized achievement scores are lower than those of their White student

peers. The heavy reliance on such assessment tools leads to the underidentification of Black and Hispanic students. District school leaders need to include other assessment tools that exhibit a student's giftedness beyond standardized testing. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to identify educators' perspectives of how the GT identification process supports or hinders the identification of students of color. To address the purpose of this study, I used an appreciative inquiry approach (see Cooperrider, 2018; Hung, 2017) to identify school districts that met the criteria as an exemplar district. I studied educators' perspectives, who worked in exemplar district and met the inclusion criteria for this study to address the research questions. Appreciative inquiry is used by researchers to lay a foundation for collaboration thoughtful inquiry related to the strengths of an innovation or educational (see Cooperrider, 2018; Hung, 2017).

Definition of Terms

The following definitions refer to key words associated with GT education and used in the study:

Appreciative Inquiry: Appreciative inquiry involves examining how innovation is supported using best practices, strategic planning, and organizational culture. Researchers found that appreciative inquiry supports strengths-based change, as using this approach results in individuals' values relate to issues or problems to emerge and positively influence practices and processes in organizations (Grieten et al., 2017).

Ethnic minority population: In the United States, the ethnic minority population includes people who are Black or African American, Hispanic, or Latino, Asian

American or Pacific Islander, American Indian, and Alaska Native (Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, n.d.; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020).

Educators: An educator is a person who is employed in a school district and has experience as providing instruction or educating students. (Merriam- Webster, 2021).

Exemplars: Exemplars provide examples of best practice in educational settings (Korsgaard, 2019). In this study, exemplar districts were those with a proportion of students of color enrolled in GT programs at least 10% greater than the proportion at the target district, were demographically like the target district and in the same geographic region as the target district.

Gifted and talented (GT) education: GT education differs state to state but typically is, as described in the North Carolina Statutes, "differentiated educational services beyond those ordinarily provided by the regular educational program" (§ 115C-150.5). In the target district, GT education includes cluster or homogenous-group classes of GT-identified students taught by teachers trained in GT strategies. Students receive advanced instruction by relevant subject (North Carolina Statutes, Article 9b. Academically or Intellectually Gifted Students, 2021).

Giftedness: The National Association for Gifted Children (2019) explained, "Students with gifts and talents perform—or have the capability to perform—at higher levels compared to others of the same age, experience, and environment in one or more domains" (p. 1).

Students of color: A term used for students who identify as Black or African American Latinx or Hispanic, Asian, Native American and/or multiple of aforementioned racial identities (National Association of Independent Schools, 2021).

Significance

This study is significant to the local context because GT education allows students to achieve optimal educational outcomes. These students may not achieve their academic potential without proper identification and services of GT programs and may be underperforming in many instances (Hodges et al., 2018). Hence, educators must accurately identify students who need differentiated services to meet their academic needs and make sure an equitable identification process is set in place providing appropriate learning opportunities to GT students (Hodges et al., 2018). Worrell et al. (2019) found several alternatives have been proposed to address the underrepresentation in GT education. These alternatives include universal screening, reducing the dependence on teacher referrals, using customized local identification procedures, nonverbal ability testing, and performance-based tasks.

With the recent changes in defining giftedness, using IQ tests as the only indicator to identify GT students has received much criticism for educators specializing in GT education (Hodges et al., 2018). As IQ tests are verbal and quantitative, students of color who do not have the opportunity to develop their skills in these areas may not be able to excel in these exams. With the high cut-off scores needed to select students in GT educational programs, differences between students of color and their peers only

increase, making proportional representation more challenging to accomplish (Hodges et al., 2018).

The study is significant to the local school district because the study provides information to help increase insight regarding the identification process for GT education services in the local setting. The study provides unique findings on the identification process of ethnic minority students in GT education that inform the local school district about continuous improvement efforts on identifying GT students of color. As the district staff continue to transform the GT program, the information gleaned from this study allows district officials to collect information to better define simple, equitable, and comprehensive student identification procedures that contribute to appropriate educational services for all GT students.

This study is significant to the profession of education because findings relate to a solution to the long-standing academic achievement gap between White and ethnic minority students (Crabtree et al., 2019). Having access to more rigorous academic classes could help Black and Hispanic students who come from low-socioeconomic backgrounds develop the necessary skills to enter the college- and career-ready track (see Allen et al., 2013; Crabtree et al., 2019). This study supported promoting equity for ethnic minority students at the local and national levels in GT education. This study informed stakeholders regarding potential reasons why students of color are not proportionately identified for the GT program relative to the target district. The study may raise awareness on how to identify GT students of color and improve the equitable access of GT education for this student population.

Worrell et al. (2019) proposed a solution to the underrepresentation in GT education through policy changes but recommended changes in evaluation practices when identifying GT students will help to remedy this problem for disadvantaged students, primarily because of their group membership. Using multiple assessment tools to identify GT students will play a major role in eliminating the achievement gap nationally and globally. This study contributed to the research base helping educators nationwide make necessary changes so that all students can have access to more advanced, rigorous curricula as instructed through GT education. Such changes and equitable access may alleviate the national achievement gap between underrepresented students and their peers (see Worrell et al., 2019).

Educators who can increase access to GT education may permit underrepresented students increased access to challenging curricula, increased enrollment into rigorous educational programs, and increased enrollment in selective institutions of higher education (Worrell et al., 2019). Positive social change occurs when disparities in educational opportunities decrease for underrepresented students who come from low-income families. Eliminating underidentification in GT education may provide opportunities for long-term economic success, affecting families, communities, and society.

Research Questions

In a southeastern U.S. suburban school district, the local problem addressed by the current study was that students of color are not proportionately identified for the GT program relative to the total school population in the target district. The purpose of this

basic qualitative study was to identify educators' perspectives of how the GT identification process supports or hinders the identification of students of color. Using an appreciative inquiry approach (see Grieten et al., 2017; Korsgaard, 2019) school districts containing 10% or more proportional representation students of color than the target district were identified and referred to as *Exemplar* school districts. The research questions that guided the basic qualitative study and focused on educators' perspectives of the proportional identification of students of color in the local exemplar districts of students of color were:

Research Question 1: What are educators' perspectives of how the GT identification process supports identification of students of color in local exemplar school districts?

Research Question 2: How do educators describe barriers to the GT identification process for students of color in local exemplar school districts?

Review of the Literature

At a local school district in the southeastern United States, the GT identification process relies heavily on standardized assessments measuring student achievement and aptitude. These standardized assessments are the sole measure for identifying giftedness. Worrell et al. (2019) stated that the goal of GT education is to cultivate children's talents at the top of the distribution in all areas of endeavor to optimize the lifetime contributions of these individuals to society. With this goal in mind, Ford et al. (2021) stated school leaders may identify and offer developmental opportunities for students not only to show excellent performance, but also to be inspired to create outstanding ideas and works from

early childhood to adulthood consistently. Ford et al. (2021) also stated GT education cannot move forward and have a positive image among the masses unless educators consider the pluralistic nature of society and the importance of proactively striving to achieve excellence and eminence without continuing to neglect equity. School leaders should understand that GT education is about equity and must take the initiative in communicating this message with others.

Michael-Chadwell (2010) conducted a phenomenological study and found many school districts have maintained the status quo for classification processes of potential GT students; screening creates a cultural bias by focusing directly on the quantitative and linguistic abilities of the students as well as IQ test scores. Michael-Chadwell also found school leaders need to improve the scope, supervision, and evaluation of GT programs, especially regarding increasing the number of historically underidentified students in such programs. Michael-Chadwell found embracing a holistic structure of leadership that incorporates models of instructional and transformative leadership can influence the process of organizational change. This transformative approach has the potential to ensure that all students, particularly those underidentified, have an equitable access to rigorous academic programs and curricula.

Identifying GT students should reflect the expectations and goals of the GT program (Peters et al., 2019; Pierson et al., 2012). School officials of both public and private schools are involved in recognizing students who are exceptional and highly qualified. School staff are held accountable for narrowing the achievement gap between White and non-White student groups. Being able to strengthen the identification process

to include underidentified student populations in GT education could facilitate the elimination of the achievement gap that has been prevalent for many years (Crabtree et al., 2019).

Resolving the underrepresentation of students of color in GT education requires examining how teachers cultivate, consider, and react to the ability of each pupil. Different characteristics of students of color may be overlooked due to identifying behaviors or educators' assumptions about the lack of opportunity for these students (Peters et al., 2019). According to Harradine et al. (2014), test bias, insufficient teacher referrals, and deficit-based paradigms contribute to the underrepresentation of students of color in GT education. In many instances, teachers enter the classroom with a lack of cultural awareness; such awareness would support individuals in recognizing and addressing their students' educational, emotional, psychological, and social abilities and needs (Harradine et al., 2014; Peters et al., 2019). In a North Carolina study, Harradine et al. used student systemic indicators to identify academic potential and to investigate educator perceptions of obstacles to recognize this potential in students of color. Harradine et al. examined the effect of the Teacher's Observation of Potential in Students tool on the teachers' capacity to record the academic strengths of elementary students, ages 5–9. Teachers stated using the tool enabled them to observe strengths of their students of color, in poverty, and of linguistic diversity (Harradine et al., 2014). One-fifth of the teachers stated that the study changed their approach on how they observed and recognized their students' academic potential. By carefully documenting students'

strengths, the teachers were able to establish higher expectations for their students of color.

Conceptual Framework

During the identification process for GT education services, many Black and Hispanic students fail to meet the minimum requirements to qualify for GT education services on the intelligence assessments (Crabtree et al., 2019). In this study, I used Warne's approach to identifying giftedness (2016), and Renzulli's three-ring conception of giftedness as the conceptual framework. Warne (2016) stated that the admission to the GT education program should not be solely based on intelligence tests. His discussion included several nonverbal tests, such as Raven's Progressive Matrices and Naglieri Nonverbal Abilities Test, which are used to identify GT students. These nonverbal tests measure nonverbal intelligence. The Iowa Tests of Basic Skills are achievement tests designed to measure academic achievement, and the Cognitive Abilities Test measures cognitive abilities. According to Warne, measures of intelligence assess only phenotypes, not genotypes. Therefore, these assessments only inform educators about the nature and scale of the current group disparity in scores, not potential possibilities, why disparities exist, or how to address or interpret discrepancies in the scores. Although in GT education intelligence is helpful, it should not be the sole predictor of giftedness. When considering GT education, educators should examine those students who demonstrate high ability in areas other than general intelligence. Peters et al. (2019) recommended comparing students within a school, rather than comparing student scores to a national

sample, as well as using group norms to compare students with the same backgrounds or socioeconomic status.

Renzulli identifies in his three-ring model for giftedness, three factors that are important for the development of giftedness. Renzulli and Reis (2018) described three intertwining clusters that characterize GT students: (a) superior general ability; (b) mission dedication; and (c) innovation, although not inherently superior. Renzulli and Reis concluded that no single cluster is a gift. Rather, the interconnected clusters of above-average skill, project dedication, and imagination and creativity shape a student's talent.

These theories provide a conceptual framework for this study because one of the issues for Black and Hispanic students in the identification process of GT education is not meeting the required scores on the assessments used to qualify to receive services from the GT education program. Allen (2017) noted an overemphasis on standardized test scores led to disproportionate selection of students of color for GT programs compared to White students. Erwin and Worrell (2012) commented that IQ centers around schooling because "IQ scores relate to the acquisition of knowledge in school and occupational settings" (p. 77). Whereas intelligence tests may be considered the best indicators of potential, IQ affects schooling and schooling affects IQ, making IQ more of a general predictor of academic performance in reading, math, science, and other academic areas. IQ tests measure constructs associated with IQ such as fluid reasoning, verbal comprehension, perceptual reasoning, working memory, and processing speed (Lichtenberger & Kaufman, 2013). Van Tassel-Baska (2009) found that using nonverbal

assessments for determining identification of GT students was not better at determining intelligence than any other test measure because nonverbal assessments did not align with GT education. Van Tassel-Baska found inclusion in GT education depended on the flexibility of placement in GT education based on how well an identified student could demonstrate academic proficiency.

The Cognitive Abilities Test is the most common nonverbal assessment used in identifying GT students. Carman et al. (2018) found school district leaders mistakenly think that the use of nonverbal assessments will increase representation of students of color in the GT education program. However, these assessments should only be used as part of the GT identification process, understanding that the desired results may not come from the sole use of the Cognitive Abilities Test. Carman et al. also stated school district officials should develop the mindset of using a form of ability testing as part of their identification process as opposed to using ability testing as the sole indicator of giftedness.

Warne's approach to identifying giftedness and Renzulli's three-ring conception of giftedness include alternative constructs for the identification of students who may be gifted. The conceptual frameworks are related to the problem that was the focus of this study pertaining to the disproportionate identification of students of color in GT programs in the target district. The authors of the frameworks suggested alternate assessments to measure giftedness at the elementary level and recommended that educators develop different perspectives on GT identification. Selecting additional measures for identification has the potential to eliminate the lack of inclusiveness in the GT education

program as well as narrow the achievement gap among White, Black, and Hispanic students in the local school district. In the next section, I discuss the broader problem of identifying students of color for GT services in proportional representation to the district demographics and possible issues that may influence this problem.

Review of the Broader Problem

The underrepresentation of students of color in school GT programs is a longstanding national issue (Peters et al., 2019). In this literature review I reviewed scholarly literature related to the problem. I accessed databases that included ERIC, EBSCOhost, Scholar Google, and ProQuest Central. Search terms were *gifted identification*, *biased GT identification practices*, *definitions of giftedness*, *teacher perceptions GT students*, *barriers and racial microaggressions*, and *teacher cultural awareness.* I focused on identifying peer-reviewed literature published in the last 5 years. This review of literature provides the context for the problem of proportional identification of GT students in the target district. The literature I reviewed provided a foundation for the study and context of the problem in the target district. This literature review includes discussions on the following topics: (a) biased identification procedures, (b) the definition of giftedness, (c) teacher perceptions of giftedness, (d) attitudinal barriers and racial microaggression, and (e) lack of educator's cultural preparation.

Biased Identification Practices

A straightforward, evidence-based, and deliberate method to identify GT students is crucial in providing appropriate learning opportunities to GT students. Traditionally, IQ scores have been used to define giftedness with students scoring above a specified

cutoff score as part of the identification process of giftedness. The Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children is frequently used in the identification process of GT students (Hodges et al., 2018). Using only IQ scores to recognize GT students may not identify and represent Black and Hispanic students, preventing the opportunity to develop their talented potential (Hodges et al., 2018).

Another problem with solely using IQ as an assessment of giftedness is the question of validity of using IQ assessments. As IQ assessments are both verbal and quantitative, Black, and Hispanic students who do not have the opportunity to develop their skills in these areas are not likely to excel on these assessments (Hodges et al., 2018). In addition, high cutoff scores are used to identify students for the GT programs. The gap between students of color and their White peers only widens, making proportional representation in GT programs difficult (Hodges et al., 2018). Due to the lack of context, researchers have warned against using IQ as the sole measure of classification. Some researchers have suggested many IQ assessments are racially biased. Therefore, the question should be whether these assessments should be the only criterion for students to classify as GT students (Hodges et al., 2018).

The Definition of Giftedness

The current definition of giftedness may be too restricted because it does not include the emotional, social, kinesthetic, and interpersonal skills of students (Al-Hroub & Krayem, 2018). The impact of creativity should be both considered important and be included in the definition of giftedness to better fit the values and opportunities of underrepresented students (Worrell et al., 2018). Altintas and Ilgun (2016) found that

teachers defined GT children as learning easily, having an awareness of patterns and connections, being creative, understanding above the average level, being curious, being self-motivated, and having an extensive vocabulary. Altintas and Ilgun also found that teachers defined giftedness as a child having a strong desire to learn, strong reasoning skills, and inquisitiveness.

The quality of giftedness is perceived as a trait for some and not others. Worrell et al. (2018) reported a misunderstanding of what defines giftedness. Giftedness is not about a single domain's capacity. Rather, giftedness should be described as what a student is doing in a particular domain with the potential. In other words, giftedness is about what an individual does and not who the individual is. Pfeiffer (2020) examined giftedness as a socially constructed concept, suggesting giftedness is a way to categorize students who perform exceptionally well in academic areas. However, what constitutes giftedness varies by culture and society, and no scientific basis or consensus supports the quality of giftedness (Pfeiffer, 2020).

Pierson et al. (2012) stated that in keeping with the definitions of giftedness derived from the No Child Left Behind legislation, giftedness needs more than the measure of intellectual ability. Children who display giftedness in other domains will be omitted, thus increasing underrepresentation in GT education programs. Hopkins and Garrett (2010) found the federal definition of giftedness continues to promote separation and unequal education. According to the National Association for Gifted Children (2019), the definition of giftedness is when a child's ability is significantly above the norm for the child's age. Hopkins and Garrett expressed that educators need to change

their approaches, mindsets, and expectations when selecting GT students into the GT program. Peters et al. (2019) noted that students should be compared by groups not just by age but by advantages as well, so students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds are compared to each other rather than to students with more advantages. Cooper (2012) also found that the definition of giftedness continues to plague many school officials. School officials' beliefs about what constitutes giftedness may create inconsistencies when identifying GT students. The commonality among researchers (Cooper, 2012; Hopkins & Garrett, 2010; Peters et al., 2019) is their recommendation that multiple criteria for identifying GT students' needs should be considered.

Teacher Perceptions of Underrepresentation in GT Education

Researchers have reported that teachers are the gatekeepers regarding the underrepresentation in GT education and continue to perpetuate the underrepresentation because they underidentify Black students for such programs (Allen, 2017; Peters et al., 2019; Whiting & Ford, 2009). McBee (2010) stated that in GT education, underrepresentation is of critical importance. Addressing underrepresentation causes educators to acknowledge that access based on race and socioeconomics is denied to a large number of students who need advanced educational opportunities. McBee found that the low number of teacher nominations of ethnic minority students into GT education programs is problematic to GT education. Due to the abundance of White, middle-class educators, teachers may not regularly identify the quality of talents displayed in students from diverse cultural backgrounds (McBee, 2010; Peters et al., 2019). This lack of

cultural awareness may result in a lack of teacher nominations of students of color into GT education programs across the country (Allen, 2017; Peters et al., 2019).

As teacher nomination is widely used to identify students for GT programs, understanding the perceptions of teachers is important (Allen, 2017; Carman, 2011; Peters et al., 2019). Hargrove and Seay (2011) conducted a questionnaire study in North Carolina and found teachers who taught Grades 3–5 identified difference in language experiences and the absence of a stimulating home environment as major barriers to participation in GT programs. In the same study, a chi-square analysis indicated ethnic minority teachers were more likely than White teachers to agree educators do not consider the signs of potential talent in Black male students. White teachers perceived intellectual talent is not valued by the Black community and the Black community does not encourage their children to succeed in school. In another study, Allen (2017) found teachers perceived a language barrier as contributing to the underrepresentation of culturally and linguistically diverse students in GT programs. Allen (2017) reported a need for professional development among educators to increase awareness of cultural differences and the underidentification of diverse students in GT education.

Carman (2011) conducted a mixed-methods study to further investigate the stereotypes held by teachers. The findings were 78.8% of teachers held stereotypical beliefs for four or more of the following areas: gender, ethnicity, learning interests, age, talents, and the use of glasses. Teachers were more likely to imagine a GT student who shared similar demographic characteristics to themselves. For example, female teachers were more likely to view female students as gifted, whereas male teachers viewed male

students as gifted. Teacher participants in the study were more likely to imagine a White student as gifted over a student of color. Carman concluded those holding stereotypical thoughts tended to make biased references for GT services. The underrepresentation of students of color in GT programs could be related to teacher referrals and perceptions (Carman, 2011; Peters et al., 2019). Peters et al. (2019) and Morgan (2019) concluded a more diverse workforce of teachers would be needed to prevent underrepresentation of students of color.

Attitudinal Barriers and Racial Microaggression

Ford et al. (2013a) found deficit and prejudicial thinking leads to underrepresentation in GT education, preventing Black students from being considered for GT education screening and identification by teachers. These attitudinal barriers hinder Black and Hispanic students' access to GT education. Ford and Whiting (2016) found that GT education continued to relate to the underrepresentation of students of color. However, after the Supreme Court's second hearing of *Fisher v. University of Texas–Austin* in December 2015, education scholars debated whether students of color would benefit from attending elite, predominantly White universities, because students of color are not prepared to excel at these higher learning institutions. Instead, students of color should attend universities with a slower track where they would do well. This "mismatch theory" created by Justice Antonin Scalia extends to GT education programs. The idea was students who do not meet criteria for giftedness are not included GT programs based on lack of academic proficiency rather than a systemic racial bias. According to Ford and Whiting, the Office of Civil Rights officials revealed White

students represented 49% of the public-school population yet approximately 62% of the GT student population. Students of color represent 19% of the public-school population, yet only 10% of the population of students of color is enrolled in GT education (Ford & Whiting, 2016). This means students of color do not have equitable access to GT education.

Advocacy for changes to these attitudinal barriers must be made by educators to eliminate underrepresentation and improve GT recruitment and retention among Black and Hispanic students. Goings and Ford (2018) described how teachers approach GT students of color using a deficit-thinking approach. In deficit thinking, the teacher assumes the reason for poor school performance is due in large part to the cognitive and motivational deficits of students of color, without holding accountable organizational frameworks and inequitable academic practices that prevent students from learning opportunities (Goings & Ford, 2018). Goings and Ford also found deficit-thinking language indicated stereotypical assumptions about students of color. Such language suggested a mentality that students of color should change to the learning environment instead of the learning environment adapting to the needs of these students.

Microaggression comes from the idea that specific interactions between those of different races and cultures are often disturbing and mostly result in non-Whites being demeaned and insulted (Callahan et al., 2017; Ford et al., 2013b). Racial microaggressions relate to understanding the variables influencing intergroup interactions. Students of color affected by these microaggressions may respond with negative feelings, which contribute to underachievement and then underrepresentation in

GT education. According to Ford et al. (2013b) GT students of color experience three kinds of racial microaggressions: microassaults, microinsults, and microvalidations.

Ford et al. (2013b) explained microassaults are intentional actions, such as commending a GT White student but not a GT Hispanic student who earned the same grade. Microinsults are verbal or nonverbal communications that convey insensitivity in a subtle way to a student's racial identity. An example might be implying a student was admitted to a GT education program to fulfill a racial quota. Microvalidations are communications that negate the experiences or feelings of Black and Hispanic students. An example would be a teacher asking a Hispanic student where they were born, as if the student could not be a U.S. native. These three microaggressions are reminders that both Black and Hispanic students rarely have the privilege of being securely different. Their racial differences from their White student peers yield both overt and covert racial prejudice. To eliminate these microaggressions in GT education, teachers and school leaders must partake in comprehensive multicultural professional development (Ford et al., 2013).

Allen et al. (2013) found that racial microaggressions are prominent at the district and school levels of urban education. These microaggressions continue to stigmatize the school experiences of students of color. Allen et al. (2013) also found school-level microaggressions continue without consideration of the population that the district and school serve. Districts and schools act as agents of racial microaggression by expressing sociocultural signals to reinforce students' feelings of inferiority. Unconscious internalization of microaggressions may impact the well-being of students.

Academic tracking policies act as a microaggression at the district and school levels, minimizing educational experiences of students of color. These academic tracking policies support ability groups of students by high, moderate, and low academic achievement. Students with high academic success are put on higher paths, usually leading to advanced, rigorous courses and 4-year universities, whereas students with lower academic performance are placed on an academic track often leading to vocational occupations. This practice of academic tracking has affected student achievement because this difference in access to education and services perpetuates broad educational inequities (Allen et al., 2014). The disparities between overrepresentation of students of color in special education as well as their underrepresentation in GT education has served another systematic microaggression (Allen et al., 2014). According to Allen et al. (2014), students of color are not afforded the equal and equitable educational opportunity as their White peers. This lack of equal educational opportunities greatly contributes to the social and economic classifications between students of color and their White peers, often putting students of color towards the bottom of the social hierarchy.

The underidentification of Black and Hispanic students in GT education functions as a systematic microaggression. Ford et al. (2013a) proposed effective ways to engage and maintain students of color to reduce the underidentification by integrating culturally relevant practices to tackle educational, social, and cultural obstacles in the classroom. According to Ford (2014), an effective way to reduce the underidentification of Black and Hispanic students is to set equity goals to desegregate GT education. Ford proposed raising the equity allowance to 20%. This equity allowance recognizes giftedness in all

racial and cultural groups. An equity allowance allows doors to open for those students who would not be identified and served in GT programs. The second effective way to reduce the underrepresentation of Black and Hispanic students, according to Ford (2014), is to collect data on the experiences of GT students of color. Gathering and analyzing information from culturally different students and their parents regarding their life experiences can be beneficial when identifying students of color for the GT education program. The third effective way to reduce underrepresentation is to expand the educators' preparation in GT education. In most teacher education programs; preservice teachers receive little to no training in GT education. Therefore, educators are not adequately equipped to properly identify GT students.

Ford (2014) proposed that preparation for GT education should be continuous and substantial. GT teacher preparation should focus equitable assessments, policies and procedures for identification, and evaluation, affective development, social and cultural development, and appropriate curriculum and instruction for GT students from all backgrounds. Ford (2014) as well as Allen (2017) emphasized that reducing underrepresentation of students of color depends on analyzing the educators' ability to identify GT students and to improve educators' cultural preparation for meeting students' needs. Teachers should understand the diverse needs of students and their various ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

Lack of Educator Cultural Preparation

Peters et al. (2019) suggested more diversity among educators would help prevent underrepresentation of students of color in GT programs. According to Ford (2014),

comprehensive cultural diversity preparation helps to guarantee equitable changes and progress in education. Professional development on diversity and cultural differences must be continuous and significant. Providing opportunities for teachers and school leaders to become immersed in the various cultures of student groups is important for the increase in social equality in GT education programs. Ford (2014) found valuing the culture of students of color while understanding how different subgroups vary (e.g., Mexican, Cuban, Puerto Rican, etc.) creates an atmosphere culturally responsive to the academic necessities of culturally different student groups. Educators who are not prepared to work with culturally diverse students compromise the educational journey for these students and contribute to underidentify such students in GT education.

Szymanski and Shaff (2013) conducted a qualitative study to gain an understanding of teachers' perceptions pertaining to identifying and instructing Hispanic GT students in the classroom. The school district personnel participating in the study served a student population of 900, of whom 64.5% were Hispanic students. Five percent of the total student population were identified as GT learners. At the conclusion of the qualitative study, Szymanski and Shaff found teachers had minimal to nonexistent training in working with diverse, low-income GT students and relied on their personal beliefs to offset their lack of professional development in identifying and accommodating Hispanic GT students. Teachers frequently did not understand cultural behaviors and values contributing to diverse students' learning. Therefore, professional development was needed to improve teachers' efficacy in teaching GT students and their cultural competency when interacting with diverse student learners (Szymanski & Shaff, 2013).

Implications

The purpose of this study was to identify educators' perspectives of how the GT identification process supports or hinders the identification of students of color. In this study, I examined the current identification process and the current barriers preventing a local school district from effectively implementing an inclusive GT identification process. The literature review and findings from the collected data informed a project as the outcome of the study. The project focuses on recommendations for changes to the identification process that promote equitable access for all GT learners at the elementary level in the target district. The study findings informed recommendations for policy development through the development of a position paper, regarding how students are identified to receive GT education services at the elementary level and the professional development needed for educators to support change in pedagogical practices. The project genre is a position paper with recommendations for a policy change that will focus on changes to the identification process to promote equitable access for all GT learners at the elementary level in the target district.

Summary

The local problem addressed in the study was that students of color are not proportionately identified for the GT program relative to the total school population in the target district. Black students represented 28.5% of the general education population but only 7.2% of the GT student population. Hispanic students represented 7.7% of the GT student population yet 24.5% of the general education student population. According to the local school district GT plan, district leaders desire to increase the student

enrollment in GT education to include underrepresented student populations. The problem represents a gap in practice because it is unknown how the identification process for GT education results in the identification of disproportionate representation of the target district student demographics. The problem is broad; a substantial disparity exists between the proportion of students of color compared to White students in GT education (Crabtree et al., 2019). After examining state-mandated data to identify and serve GT students, Siegle et al. (2016) found White students were more than 3.5 times likely to be identified as GT than Black students who were not eligible for free and reduced-price lunch, 12 times more likely than Black students who are eligible for free and reduced-price lunch, and more than 15.5 times more likely than Hispanic students to be identified as GT. Siegle et al. also found that to optimize the academic growth of the underrepresented students, educators must find the barriers that prohibit inclusiveness for Black and Hispanic students in GT education.

Researchers have reported underrepresentation in GT education is due to the assessment practices in school districts (Allen, 2017; Erwin & Worrell, 2012; Peters et al., 2019). Teachers often overlook nominating students of color because often their standardized scores are lower than their White peers. McBee et al. (2016) found that the identification of GT students relied heavily on teacher nomination, resulting in a large percentage of GT students being overlooked. To increase the representation, some districts require elementary students to take the Cognitive Abilities Test and other tests, such as the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test (Lee et al., 2021). The rationale and evidence

of the problem were provided to establish that the problem was both a local concern and one in the larger educational setting.

The data presented support that the issue of underidentification in GT education is significant to the local setting as well as to the profession and social change. This local issue becomes a bigger issue that affects the profession nationwide. Determining solutions to underidentification student populations in GT education could create positive social change throughout the education profession locally and nationally if potential solutions are identified, adopted, and implemented. Therefore, the purpose of this basic qualitative study was to identify educators' perspectives of how the GT identification process supports or hinders the identification of students of color. The significance of this problem was discussed regarding social change implications, as data were gathered from educators knowledgeable of the GT identification process in exemplar districts, where a higher proportion of students of color are in GT programs. Identifying the educators' perceptions of the supports and barriers of the GT identification of students of color in these exemplar districts provided information to inform stakeholders in the target district regarding variations of the GT identification process that could support the identification of students of color. Finding a lasting solution to this issue throughout the local setting and profession would permit traditionally underidentified students of color access to an academically rigorous education that could help eliminate the achievement gap between students of color and their White student peers (see Crabtree et al., 2019; Hodges et al., 2018; Worrell et al., 2019). The literature review and data collection provided a context for the problem that was the focus of this basic qualitative study. I developed two

research questions to guide the study, related to educators' perspectives of how the GT identification process supports identification of students of color in local exemplar school districts and educators' descriptions of barriers to the GT identification process for students of color in local school districts.

In Section 2, I present the methodology used to complete this basic qualitative study. This section includes the research study design and approach, participants, data collection, role of the researcher, and data analysis. The methodology section is presented in enough detail that other researchers could replicate the study. I conclude Section 2 by summarizing the research findings and describing the project deliverable, a white paper with recommendations for policy development.

Section 2: The Methodology

A substantial disparity exists nationally between the proportion of students of color compared to White students in GT education (Crabtree et al., 2019). Students of color are not proportionately identified for the GT program relative to the total school population in the target district in a southeastern state. In the district GT plan for 2019–2022, the creators of the GT plan acknowledged that a lack of inclusiveness continued to occur in the target school district and noted that steps should be taken to increase the identification of ethnic minorities in GT education by including multiple criteria for GT student identification. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to identify educators' perspectives of how the GT identification process supports or hinders the identification of students of color.

For the nature of the research questions in this research, qualitative research provided an opportunity to delve into a situated activity to gain a deeper understanding of the target subjects' world in their natural setting. The use of a basic qualitative study was appropriate for this study because the goal was to explore in depth educators' perceptions related to the identification process of GT students in a local, exemplar school districts.

Qualitative Research Design and Approach

Qualitative research presents in a variety of forms, such as narrative studies, phenomenological studies, grounded theory, ethnography, case studies, and basic qualitative studies (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Yin (2018) concluded that a qualitative case study design should be considered when the study's primary focus is to answer "why" and "how" questions or when the researcher believes that contextual conditions are

relevant to the phenomenon of focus and necessary to have a true picture of the phenomenon. Qualitative research design involves continuous data reflection, analytical questions, and making interpretations. Qualitative data analysis is often performed at the same time as data collection and interpretation, and narrative reports are generated (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Justification of Design

For this study I used a basic qualitative design. Although other qualitative design approaches were considered, a basic qualitative study was appropriate to develop a comprehensive understanding of the underrepresentation of students of color in the target school district's GT education program (see Yin, 2018). A qualitative study design allowed for capturing the essence of real-time thoughts of the participants regarding the identification processes that facilitate and or hinder inclusiveness in GT education programs of school districts in a Southeastern state. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) indicated that qualitative study design methods were helpful for obtaining the perceptions of participants surrounding a given phenomenon so that current views could inform the researcher about the phenomenon being studied.

There were other potential candidates for the selection of the research design in this study. A narrative study uses numerous analytical practices and is rooted in various disciplines of society and humanities. Narrative studies collect stories from people, documents, and group conversations about lived and spoken experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018). These stories may be told to the researcher or may be a collaboration from both the researcher and the participant. Therefore, strong collaboration

is featured in the narrative research through the interaction of the researcher and the participant (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). A narrative design was not suitable for this study because the procedures for implementing this type of research would not help to discern the teachers' perceptions related to the GT identification process of students of color and how the process facilitates or hinders identification of students of color.

According to Creswell and Poth (2018), a phenomenological research methodology explains the common meaning of a theory or phenomenon for individuals through their lived experiences. Creswell and Poth stated that phenomenology centers around the description of the commonality of what the participants have experienced; phenomenological studies reduce the individual's experiences with a particular theory explaining the universal experience of a population. Certain forms of phenomenology also allow the researcher to bracket biases and to discuss their personal experiences with the phenomena while setting these personal experiences aside to focus on the participants' experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A phenomenological study approach was not suitable for this study because the researcher focuses entirely on the participants' thoughts and beliefs and lived experiences without including his/her own experiences into the findings of the study.

A grounded theory research study moves beyond description to discover a theory for a particular action. Participants in a grounded theory study would have experienced the action. However, the making of the theory would provide a framework for further research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The making of the theory is grounded from the data generated from the participants who have experienced the particular action. Grounded

theory research would not be appropriate to generate an identification process for GT students based on a general explanation of why underrepresentation has occurred in the elementary GT education program. A general explanation might be ill suited and not explain all the experiences that have resulted in the underrepresentation of Black and Hispanic students.

Ethnography is a qualitative design in which the researcher describes and interprets common and learned patterns of a culture-sharing group's behaviors, beliefs, ideas, and language (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher becomes immersed in the daily lives of the culture-sharing group to study the learned patterns of behaviors, beliefs, and ideas. The researcher also observes and interviews the participants to learn the norms of the culture-sharing group. An understanding of cultural anthropology is useful when conducting ethnographic research. Ethnography allows the researcher to develop an understanding of the culture of those being studied as well as their natural settings (Hammersley, 2018; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983). By simply studying the artificial simulations through experiments or interviews, the researcher cannot understand the social world. To restrict social behavior research to such settings, therefore, is to discover only how people conduct experiments and interview situations (Hammersley, 2018; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983). Ethnography was not appropriate for this study because the need to learn the culture of the research participants was not relevant or necessary.

Finally, a case study was also considered. Merriam (2009) stated that a "case study is an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single entity, phenomenon, or social unit" (p. 46). Case study research involves the study of a case within a real-life,

contemporary context or setting (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). In a qualitative case study, a researcher seeks to find meaning, investigate processes, and gain insight into understanding of an individual, a group, or a situation (Lodico et al., 2010). Stake (2013) stated that a case study is particular and not generalized. A researcher investigates a particular case and gets to know the case well to see what makes the case different from others. The uniqueness of the case and applying the knowledge of others to understand the case make qualitative case studies explanatory. A case study design, however, typically involves multiple sources of data, such as documents, surveys, and interviews to develop a comprehensive understanding of the context (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In this study, I collected data through interviews and through reviewing archival information pertaining to GT education that I obtained through open public records on local exemplar districts' webpages. Consequently, the scope of the study extended to seven local exemplar districts to gain deeper insight on the phenomenon of the disproportionate identification of students of color in GT programs.

To summarize, because the local problem was that students of color are not proportionately identified for the GT program relative to the total school population in the target district, the basic qualitative design was appropriate for this study. The problem represents a gap in practice because it is unknown how the identification process for GT education results in the identification of disproportionate representation of the target district student demographics. The basic qualitative design was beneficial to identify the different viewpoints of the participants to gain a deeper understanding of the factors that inhibit inclusiveness for the GT education program in local school districts in a

southeastern state. The data obtained through this study may provide stakeholders with information regarding possible solutions to reduce the underrepresentation of Black and Hispanic students in a GT program. With information to deepen understanding of the practices surrounding students' of color receiving proportional services in the GT program, target district educators may be better informed regarding ways to identify students of color more equitably in the GT program. Additionally, the student achievement gap between White students and students of color could be reduced at the local level.

Participants

The following sections include a description of the setting and population, a school district in a southeastern state. I describe the criteria for selection of the exemplar districts as well as participants. I explain the sampling procedures and access to participants. The researcher–participant relationship is discussed as well as protections and ethical treatment of all study participants.

Setting and Population of the Target District

The target school district was the fourth largest school district in southeastern state and the 81st largest in the country. The school district served 55,000 students and included 42 elementary schools, 14 middle schools and 15 high schools. For the 2017-18 school year, the target school district served 25,493 elementary students. Student demographics for the 2017-18 school year were as follows: 40.2% White, 28.5% Black, 24.5% Hispanic, 4% multiracial, 2.5% Asian, and less than 1% American Indian or

Native Hawaiian/Pacific. In 2017-18, 63.5% of district students were classified as economically disadvantaged.

The local problem addressed by the current study was that students of color were not proportionately identified for the GT program relative to the total school population in the target district. The problem represents a gap in practice because it is unknown how the identification process for GT education results in the identification of disproportionate representation of the target district student demographics. Other districts in the state that were (a) geographically near the target district, (b) demographically similar to the target district and (c) served 10% or more proportionate identification of students of color in the GT program were used for sampling. Districts meeting these criteria were labeled as exemplars. The perceptions of the participants in the exemplar districts that contained more accurate proportional representation of students of color in the GT programs compared to the overall district demographics were selected as the exemplars did not reflect the problem identified in the target district; these exemplars represented greater proportional representation and therefore would support studying district exemplars from an appreciative inquiry approach (see Grieten et al., 2017; Korsgaard, 2019). The information gleaned from the participants in the exemplars provided information to help address the problem at the target district. To examine the phenomenon of students of color not being proportionately identified for the GT program relative to the total school population in the target district, I used an appreciative inquiry approach to examine how school districts that were demographically like the target district were identifying a higher proportional representation of Black and Hispanic

students. Demographic variables used for selection included racial breakdown and the percentage of economically disadvantaged students. The appreciative inquiry is to strengthen leadership and institutional change processes (Grieten et al., 2017). Appreciative inquiry involves examining how innovation is supported using best practices, strategic planning, and organizational culture (Grieten et al., 2017). I named the school districts I identified for educator recruitment exemplars (see Korsgaard, 2019). The identification of the exemplars was necessary to pursue recruitment of educators in the exemplar districts to better understand the phenomenon of the best practices for identification of students of color for GT services. Using the appreciative inquiry approach, I deducted that the participants recruited from the exemplar districts would have perceptions regarding the gap in practices pertaining to more proportional representation of Black and Hispanic students in GT programs. I describe the process for selecting the exemplar. In the next section, I describe the process for selecting the exemplar districts.

Criteria for Selection of Local, Exemplar Districts

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to identify educators' perspectives of how the GT identification process supports or hinders the identification of students of color. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), "the researcher should purposefully select participants or sites that will best help the researcher understand the problem and research questions" (p. 178). Using an appreciative inquiry approach that involves studying the strengths of systems, local, exemplar districts were selected. Selection of the exemplar districts was purposeful, and I used a set of criteria to identify local, exemplar districts.

The first criterion for the exemplar school district selection was to find school districts with GT programs. I was specifically looking for school districts with more representation of Black and Hispanic students enrolled in the GT program than the target local school district's GT education program. The selection criteria for the local, exemplar districts were identified based on having a minimum of 10% greater proportional representation of the percentage of students of color enrolled in the GT program when compared to the target district. In the 2017-18 school year, 7.3% of students in the GT program in the target district were Black and 6.8% were Hispanic; 76.6% were White. Using the statewide GT child count reports for 2016-17 and 2017-18, I initially identified 10 local exemplar districts, however, participants responded to the Letter of Invitation in seven of the 10 local exemplar districts.

Criteria for Selection of Participants

Exemplar, local districts were within the geographical region of the target district and were similar to the overall student population in terms of size, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity, and identified 10% or more students of color for GT services in the exemplar district than compared to the target district. Participants recruited for this study were employed by the local, exemplar district and had: (a) knowledge of the identification process for GT students in their respective school district and (b) had taught or supervised GT students for at least 1 year. I planned to include up to the first 15 participants who volunteered and met the criteria. The final participant sample included 11 educators who met the criteria specified for the study. Table 2 is a summary of the

main characteristics for the 11 participants who participated in this basic qualitative study.

Table 2

*Participant Characteristics (*N = *11)*

Characteristic	*n*	%
Job role		
GT teacher, director, or specialist	5	45.5
Regular education teacher	3	27.2
Principal or assistant principal	2	18.2
Curriculum facilitator	1	9.1
Years of experience		
1–5	1	9.1
5–10	1	9.1
More than 10	9	81.8
District		
District A	2	18.2
District B	1	9.1
District C	1	9.1
District D	2	18.2
District E	1	9.1
District F	3	27.2
District G	1	9.1

Justification of the Sample Size

As indicated above, participants were selected using a purposeful sampling process (Lodico et al., 2010). The selection of the participants added to the understanding of the phenomena of the underrepresentation of students of color in GT education. The final sample included 11 educators who met the participant criteria. In qualitative

research, smaller samples are often used, as the data are conducted in a manner that help the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon being studied. The aim in qualitative research is to obtain descriptive accounts, experiences, and perceptions from participants to reach saturation. (Marshall et al., 2013).

Procedures for Gaining Access to Participants

As described in a previous section, I compared data related to proportion of students of color enrolled in GT programs and identified local, exemplar districts in the state with 10% or higher proportional of students of color in GT programs compared to the target district. I used the state Department of Public Information and district websites to distinguish whether an educator taught GT students through the listings of job titles. District websites included educator contact emails.

As a first step in the research process, I received approval (No. 07-17-20-03627) to conduct the study from the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB). Following approval from Walden IRB, I recruited participants through email. Using the public records data available, I contacted and invited potential participants who might have met the selection criteria to participate in this study. I emailed the letter of invitation to participate in the study to the list of potential participants. The letter of invitation to participate contained information on the purpose of the study and the criteria for participation. The letter contained a link to the informed consent form and the demographic questionnaire. The informed consent form contained specific procedures of the study, the voluntary nature and confidentiality of participation, the minimal personal risk in participation, and researcher and university contact information.

I restated the voluntary nature of the interviews and participating in the study to each participant to confirm that the study was not required by the exemplar district leadership in the introduction of the Letter of Invitation for this study. I also noted in the letter that this research study was not being conducted by the potential participant's district. At the bottom of the informed consent form, participants were requested to check the box labeled "I Agree" if they understood, agreed to the consent form specifications, and desired to participate in the study. Thus, the participants self-selected into the study. Once the participant checked "I Agree," the participant was requested to complete the demographic questionnaire that followed the informed consent form. At the bottom of the informed consent form was a brief questionnaire designed to confirm teachers met the criteria for participation. The instructions noted that submission of the demographic questionnaire indicated participants had read and understood the informed consent form and agreed to participate in the study. I followed the same process for all the purposefully sampled educator participants.

Educator information gathered from the online demographic questionnaire included basic contact information, job role, and years of teaching or supervising in a setting with students identified as GT. I checked the results of the online consent form and demographic questionnaire submissions daily. If a participant returned an informed consent form and demographic questionnaire, I confirmed that the participant met the criteria for the study by reviewing their responses on the demographic questionnaire.

I personally contacted via email each new participant who completed the informed consent form and demographic questionnaire to schedule a date and time to

conduct a video-conference interview via Zoom or a phone interview. All participants indicated their preference for the interview was a video platform. I scheduled the interview at an agreed-upon mutually convenient date during the participant's noninstructional time. Once receiving the preferred time for the interview, I sent a follow-up email confirming the interview date, time, and preferred platform.

One week after I sent the letter of invitation to participate with the embedded electronic informed consent form and demographic questionnaire to potential participants, I sent the letter of invitation to participate again to the potential participants who had not responded. After another week, I sent a final reminder. I followed the same procedure described regarding the return of any informed consent form and demographic questionnaire regarding receipt and follow up with participants indicating an interest in participating who met the criteria for the study. By the third round of sending the letters of invitation, I had received 11 participant responses from educators who had returned their informed consent form and demographic questionnaire and met the participant criteria. If an interested participant did not meet the criteria for the study, I would have notified the individual of this information; this was not the case.

As the consent and demographic questionnaires were returned, I compiled the names, preferred email address, phone number for reach of the 11 participants and assigned numeric pseudonyms for each participant in my records. I am the only one that knows the names of the participants. In the next sections, I review the process used for establishing the researcher–participant relationship and protection of participants, including confidentiality and rights.

Researcher–Participant Relationship

I developed a researcher–participant relationship through carefully selecting the language used in my communications with the potential participants, and subsequent communications as I arranged the interview schedule and during the interview. The researcher-participant relationship is important as the researcher and the participant are both viewed as contributors to the research process. Therefore, I strived to create a comfortable environment to maintain the integrity of the interview process and to protect the participant. My role as the researcher was pivotal to a successful data collection process, and therefore I first obtained approval to conduct research from the Walden University IRB. Prior to the interview, I made sure participants had my contact information, and I was available to respond to any questions related to protection, participation, or to the purpose of the study. Participants were provided with my cell phone and email address, and I informed them that could reach out regarding any questions about the study. The informed consent form contained sample interview questions to help participants feel more comfortable and prepared. I undertook such actions to build trust with participants, as recommended by DeJonckheere and Vaughn (2019) and Merriam and Tisdell (2016). Moreover, I was not an employee or supervisor at the participants' districts. Such trust included efforts to protect participant identities and data, as described in the next section.

Protection of Participants

I completed the National Institute of Health Office of Extramural Research training to support evidence of my understanding of the participants' rights and to

safeguard ethical protection of all participants. I completed training with the. In accordance with IRB policy, each participant was reminded that they could save or print a copy of the informed consent form before beginning participation in the study. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) explained that participants' exposure to dangers could not be greater than the benefits of the research. This research study had minimal risk to participants, as reviewed on the informed consent form. The informed consent form explained the study involved only some risk of the minor discomforts encountered in daily life, such as fatigue, stress, or becoming upset. Being in this study would not pose risk to participant safety or well-being. I discussed the purpose of the study, reiterated the voluntary nature of the study, and addressed any questions or concerns raised by the participants through email. I reiterated that participation was voluntary. Participants could withdraw from the study any time without any consequences. I asked participants if they had any questions regarding the informed consent and research process. Participants indicated they understood and still agreed with the informed consent for. In seeking the participant's cooperation in the research, I was open and forthcoming with the purpose, benefits, and possible minimal discomfort of the research.

I complied with all IRB regulations, and I was transparent with the notes, steps included in the interview process and data reported using member checking, that was included in the informed consent. I sought the participants' cooperation in the research, respected their privacy, and protected their identity. Further Participants received a copy of the draft findings for comment.

To protect the participant's identity, no names were used in the data collection process; I assigned a numeric pseudonym for each participant to protect their identity upon receiving their returned consent. In the consent, I stressed that participants could withdraw at any time and that participation was voluntary. In research with human participants, protecting the participants' rights is a priority. I determined the priority for the participants was their safety, well-being, and confidentiality. The participant information was only known to me to protect identity of the participants and ensure confidentiality. I kept this information in a secured file cabinet, located in my home office, and I am the only individual who can gain access to the secured file cabinet. All electronic data collected were stored on a password-protected computer in my home. No third party was privy to any information collected.

I used my home office for storing all the electronic data on my password-protected laptop. I used a locking file in my home office for any nonelectronic data collected such as my field notes. All information collected will be stored for 5 years in accordance with Walden University protocol. After 5 years, all data will be deleted or destroyed. In summary, participant protection methods included providing participants with numeric IDs, protecting their identities, allowing voluntary participation or withdrawal from the study, and gaining informed consent.

In the next section I review the data collection procedures for the study. I describe the interview protocol development to answer the research questions. I explain data collection processes, including systems of recording and tracking data and I present the role of the researcher.

Data Collection

A basic qualitative research was the appropriate design for this study because data collection generated information to provide a deeper understanding of the identification process of the exemplar districts' GT students as perceived by educators who served in those exemplar districts. Information gathered from the interviews materialized organically. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to identify educators' perspectives of how the GT identification process supports or hinders the identification of students of color. For this basic qualitative study, interviews were appropriate to gather in-depth information on participants' perceptions. The primary method for data collection in this study was through semistructured, video conference interviews. The secondary data source was archival data, pertaining to GT education, available through public records. In this section, I review the interview and data collection process for this study.

Data Collection Instrument

I used interviews as the primary means of data collection to identify educators' perspectives related to the phenomenon of the disproportionate representation of students of color in a GT program. The participant interviews helped me gain a deeper understanding of which GT identification practices best provide inclusiveness for all students to receive GT education services. Interviews were used to gather information regarding the participants' perspectives of how the identification process supports identification of students of color in their school districts. DeJonckheere and Vaughn (2019) stated that interviews are a common method of data collection in qualitative research. With semistructured interviews, the researcher uses predefined questions and

then delves further as the participants answers, potentially using probes to generate data that provide deeper understanding into the participants' experiences, perceptions, and opinions (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). An interview protocol provides the researcher with an opportunity to collect meaningful data from open-ended questioning followed by skillful use of probes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Probes are follow-up question asking for more details or clarification (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Development of the interview protocol is a critical component of the qualitative data collection process. The structured aspect of the interview protocol allows for the same questions to be asked of all participants; the flexible aspect of the semistructured interview allows for probing questions based on the individual interview (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). The use of an interview protocol allows the researcher to confidently collect data with a structured format where most questions are written out ahead of time (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The protocol interview questions focused on the identification process of GT students and how this process supports or hindered the identification of GT students of color. The phenomenon I focused on in this basic qualitative study could not be obtained through observations (see Lodico et al., 2010; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Additionally, the interview protocol included the preliminary actions and review of information by the interviewer, to ensure each interview was conducted the same way. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated that the most common way to record interview data is to tape the interview in addition to taking notes to ensure accuracy is preserved for analysis.

I had a panel of experts to review the questions for the interview protocol prior to beginning the interview process to edit any questions deemed confusing or ambiguous (Locke, 2019). Locke (2019) noted good questions are clear and unambiguous while being sensitive to class, cultural, and gender differences. I asked an expert panel to review and provide feedback regarding the quality of the interview questions. The expert panel included those who were experienced with supervising GT education and who were not potential participants in this study. I edited and revised my questions based upon verbal feedback from the experts so that I obtained clear and reliable responses from the interviews with participants.

The interview questions included general information about teaching or administrative experience with working with the GT students and understanding the identification process (Appendix B). The qualitative research interview questions were based on opinion and experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In the next section I describe the use of archival data that I identified from the open public records website of the local, exemplar districts that I triangulated with the information obtained from participant interviews.

Archival Data

I reviewed the archival data, pertaining to GT education, such as, the GT annual child count summary and district GT plan, using open public records on district websites, regarding GT identification and services from the school districts in which the participants were employed. I used this information to triangulate the archival data with

the information obtained from the interviews. This triangulation process also added to the trustworthiness of the findings resulted from this study.

Sufficiency of Data to Answer Research Questions

Research questions were aligned with the interview questions. Research Question 1 asked about how the GT identification process supports identification of students of color; Research Question 2 asked about barriers in the process. Interview questions were designed to ask about benefits of the GT identification process as well as aspects that could be improved. To answer the research questions fully, I did not go astray from the interview questions during the session. As noted earlier, an expert panel reviewed the interview questions and deemed them sufficient to answer the research questions.

Generation of Interview Data

The semistructured interview process contains a protocol, which is important to the integrity of the data collection process (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). During the individual video conference interviews, I worked to establish a rapport and build a collaborative relationship with the participants to ensure buy-in and clarity regarding the confidentiality, protection processes, and answer any questions the participants had related to the purpose of the study or expectations for participation (see Creswell & Poth, 2018). I introduced myself, explained my intent to conduct research, answered any questions, and provided clarifications as necessary. I answered any questions about the study, confidentiality, or the data collection procedures. I reminded participants at the beginning of the interview process that they had received an electronic informed consent form and could still save or print a copy of the notice for their files. I reiterated to the

participants that they could withdraw from the study any time without any consequences or refuse to answer questions that made them feel uncomfortable. I ensured participants that all names and identifying details were kept confidential to protect anonymity and to elicit open, meaningful, and honest responses. I verbally reminded the participants that the interview would be audio recorded. I also used an interview protocol with space to write responses and interview field notes, as suggested by Creswell and Creswell (2017) and Yin (2018). All data were recorded using Zoom and transcribed verbatim to minimize any unethical issues such as deception, lack of confidentiality, or risks that might harm the participants and to ensure accuracy during the data analysis.

I used the video-conference platform, Zoom, to conduct the interviews and audio record the interview sessions to ensure that information was not missed or overlooked. I confirmed that the record feature was working before proceeding with the interview. I followed the interview protocol and used prompts to elicit deeper responses from the participants. Prompts or probes included phrases such as, “Could you elaborate?” During the interview, I probed beyond the protocol to gather more information about the needs of the students, best identification practices, and which identification practices best decrease underrepresentation of students of color by asking the participants to clarify any statements that were ambiguous or unclear. I verbally summarized the information gathered after each question was answered by the participant. This process allowed the interviewee to confirm the accuracy of the interviewer’s interpretation of the

information (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I completed the interview within the specific time, was respectful, and offered few follow-up questions or advice during the interview session.

After concluding the interview, I thanked the participant and reminded them I would be emailing them a copy of the draft findings for their review as part of the member-checking process. Each participant received a $5 Amazon gift card emailed to their nonwork email address. After each interview session, I reviewed my notes against the audio recording to make sure that the information was accurately recorded. I transcribed verbatim all interviews immediately to ensure accuracy, maintain ethical standards, and minimize researcher bias (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Each interview session was transcribed verbatim within 24–48 hours of conducting the interview. Then I read each transcription while listening to the recording to confirm accuracy of the transcription. The collected data were used to answer each research question.

Systems for Keeping Track of Data

Collection and organization of data are critical for confidentiality and maintaining the integrity of the data collection process. I used individual file folders, individual electronic folders, and research logs to keep information separate for each participant. For the organization of the data, I used a colored file folder for each participant. I also used individual electronic folders for each participant's audio recording. Each colored file folder housed the collected data from the field notes from each interview. The colored file folders with collected data have been placed in separate storage bins. Each storage bin was labeled with a numeric ID to distinguish each participant

Access to Participants

I accessed participants for this study after I received the Walden IRB approval. I followed the access and recruitment process reviewed as per Walden IRB approval. I used the state Department of Public Information and district websites to find educators who taught GT students, based on the listings of job titles. District websites include educator contact emails. I recruited participants through an invitation letter emailed to educators who might meet the study criteria, including experience with the GT identification process. The *Letter of Invitation to Participate* contained information on the purpose of the study and the criteria for participation as well as an electronic link to the informed consent form and demographic questionnaire. The informed consent form contained specific procedures of the study, the voluntary nature and confidentiality of participation, the minimal personal risk in participation, and researcher and university contact information. The bottom of the informed consent form was a brief questionnaire designed to confirm teachers met the criteria for participation. After two additional email reminders to those who had not responded, each reminder a week apart, I had obtained 11 participants who met the inclusion criteria for this study.

Role of the Researcher

At the time of the data collection, I served in the role of an elementary school administrator in the target district. Prior to the data collection, I was an instructional facilitator for kindergarten through Grade 5 in the target school district. I have a total of 23 years of experience as an educator This study was conducted in sample exemplar districts. I am not employed in the sample exemplar districts, nor have I ever supervised

or evaluated any participant. I have no personal connection with the participants. I had no direct contact with any of the participants, prior to conducting the interviews.

Lodico et al. (2010) stated that qualitative researchers should examine their personal belief system and understand how it may affect a study. Prior to interviewing, the researcher must explore their own experiences and set them aside (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). I discussed my prior experiences with GT students with my dissertation chairperson to diminish any possible preconceptions I might have had in this qualitative study to make sure the data were collected and analyzed with minimal bias.

Before data collection began, I reduced bias by making sure that each participant understood that they could withdraw from the scheduled interview at any time without repercussion. Interview questions were given to participants to allow them time to reflect upon them before the scheduled interview. I made sure during each interview, my facial expression and vocal tone did not influence the participants' answers to the interview questions. After each interview, I immediately reviewed my notes from each interview protocol to identify any biases that I might have had during the interview. I also used the interview protocol for each interview so that all interviews were conducted in the same manner (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Use of a peer debriefer and member checking with participants also helped reduce bias during data analysis. Analysis is described in the following section.

Data Analysis

I used content analysis to analyze the data collected which were primarily from semistructured interviews conducted using Zoom video platform. I also collected archival

data from local exemplar district websites related to the GT program in each respective district. Content analysis is a data analysis process that includes developing inferences from information or data collected in visual, written, or verbal forms (Bengtsson, 2016). The intent of content analysis is to find meaning, context, or intention (Bengtsson, 2016). Yin (2018) notes that the order for data analysis includes:

1. compiling
2. disassembling
3. reassembling
4. interpreting
5. concluding

The first step in the data analysis process was to transcribe verbatim, organize and prepare the data for analysis. This includes compiling all the data collected. The predominant data collection tool for this study was semistructured interviews. I also recorded interview field notes that included my thoughts and observations during the interview process. Documents and archival data, pertaining to GT education program in each exemplar district. I used inductive and deductive processes to analyze the data and code the information by research question and the conceptual framework (see Saldana & Omasta, 2016). I read and reread the interviews many times thereby completing cycles of data review through the phases (see Yin, 2018). Coding is the process of organizing the data into chunks of text then into categories and labeling the categories with specific terms (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Stake, 2013). I transcribed the interviews using MAXQDA, qualitative data analysis software, after finishing the interviews. This step

also involved typing field notes that were bracketed in the margin of the interview protocol, and sorting and arranging the data by participant, interview question, and by research question. I also manually coded the data using deductive codes associated with the conceptual framework.

Following transcription of the interviews and organization of the interview field notes, I analyzed each transcript and interpreted all responses by carefully reading and rereading sections of the transcribed data to reflect on the information and to get a sense of its overall meaning from each individual participant (Yin, 2018). Then, I reviewed the transcripts of each participant to gain a sense and understanding of what each participant conveyed regarding the interview questions. Next, I read each participant's response for each interview question to develop a sense of the perceptions of participants of interview questions associated with the corresponding research question. As I read and reread the transcriptions, I immersed myself in the data. As I cycled through review of the data, I identified emerging codes, commonalities, patterns, and themes that responded to the research questions, as suggested by Merriam and Tisdell (2016). Bengtsson (2016) notes that there are specific steps to the content analysis process. The steps in the process are:

1. Organize and prepare to assemble the data collected.
2. Read, review, and explore the data.
3. Complete the first round of coding the data after immersing oneself in the data.
4. Assign codes and search for similarities and differences in the codes or categories from all the interviews completed.

5. Determine the name of the theme that is derived from the codes.
6. Establish the themes that reflect the purpose of the research study using quotes and excerpts of text from participants (see Bengtsson, 2016)

I used open coding, an inductive coding technique, to conduct my first round of coding and categorize interview data. This approach allowed me the opportunity to determine which data were important. I then reviewed the codes and identified common patterns and differences. I conducted a second round of open-coding and collapsed the codes in the first round of open-coding into categories that seemed to be similar. In my second round of open-coding I further collapsed the coded text as I looked for commonalities and differences and categorized similar codes together. I examined the grouped codes and the text associated with the assigned code and identified descriptive words and phrases that were grouped together into categories (see Yin, 2018). I developed themes from the categories by looking at the coded words and text together. I identified themes that emerged from the open-coding process. Themes relevant to the GT identification process, barriers to equitable education access, and GT identification of students of color (see Creswell & Poth, 2018).

I decontextualized the data and assigned codes, which was a process of induction and deduction to create open codes and themes (Bengtsson, 2016). After coding the transcripts and interview field notes in MAXQDA, I transferred the text and codes to a spreadsheet. By using a spreadsheet, I was able to visualize possible relationships between the text from the transcript and a code. I examined the open codes and text for associations, similarities or differences with the deductive codes obtained from the

conceptual framework. After completing two rounds of open-coding and combining the codes into categories, I collected excerpts from the participants' responses for the assigned codes. There were 17 open codes remaining after two rounds of open coding (see Table 3). The themes for research question one was that (a) educators perceived the identification process for GT to be multifaceted, and that (b) educators perceived GT identification process to be student-centered. The themes for research question two were that (a) educators perceived institutional culture as a barrier to equitable access for GT education for all students, and (b) educators perceive parental language and lack of experience as barriers to equitable access to GT education for all students. Table 3 reflects the research questions, 17 assigned open codes and the themes associated with each group of codes for each research question.

Table 3

Research Questions, Open Codes, and Themes

Research Question	Open codes	Themes
RQ 1. What are the educators' perspectives of how the GT identification process supports identification of students of color in local exemplar school districts?	Educators' responsibility to give all students access Reflect student demographics Inclusive Innovative Many/more opportunities Teacher/parent nominations retest/rescreen Student work samples	Theme 1: Educators perceived the identification process for GT education to be multifaceted. Theme 2: Educators perceive the GT identification process of students of color as student-centered.
RQ 2. How do educators describe barriers to the GT identification process for students of color in local exemplar school districts?	Limited exposure/experiences Segregated schools School choice/zones Bias systematic processes Achievement gaps Parents' lack of knowledge of identification process Socioeconomics Lack of skills Perception of giftedness	Theme 3: Educators perceive institutional culture as a barrier to equitable access to GT education for all students. Theme 4: Educators perceive parental language and lack of experience as barriers to equitable access to GT education for all students.

After completing two rounds of open-coding, I reviewed interview data for a priori codes based on the conceptual framework. There were 3 codes that were deductively derived from Renzulli, which was the conceptual framework used for this study. The codes from the conceptual framework were: (a) Identification should not be solely based on intelligence, (b) Flexibility of placement in GT education, and (c) Barriers to GT educational access. I conducted another cycle of data review and reflected on the associations between the open codes, a priori codes derived from the conceptual framework, and themes. I filtered similar a priori codes and associated open codes that

reflected similar concepts. Table 4 reflects the Research Questions, a priori codes derived from the conceptual framework, open codes, and corresponding themes.

Table 4

a Priori Codes, Open Codes and Themes

a priori codes	Open codes	Themes
Identification should not be solely based on intelligence	Cognitive Abilities Test Achievement Aptitude Student nominations Teacher referrals Observations Work samples Multitiered Portfolios Multiple ways/pathways Talent pools	Theme 1: Educators perceived the identification process for gifted and talented (GT) education to be multifaceted. Theme 2: Educators perceive the identification process of students of color as student-centered.
Flexibility of placement in GT education	Educators' responsibility to give all students access Reflect student demographics inclusive Innovative Many/more opportunities Teacher/parent nominations retest/rescreen Student work samples	Theme 1: Educators perceived the identification process for GT education to be multifaceted.
Barriers to GT educational access	Limited exposure/experiences Segregated schools School choice/zones Bias systematic processes Achievement gaps Parents' lack of knowledge of identification process Socioeconomics Lack of skills Perception of giftedness	Theme 3: Educators perceive institutional culture as a barrier to equitable access to GT education for all students. Theme 4: Educators perceive parental language and lack of experience as barriers to equitable access to GT education for all students.

After rereading the transcribed text and a priori codes simultaneously, I selected excerpts of text that supported the associated a priori code and open code collectively. The sample quotes in Table 5 represent raw data obtained from the participants during interviews. Table 5 presents the participant number, and selected sample quotes that reflected support for the assigned a priori code. Following Table 5, I will discuss the themes by research question for this study.

Table 5

Sample a Priori Coding for Participants

Participant	Sample quote	a priori code
Participant 3	It is better than it used to be and now multifaceted. This district has even implemented a nurturing program, which is a program that helps to develop the kids who show high academic performance and get them college ready and push them to take higher-level courses in middle and high school.	Identification should not be solely based on intelligence
Participant 4	I think looking at a year's worth of performance including classroom participation and how they engage into the material they are learning and interest in the material, because we have those students who don't qualify on the test for math but in class, they are very engaged, they want that push they want that challenge.	Identification should not be solely based on intelligence
Participant 5	It allows for multiple indicators like ability testing, achievement testing, nomination by teacher and parent.	Flexibility of placement in gifted and talented (GT) education
Participant 7	With the way they are doing it now, it will be able to grasp those students who would normally be overlooked because they will be able to show their giftedness and strengths in different ways through the portfolio.	Flexibility of placement in GT education
Participant 8	Well, I see as problematic when it comes to students of color. The reason I say that is because there hasn't been a justice or equalizing of educational opportunities in lower income educational settings as opposed to your schools in affluent areas.	Barriers to GT educational access
Participant 11	Well, segregated schools. before we got to level the playing field, the educational playing field for everyone starting at kindergarten. Like as soon as they walk in the door, we got to level the playing field. There are so many systematic things that need to place in education before that happens that you know and until that happens, we will continue to see middle class, upper middle class, gifted service being for that particular population.	Barriers to GT educational access

Research Results

The local problem addressed by this study was that students of color are not proportionately identified for the GT program relative to the total school population in the target district. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to identify educators'

perspectives of how the GT identification process supports or hinders the identification of students of color. Educators were interviewed from nearby districts with similar demographics yet higher percentages of Black and Hispanic students in GT programs. Perceptions could include information to help educators and leaders at the target district improve the rate of GT identification of students of color.

I conducted semistructured video interviews with 11 educators from seven districts identified as exemplar districts per the criterion of having at least 10% higher percentages of Black and Hispanic students in GT programs compared to the target district. Perceptions could include information to help educators and leaders at the target district improve the rate of GT identification of students of color. The research questions were as follows:

Research Question 1: What are educators' perspectives of how the GT identification process supports identification of students of color in local exemplar school districts?

Research Question 2: How do educators describe barriers to the GT identification process for students of color in local exemplar school districts?

The interview protocol was developed to align with the research questions. Interview Questions 1–9 was designed to answer Research Question 1 (RQ 1). Interview Questions 10 and 11 were designed to answer Research Question 2 (RQ 2). Interview Question 12, about administrator support, could provide data to answer either research question.

Two themes emerged from each of the research questions for a total of four themes. The four themes related to the educators' perspectives of the identification process and the barriers to equitable access to GT education. For Research Question 1, the themes were related to the multifaceted variation in how students were identified for GT services and student-centered processes that supported the GT identification process for students of color. For Research Question 2, themes were related to the institutional cultural pedagogy and language and experience barriers for students of color as perceived barriers to the identification process for students of color. In this section, I reviewed the themes that emerged by each research question, as shown in Table 6.

Table 6

Relationship Between Themes and Research Question

Research question	Theme
RQ 1. What are the educators' perspectives of how the gifted and talented (GT) identification process supports identification of students of color in local exemplar school district?	Theme 1: Educators perceived the identification process for GT education to be multifaceted. Theme 2: Educators perceive the identification process of students of color as student-centered.
RQ 2. How do educators describe barriers to the GT identification process for students of color in local exemplar school district?	Theme 3: Educators perceive institutional culture as a barrier to equitable access to GT education for all students. Theme 4: Educators perceive parental language and lack of experience as barriers to equitable access to GT education for all students.

Theme 1: Educators Perceived the Identification Process for GT Education to Be Multifaceted

The first theme that emerged from the interview data revealed all 11 participants described the GT identification process as being multifaceted, with multiple pathways for students to be identified as gifted. Participants described that the GT identification process included universal screening at Grades 2, 3 and 5 for all students. Participants 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, and 10 conveyed that the GT identification process in their district involved completing universal screening at Grade 2 with retesting at Grade 5. Participants 3,7, 9, and 11 conveyed that their GT identification process involved completing universal screening at Grade 3 grade with retesting at Grade 5.

The participants all indicated they were aware of the use of both aptitude and achievement screening tools for identification of students for the GT services in their respective districts. Participants 1 and 2 stated the Cognitive Abilities Test is used for aptitude testing, whereas the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills are used for achievement. Participant 2 explained:

> The sum of composite scores of the aptitude and achievement testing must equal to 185 or higher to qualify for academically gifted (AG) services, which serves students who are at least one grade level above in reading and math. A score of 196 qualifies students to receive highly academically gifted (HAG) services…. Those students who qualify for HAG services are performing two grade levels above in reading and math. Fifth grade students who are already identified as AG can retest to qualify to receive HAG services in middle school. The students' end of grade scores in either reading or math or both subjects must be in the 98th or 99th percentile to qualify for retesting for the AG program.

Participant 2 added the following:

> There is also single certification for students whose academic proficiency is above grade level in reading or math. . .. Single certification allows for students who perform above grade level in reading or math to receive gifted education services in one of these content subject areas.

Participants 6, 7, and 9 described similar universal screening processes that included both achievement and aptitude components for the identification process. Participant 10 commented:

> My district expanded on the number of data points looked at with the CogAt [Cognitive Abilities Test]. The fact that multiple subtests are examined so a student can qualify just from a nonverbal score or just from a verbal score or quantitative score is helpful.

Participants indicated that having alternative identification methods other than the traditional pathways benefited students of color. Several participants mentioned that the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test, a nonverbal aptitude test measuring nonverbal reasoning and general problem-solving skills, was used as an alternate pathway for identification for GT education services. The Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test is a short test in which test takers use visual reasoning to analyze information and solve problems. Participant 6 stated, "Students of color are administered the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test for identification of gifted services. Spanish-speaking students who are screened for gifted education services can have the test directions read to them in Spanish." Participants 2, 3, 4, 10, and 11 also stated that their district officials chose to administer the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test because it is more culturally neutral and allows students to use reasoning instead of verbal ability to measure aptitude. These participants perceived that the administration of this alternative aptitude test resulted in identifying more students of color for GT education services in the sample districts. For example, Participant 6 stated,

> Giving them another opportunity to take another test like the Naglieri, which is a shorter test, is a step in the right direction. With time constraints, some children cannot sit still that long to go through that test. Even though it's read orally, they

> would not turn in and focus and function that long during that length of test. They deserve another opportunity to qualify for services.

The participants described the support for identification of students of color as an opportunity to use more than one identification process or instrument to give these students access to GT services resulted in students of color having a more equitable educational path that is rigorous and helps prepare them for higher education, as exemplified below:

> I think looking at a year's worth of performance, including classroom participation and how they engage into the material they are learning and their interest in the learned material, because we have those students who don't qualify on the test for math but in class, they are very engaged, they want that push, they want that challenge. I think we are crazy not to say maybe they are AIG, but they are not showing it on a test. (Participant 4)

Teacher nomination was another pathway to GT identification described by several participants. In the teacher nomination process, a teacher could nominate a student for consideration for screening for the GT program. Participants 7 and 9 noted that their school district's GT identification process included regular teachers' recommendations of students who performed above grade level. These student recommendations were forwarded to the GT teacher for consideration for screening for GT education services. As Participant 9 stated, "regular education teachers nominate students who are performing above grade level in reading and math for testing to [determine if they] qualify for the gifted education program."

The participants' responses framed an understanding of their perspectives of how the GT identification process supports the identification of students of color. The multiple ways in which a student could be considered for GT services was a strength of the identification process for students of color, as perceived by all 11 participants. This multifaceted process included the use of a variety of assessment and identification tools, as well as flexible and constant screenings and the involvement of educators across the campus who may perceive a student who should be referred for consideration of additional screening. Five of the participants noted the multiple pathways in which a student could be considered for GT services offered greater opportunities for students of color to be identified. The multiple pathways and identification processes described by the participants were flexible in the use of both referrals and alternate testing.

Most participants mentioned that the district personnel acknowledged an underidentification of students of color for GT education services and thus were finding multiple pathways to identify students of color. Participants 2 and 3 stated that district officials provided opportunities for retesting and rescreening students of color when initial aptitude and achievement scores were scrutinized, and students performed well above grade level but did not qualify through traditional achievement and aptitude testing. According to Participant 4, school district officials were improving the process because they acknowledged the underidentification of students of color in the GT education program and continued to initiate efforts to ensure the GT education program reflected the diverse student population.

The interview findings were supported by archival data. Districts' GT plans indicated multiple pathways for GT identification. District A, for example included multiple criteria for student identification, including measures of aptitude, achievement, and alternative forms of assessment. These criteria measures help to develop a comprehensive profile for each student. Identification procedures include multiple entry points for identification; kindergarten through third grade has one pathway, whereas Grades 4–8 have three different pathways. The GT plan for District F also showed a commitment to using multiple criteria to increase student identification. At District F, a talent development program was designed and implemented to capitalize on developing the potential of a student, particularly among underrepresented student populations, to increase student identification for GT services.

Similarly, the GT plan for District E showed multiple opportunities to identify students as gifted. Criteria may include both qualitative and quantitative data to develop a comprehensive learner profile, through gifted behavioral characteristic checklists, classroom performance and observations, documented recommendations, standardized test scores, and anecdotal information. The GT plan for District D indicated three pathways for student identification: (a) aptitude, (b) achievement, and (c) achievement and aptitude. In addition to these three pathways, a portfolio assessment may include at least three performance artifacts that support a student's advanced ability and need for GT services. These performance artifacts may include work above grade level, student writing samples, interviews, outstanding achievement outside of the classroom, evidence-based teacher recommendations, and standardized assessment measures. Finally, District

C and District G used traditional and nontraditional research-based measures to identify students for GT services, according to their district GT plans. A multidimensional student profile is created to assist the GT team in understanding a student's abilities and potential. In District C, for example, an objective points-based rubric is used to determine GT eligibility for students using multiple criteria and both formal and informal assessment opportunities. Formal assessments include aptitude and achievement assessments, whereas informal assessments include rating scales and portfolios.

Based on the data findings in Theme 1, the educators' perspectives were that using a multiple pathway in the GT identification process supports the identification of students of color. Teachers perceived that the GT identification process in their respective districts was characterized by having multiple pathways for identification of students for gifted education services.

Theme 2: Educators Perceived the GT Identification Process of Students of Color as Student-Centered

Participants reported the GT identification process to be student-centered. The educators that participated in this study described how the school districts in which they worked cultivated potential gifted students through the creation of academic programs with a primary focus to expand diverse student representation in the GT education programs. One such nurturing program was designed by staff in one school district to foster students' skill development to the next academic level in reading and math as well as prepare them for middle and high school. The district GT plan verified interview data on the nurturing program. Participant 2 described the nurturing program as an

opportunity to provide inclusivity in the GT education program by making the identification process more accommodating to access more potentially gifted students of color. Participant 10 explained that the district's talent-development program is for the entire second grade:

> The purpose is to help boost the number of students of color that qualify for gifted education. One of the great things about this program is the focus of the lessons hit on multiple different aptitude venues. There might be lessons that are tailored towards nonverbal ability or arithmetic, or different factors of aptitudes are addressed so that students can participate in small group lessons if they are stronger in one subject and not the other.

All participants perceived the GT identification process as supportive and designed to be inclusive for students of color and promoted varied opportunities for access and entry. Student-centeredness was prevalent in many participant responses as they described how the identification process was implemented. Participants 9, 10, and 11 explained that the GT identification process allowed for an expansion of data points collected on each individual student to increase the number of students of color who were identified as gifted. These educators noted that multiple subtest scores of the Cognitive Abilities Test were taken into consideration. Students were therefore able to qualify for GT services by a nonverbal, verbal, or quantitative score. Students also were able to qualify with the use of performance tasks. These performance tasks were added as a measure to showcase the strengths of these students who ordinarily would have not qualified for GT services under traditional guidelines. As Participant 10 stated, "I do

think the fact that performance tasks were put into place helps to capture some of those students that aren't as strong of a test taker because it is just bringing other ways to showcase what they know." Finally, Participant 10 also perceived the GT identification process to be multifaceted and not solely based on an IQ score.

To conclude, the information gained from the participants and synthesized in the first two themes described above provided data for analysis pertaining to the gap in practice that was the focus of this study. Participants reported in their respective interviews that the student-centered strategies used for the identification of students influenced the identification of students of color for GT services. Participants in the exemplar districts perceived that the alternative guidelines used for GT identification affected the identification of students of color in their respective districts. Participants perceived that the use of student-centered strategies was a key characteristic of their respective systems that facilitated the identification of a broader and more diverse population of students for GT education services.

Theme 3: Educators Perceived Institutional Culture as a Barrier to Equitable Access to GT Education for All Students

Participants described institutional culture as a barrier to equitable access to GT education. They stated that resegregation of schools has created possible barriers to equitable access to education for all students by causing an inequality of educational opportunities for students of color versus their White peers. Five participants indicated that the resegregation of schools has led to limited curriculum resources that prepare students of color for admission into the GT education program. Participant 11 stated that,

"Students of color often are not included in the conception of giftedness because they are not perceived as children who deserve the best resources" and then continued:

> Rigorous and advanced curriculum needs to be incorporated in all classes to prepare students of color and provide them with an even playing field to access advanced coursework like their White peers. The educational system needs to be redesigned to showcase who the students of color really are and the talents that they possess to achieve among their White peers.

Participant 10 also mentioned that students of color are not regularly identified as GT. Therefore, students of color are not given the opportunity to participate in activities or tasks that foster skills needed to be successful in GT education. Participant 6 said students of color often are overlooked by their teachers because these students may not exhibit traditional behaviors that are identified with being gifted. "Sometimes students who are disengaged or disruptive in class need more challenging work," explained Participant 6, and then elaborated:

> Many times, these disengaged or disruptive students are students of color. Many teachers look at these behaviors as troublesome but not as signs of a potential gifted student. Teachers need professional development on identifying nontraditional behaviors in students who may benefit from gifted education. This [professional development] would help eliminate barriers to access an equitable GT education for all students.

Theme 4: Educators Perceive Parental Language and Lack of Experience as Barriers to Equitable Access to GT Education for All Students

Participants described language and lack of parent experience with educational processes as potential barriers to equitable access to GT education. Educators indicated that parents' lack of knowledge on how to navigate their children's educational journey to provide the necessary academic resources can serve as a barrier four equitable access to education for their children. As Participant 9 explained:

> Some parents have the knowledge that benefits their children's educational journey, while others do not. Many times, parents of students of color do not know how to navigate through the educational process to obtain these benefits for their children, thus, leaving these students at a disadvantage. The education gap cannot be eliminated without first closing the racial empathy gap.

Similarly, Participant 10 stated that parents' lack of understanding the language of aptitude tests may interfere with their children's equitable access to education. She indicated having firsthand knowledge of parents who would make sure their children had the experiences necessary to excel on aptitude tests:

> Parents who have knowledge of the identification process and the contents of aptitude tests make certain that they are doing things at home with their children so that their children can do well on the aptitude and achievement tests. Parents who may not be aware of this process leave their children at a disadvantage. This disadvantage can be a barrier because parents are not aware of how to foster the skills needed by their children to be identified as gifted.

Participant 8 also stated that lack of experiences can be a barrier for equitable access to education. Parents who do not understand the GT identification process or are even unaware of acceleration services, such as GT education, unknowingly create a barrier to their child's equitable access to education. They lack the knowledge to provide the experiences needed to strengthen their children's skills. The participants perceived these barriers in accessing an equitable education contributed to the underidentification of students of color in GT education programs.

Overall, as reflected in Themes 3 and 4, participants perceived that the culture of a district that was established by the leaders influenced the procedures and approach towards the design and implementation of GT identification processes and services. Participants also perceived that the language barriers experienced by some parents for those who did not speak English as their first language, also functioned as a barrier in understanding the GT identification processes, including referrals, attributes of gifted students, and how to access acceleration services for students who might qualify for GT services if provided with additional instruction or assessed for services using a variety of assessments. In the next sections, I discuss discrepant cases and evidence of quality.

Discrepant Cases

I was open to the possibility for discrepant cases as part of being unbiased during the data analysis. I did not find myself questioning any of the participants' responses during the analysis. As I reviewed the transcripts, I noticed commonalities in the participants' responses, which helped me to minimize my bias. I observed no discrepant or outlier cases in the interviews. The multiple data sources allowed me to triangulate

across the data collection, thus ensuring the quality of my qualitative study. Variations were observed in the participants' perceptions of how their exemplar district identified students of color; however, no case emerged in which a participant reported a perspective that did not align in some manner with the perceptions of other participants.

Evidence of Data Quality

Credibility Strategies

Credibility was crucial to improving the quality of the data collection and analysis process. To support participants' clarity with the purpose of this study or data collection processes involved, I offered to individual zoom meetings or phone conferences to participants prior to the interview to answer any questions regarding the study. It is important to promote trust, build rapport and establish dependability, in the researcher-participant. Meaningful and useful data will emerge when participants feel both comfortable and accepted (see Creswell & Poth, 2018; DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

In qualitative research, researchers recommend specific strategies to promote evidence of data quality. Corbin and Strauss (2014) suggest the use of an audit trail throughout the data collection process that includes clearly listing the steps used in the data collection process and using consistent procedures when collecting data. Other strategies recommended by researchers include the use of member checking, using a reflective journal and checking and rechecking the data (Creswell, 2018). Member checking, peer debriefing or peer review, a reflective journal, and triangulation were used to ensure the credibility of the findings.

Member Checking

Member checks were used to determine the accuracy of the qualitative results by returning the draft of findings to the participants for review, as recommended by Creswell and Poth (2018) as well as DeJonckheere and Vaughn (2019). Participants were asked whether the written draft findings were an accurate representation of their viewpoints. Member checks completed at the end of the study allowed the participants to affirm their views, thoughts, and experiences about the findings or add additional data. Participants did not have any additions or changes to the draft findings.

Peer Debriefing

Whereas member checking includes gaining the perspective of the participant regarding the researcher's interpretation of the information, peer debriefing, or peer review is a process involving a peer who is not a stakeholder in the research study and who is knowledgeable on the topic or process of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A peer debriefer was used to examine the field notes, consider missed codes or themes, and provide alternate views of looking at the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Peers at Walden University, who were knowledgeable with a priori coding, open coding, and the use of MAXQDA, reviewed data coding and analysis during the a priori and open-coding process. Peers provided critique of the coding and interpretation of the coding as well as the a priori labeling of selected text from the participants. Peers provided their perspectives on the a priori coding, and peer debriefing supported the refinement of the a priori codes and alignment with the open codes. Also, peer debriefing served to confirm coding and the identified themes through an iterative process.

Overall, peers concurred with my interpretation of the codes and themes. Peers provided additional feedback for the identification of a priori codes in relationship to the themes. For example, in conferring with my chair, I changed the wording of the themes to more closely align with the a priori coding that reflected the conceptual framework and more closely related to the transition from codes to themes.

Interview Field Notes

Lincoln and Guba (1985) contended that the use of interview field notes supports recall and connections the researcher makes between the interview data and problem studied and are particularly useful for addressing personal assumptions. I maintained a reflective journal in the form of field notes. The interview field notes were descriptive and included the following information: time, date, and length of interviews. The interview field notes also included verbatim answers and direct quotes made during the interview sessions, thus the field notes served to remind me of self-reflections during the interviews, observations, insights, and nonverbal behaviors observed. I found the use of the interview field notes helped me be aware of my potential biases and experiences as an educator in a district that had a disproportionately lower representation of students of color identified for the GT program.

Triangulation

I triangulated the data collected from the semistructured interviews, archival data, such as district GT plan and GT annual child summary, and interview field notes to corroborate the data collected and to increase accuracy, credibility, and validity of the findings as suggested by researchers (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Creswell & Poth, 2018;

Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I examined the gifted and talented identification archival data for each of the exemplar districts as well as reviewing GT identification procedures available through open public records on the district websites. Triangulation supported data quality as several sources of data were compared, including the triangulation of participants' responses (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2012). I compared the data from the archival documents to the interview responses, and my interview field notes to validate the responses. This triangulation enhanced the deeper understanding to the identification processes of school districts and provided a more comprehensive finding to the research problem. Triangulation particularly demonstrated multiple, multifaceted pathways to GT identification in the exemplar districts. The documents corroborated the interviewees' descriptions of such multifaceted identification processes.

Summary of Findings

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to identify educators' perspectives of how GT identification process supports or hinders the identification of students of color. I used two research questions to investigate the perspectives of educators regarding how the identification of GT supports students of color and to explore educators' perspectives of possible barriers to GT identification for students of color. I used a basic qualitative design including an appreciative inquiry approach. The conceptual framework used for this study included the theories of Allen (2017), Erwin and Worrell (2012), and Van Tassel-Baska (2009) to explore the perspectives of educators in the exemplar districts and how they viewed the process and strategies for GT identification of students of color. I conducted semistructured interviews of 11 individual educators and obtained

information that resulted in more deeply understanding educators' perspectives of best practices used to identify GT students of color, or challenges that they perceived related to GT identification. To address the purpose of this study, I designed a study that enabled me to gain understanding of the GT identification process used in exemplar districts that proportionally identified at least 10% or more Black and Hispanic students for their GT programs than the target district. I used an appreciative inquiry approach (see Cooperrider, 2018; Hung, 2017) through the selection of exemplar districts, and gaining the perspectives of educators who were knowledgeable about the GT identification process in those districts. Thus, the strengths of the process and any perceived hinderances could be used to inform decision-making for the stakeholders in the target district. Researchers have observed that the use of appreciative inquiry sets a foundation for positive inquiry and collaboration (Cooperrider, 2018; Hung, 2017). Perspectives of barriers were gathered to determine how to consider most effectively expanding the approach to GT identification so that the process is more inclusive. Transformational change is supported through unique ideas and different ways of looking at how processes or systems operate in an organization; appreciative inquiry generates creative ideas and visions for what is working and what is possible (Bushe & Marshak, 2015).

The findings of this study indicated changes to the identification process to promote equitable access for all GT learners at the elementary level in the target district are needed. The findings also indicated that professional development for educators is needed to support change in pedagogical practices. Teachers are responsible for referrals of students for possible GT identification and yet "little to no training is provided" (Ford

et al., 2020, p. 33). Professional development has been used to support pedagogical changes in educators. Pedagogy is affected by one's experiences, beliefs, knowledge, and the environment (Koh, 2019).

Theme 1 indicated the educators' perspectives were that using a multiple pathway in the GT identification process supports the identification of students of color. Multiple pathways offered more opportunities and different ways to identify students for the GT program. Similarly, Theme 2 indicated school district personnel are implementing student-centered strategies to increase the identification of students of color for GT services. Alternative, student-centered guidelines promote inclusivity. Multiple varied, student-centered opportunities to be identified for the GT program led to an increased percentage of students of color.

This finding is supported by the literature advocating varied opportunities for GT identification. Peters et al. (2019) stated that standardized tests may unfairly penalize underrepresented students through potential bias based on race and socioeconomics. McBee et al. (2016) conducted a study that found school districts that relied on teacher nomination for the identification of GT students overlooked more than 60% of GT students compared to school districts that screened all students at least once. The major problem with GT nominations is historically Black and Hispanic students are passed over because their standardized achievement scores are lower than those of their White student peers (Worrell et al., 2019). The National Association for Gifted Children (2019) recommended that the process of identifying students for a GT program be based on a variety of research-based assessments and aligned with the specific GT education

program and its objectives. Traditional identification processes for GT education tend to miss many qualified students (Card & Giuliano, 2016; Crabtree et al., 2019). Carman et al. (2018) reported district leaders think using nonverbal assessments is enough to provide varied pathways to GT programs. More alternatives are needed. Worrell et al. (2019) found several alternatives have been proposed to address the underrepresentation in GT education. These alternatives include universal screening, reducing the dependence on teacher referrals, using customized local identification procedures, nonverbal ability testing, and performance-based tasks.

Themes 1 and 2 reflect support for the conceptual framework of Warne (2016), which holds that intelligence measures serve to reinforce perspectives related to phenotypes and genotypes and underscore group disparities rather than individual student potential. Furthermore, Theme 1 and Theme 2 are reflected in the Van Tassel-Baska (2009) framework regarding the use of nonverbal tests to identify students for GT as well embedding flexibility in the identification and placement of GT students. Most school systems have used IQ and achievement testing to identify GT students (Ford et al., 2020). "Culture-blind theories of normative development undermine the promise, potential, and possibility of Black and Hispanic students being referred to and eventually identified" for GT services (Ford et al., 2020, p. 29).

Identification of GT students of color can vary from school to school. Some differences are credited to state-to-state differences in the definition of giftedness and differences in the identification process of GT students. Even within states and school districts, variation in the implementation of policy can lead to substantial disparity in GT

identification (Grissom et al., 2017). The GT identification process can be designed individually by school districts, thereby accounting for the variations in percentages of students of color identified (Peters et al., 2019). Teacher and parent referrals for identification of GT students have not proven to support students of color, as evidenced by the disproportionate percentage of students of color in GT programs (Morgan, 2019). Bias has also been found to exist in referral systems as teachers, reflecting their middle-class values, were likely to refer students using their own value system to determine the perceived skills a GT student may exhibit (Morgan, 2019). Researchers found that the middle-class values of teachers responsible for student referrals were often not congruent with behaviors of economically disadvantaged students (Hamilton et al., 2018). GT identification systems that consider culture blindness, the lack of teachers of color as role models, and GT identification dependent on referrals or based on IQ and achievement should be examined to address the problem of disproportionately low identification of students of color in GT programs (Ford et al., 2020; Hamilton et al., 2018).

Based on the data findings in Theme 3, systematic changes need to be made to eliminate institutional culture barriers that prohibit access to an equitable GT education for all students. These systematic changes will help support identification of students of color for GT education and provide an identification process that is more inclusive. Participants recommended resegregation to neutralize the institutional culture to promote equity and allow availability of educational resources to all students. Peters et al. (2019) and Morgan (2019) concluded a more diverse workforce of teachers would be needed to prevent underrepresentation of students of color. Grissom and Redding (2016) noted

parents and students were more comfortable with the GT program process when teachers were of the same race as parents. However, they noted a limitation of their study was motivated parents could have pushed for same-race teachers or GT testing.

Without resegregation or a more diversified workforce, teachers need continued training to recognize gifted behaviors in students from diverse cultural backgrounds, as noted by an interviewed participant. Teachers are the gatekeepers and contribute to the underrepresentation in GT education because they underidentify Black students for such programs (Allen, 2017; Peters et al., 2019). Resolving the underrepresentation of students of color in GT education requires examining how teachers cultivate, consider, and react to the ability of each pupil. Different characteristics of students of color may be overlooked due to identifying behaviors or educators' assumptions about the lack of opportunity for these students (Peters et al., 2019). Grissom et al. (2017) reported disparities in GT identification are complex and include various teacher perceptions of student giftedness across student groups and the use of culturally biased tests to evaluate giftedness as a one-dimensional idea.

Creativity should be included in the definition of giftedness to better fit the values and opportunities of underrepresented students (Worrell et al., 2018). Renzulli and Reis (2018) focused on GT students as those who, due to their exceptional accomplishments and innovative efforts, have gained recognition. A set of three intertwining clusters characterize GT students: (a) superior general ability; (b) mission dedication; and (c) innovation, although not inherently superior. Renzulli and Reis concluded that no single

cluster is a gift. Rather, the three clusters work together—imagination, above-average skill, and project dedication—to shape a given student's talent.

As synthesized in Theme 3, educators perceived institutional culture as a barrier to equitable access to GT education for all students. This theme is reflected in the literature as a predominant reason for the failure to identify students of color for the GT program. Carman et al. (2018) proffered that school district leaders should develop the mindset of using a form of ability testing as part of their identification process as opposed to using ability testing as the sole indicator of giftedness. Carmen et al. noted that the mindset or pedagogical thinking around giftedness was perhaps an area of change to address as pedagogy drives the way leaders envision schools to respond to students' needs. This basic qualitative study used an appreciative inquiry approach to examine the positive results of practices, and hence the information gathered from this study offers strengths of the GT identification process in the exemplary districts. Grieten et al. (2017) found that appreciative inquiry supports strengths-based change, as using this approach results in individuals' values relate to issues or problems to emerge and positively influence practices and processes in organizations. A primary strength of appreciative inquiry is that the use of appreciative inquiry may reveal values or desired values of the group (Hung, 2017). Understanding the values of the participants in the exemplary districts could serve to transform practices reflective of transformational leadership (see Bushe & Marshak, 2015; Hung, 2017). Ford et al. (2020) noted that Black and Hispanic students need to have their gifts and talents validated and nurtured in the public schools. A bill of rights for students of color was created by Ford et al. (2018) to supported basic

issues that could be addressed in school systems to remove the barriers to access to GT services, thereby creating change that was both culturally responsive and equity based.

Based on the findings reflected in Theme 3, systematic changes are needed to eliminate institutional culture barriers that prohibit access to an equitable GT education. Systemic changes can be addressed through models of change such as concerns-based adoption management, Fullan's model for collaborative change, and the 4-D model of appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider, 2018; Cooperrider & Srivastva, 2000; Fullan, 2020). The 4-D model includes examining discovery, dream, design, and destiny. Finally, Theme 4 indicated that all parents need to be provided with support in understanding the GT identification process and other available acceleration services for their children. This support will help parents make informed decisions regarding their children's academic future and may provide all students with an increased opportunity to engage in rigorous coursework that will better prepare them for higher education. Informed parental decisions will support an equitable access to GT education and prevent barriers to effectively implement an inclusive GT identification process.

Grissom and Redding (2016) noted parents were more comfortable when interacting with same-race teachers regarding GT identification of students. Without such alignment, teachers need training on cultural awareness. Cultural awareness training should be conducted in a safe environment where teachers may speak freely. Lewis et al. (2018) recommended these awkward yet "courageous conversations" (p. 53) to increase teacher understanding of their own bias. The researchers recommended using case studies so teachers could identify with individual, varied students. Lewis et al. explained,

> The ability to successfully interact with and understand others whose cultures differ from their own is necessary if educators are to identify students . . . from underrepresented populations. The case study encourages educators to consider the ongoing impact of culture on students, such as the role of family and community, the values of self-sufficiency and family support, and the corresponding lack of dependence on outside assistance, and the complexity of attendance issues in Hispanic and Latino cultures. (p. 52)

Another aspect of this finding relates to parent engagement. School leaders may need to be more creative in methods of parent outreach and education regarding GT options. Motivating parents may require multiple areas, such as invitations to conferences or informational events not only from the school in general but also from specific teachers and the student (Hirano et al., 2016). Information should be presented in parents' native languages as well. School staff may need training on how to provide a welcoming, inclusive environment to diverse parents (Latunde, 2017). Latunde (2017) suggested asking African American parents for help and involvement and establishing meaningful two-way communication.

The findings of this study indicate possible revisions to the target district's GT identification process. As such, I developed a project study, a white paper with policy recommendations, which will serve to inform the target district school officials of potential avenues to adjust and strengthen the GT identification process to include more students of color. In Section 3, I include the description, goals, and rationale for the

project, a review of literature pertaining to the project genre and policy recommendations, findings, and implications of the study.

Section 3: The Project

The local problem addressed by this basic qualitative study was that students of color are not proportionately identified for the GT program relative to the total school population in the target district. The problem represents a gap in practice as it is unknown how the identification process for GT education results in the identification of disproportionate representation of the target district student demographics. To investigate this problem, I identified seven exemplar districts, using the criterion of the exemplar district's GT program, that had a minimum of 10% greater proportional representation of students of color enrolled in the GT program compared to the target district. I interviewed 11 participants in the exemplar districts, who were employed by the local, exemplar district and they had: (a) knowledge of the identification process for GT students in their respective school district and (b) had taught or supervised GT students for at least 1 year.

This project that emerged from this study is based on the findings of this study that are supported by the four themes that emerged from analysis of participant interviews that educators perceived the identification process for GT education to be multifaceted, and student-centered. The themes that emerged were: (a) Educators perceived the identification process for GT to be multifaceted, (b) Educators perceived GT identification process to be student-centered, (c) Educators perceived institutional culture as a barrier to equitable access for GT education for all students, and (d) Educators perceived parental language and lack of experience as barriers to equitable access to GT education for all students. However, participants perceived that their respective school organization's institutional culture and parents' understanding the

language of aptitude tests and their lack of world experiences interfered with equitable access to GT education for all students. Analysis of these data indicated the project genre of a policy recommendation described in the form of a position paper was the most appropriate project for this study. Based upon the study findings, I created specific recommendations that aligned with the themes identified in my analysis of the data. Using this project genre, I will: (a) provide background of the problem and analysis of the findings, (b) present evidence from the literature and the research, (c) outline recommendations connected to the findings for the stakeholders in the target district pertaining to the GT identification process. The recommendations I designed support implementation of the policy recommendation if the drafted policy was adopted by the target district stakeholders (see Appendix A). This study may lead to positive social change by describing recommendations to support the equitable identification of students of color for the GT program and crafting a policy that would strengthen the GT identification process and supports to nurture giftedness for students of color if stakeholders were to adopt the policy and implement the recommendations.

Position papers, also known as white papers, are designed to communicate findings, conclusions, and recommendations based on data results. The goals of this position paper are to inform educators regarding the data that would provide them with key information pertaining to the disproportionate identification of students of color in GT programs to be persuaded to consider policy changes to the identification process of gifted students in the target district to expand student representation in the GT education program (see Ibrahim & Edgley, 2015). The learning goals for the position paper are

designed to align with the needs identified in the current study by the educators who were interviewed. For the purposes of this position paper, educator stakeholders will include the following: teachers, school level administrators, and district leaders. There are four goals for this project that emerged from the study findings.

- Goal 1: Educators will understand and identify the theories related to identification of GT students and how the theory or pedagogy undergirding a policy or process may affect the identification of students of color.
- Goal 2: Educators will understand and identify how inclusively designed GT identification processes, that include multiple entry points for students and allow a variety of ways in which students may demonstrate giftedness, is student-centered and supports the identification of students of color in target district.
- Goal 3: Educators will understand the concerns-based adoption model, CBAM, for change and describe the value in professional development.
- Goal 4: The target district leadership staff will be informed and will consider implementing the recommendations that reflect a change process to initiate a policy change regarding GT identification in the target district that will address the problem of disproportionate identification of students of color

Rationale

I selected a policy recommendation rather than the other project genres because the problems discerned in the target district could be addressed with a new policy that would change the existing GT identification policy and include recommendations regarding the process that would shift the institutional culture and facilitate the adoption

of the policy recommended. The position paper was designed to inform and persuade the stakeholders to consider the information and findings from this study to inform decision-making on GT identification in the target district. In this section, I describe the goals of the policy recommendation based on the analysis of findings from this study, a scholarly rationale related to the genre of a position paper, how the problem of the disproportionate representation of students of color may be addressed through the project and present a review of the literature related to the genre, project description, evaluation, and implications.

The findings of this study indicated that educators perceived that their district leaders' approach to GT identification was influenced by district leaders' belief systems regarding the identification process for GT students. Teachers perceived that their belief systems regarding how students learn and demonstrate giftedness should influence how GT school services should be designed. Findings showed that having a multifaceted approach to identifying gifted students led to a more inclusive process and resulted in more students of color being identified as gifted compared to district stakeholders that employed the more traditional approach to identify for gifted services that was based on achievement and aptitude.

Educators described the characteristics of the GT identification process and conveyed that district culture supported cultivation of student-centered processes that resulted in the identification of students of color. Educators described their GT identification processes as having multiple points of entry, being focused on students' needs, using alternative means to demonstrate giftedness, and being designed to promote

equity and inclusiveness in the identification of GT students. Educators related that the characteristics of the identification process in their districts were associated with the district leaders' vision and vision of staff regarding how to support all students. The educators described multiple entry points in their GT identification processes throughout the school year, and programs that supported students through specially designed programs to accelerate students or fill in achievement gaps that were used for students who did not immediately qualify for GT services were implemented as vehicles to support students' skill development to potentially qualify for GT services; one district designed a program to achieve this goal. Educators described the variety of ways that students could be referred for GT identification through parent and teacher nominations and evaluated by alternative means, such as, by nonverbal IQ tests, portfolio assessment, aptitude testing, observations, and work samples. Educators also reported that their GT identification process included alternative means of identification that were characterized as being more inclusive and student-centered, thus creating comprehensive opportunities to identify students for gifted and talented services. Without changes to the identification process for gifted and talented services, students from underrepresented groups will be missed for qualification of gifted and talented education programs (Card & Giuliano, 2016).

Barriers were also described in the findings by the educators. Educators noted that barriers to equitable identification and access were related to institutional culture, and parents' language and understanding of the school processes. Some participants described limited exposure and experiences, socioeconomic status, and bias in the assessment

process as components of these barriers. Educators perceived institutional culture as a barrier in other school systems that contained disproportionate representation of students of color who were receiving GT services. Therefore, educators contended that educators' ideology and views on how to serve all students affected how GT identification and service systems were designed.

Researchers have established that shifting ideology or pedagogical thinking within an organization, such as a school system, could take as much as 3 years if strategic planning and professional development were provided to core stakeholders (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2020). Involving stakeholders in systems change, a form of pedagogical change, is central to designing a successful change process for an organization (Fullan, 2020; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2020). Findings indicated that building a deeper understanding of how to implement systematic change effectively is essential in sustaining a more inclusive identification process for gifted and talented students. Ford et al. (2020) stated that outstanding abilities can be found in students of all cultural groups from all socioeconomic backgrounds and in all areas of human endeavor. As a result, GT students must not be compared to others, using age and achievement or intellectual quotients, but should also be evaluated in terms of their experiences, exposure to learning opportunities, and the context of their environment.

Since GT identification process is normed and conceptualized for middle class White students, then GT identification needs to be reformed to reflect a student's culture, language, and socioeconomics. If the GT identification processes do not account for culture and variance in language, ethnicity, and socioeconomics, then it is likely that

students of color, who are just as gifted and talented as their White peers, could be excluded from identification.

Changing institutional culture and perspectives related to how students are served through school systems will require stakeholders to examine their GT identification policies and identification practices including the proportional identification of GT students relative to the total district student population. This study examined perceptions from educators in exemplar districts to understand possible differences more deeply in practices or pedagogical approaches that could have some bearing on the students identified. If stakeholders and change agents in organizations are agreeable to examining these policies and protocols, then it will also be essential for them to understand change processes that could be adopted to shift institutional culture related to pedagogical perceptions and would also possibly need to include addressing parent perceptions of GT access and identification as well as possible language barriers between parents and educators.

Serdyukov (2017) found that understanding change processes is essential to sustaining system change. Stakeholders need to understand how to neutralize perceived culture barriers in institutions that prohibit equitable access to GT education for all students as established in the target district. This position paper includes findings from the study as well as literature to inform and persuade the stakeholders that the adoption of a systemic change process to address the disproportionate identification of students of color in the target district is a priority.

To address the underrepresentation of students of color in GT education, educators must look for talents and potential in areas where they may not expect due to their implicit and explicit biases (Ford et al., 2020). For example, in a qualitative study, after matching students of color and White students by grades and test scores, students of color were less likely than White students to be identified to receive GT education services. An inclusive identification process is crucial to desegregating GT education (Ford et al., 2020).

In the position paper I include policy recommendation, literature and research findings that could inform and persuade stakeholders to consider refinements and revisions to the existing GT identification process in the target district. Changing the process for GT identification could benefit students that would result in positive social change. Change in the identification process will allow educators to see and then seek the brilliance of students of color. Building norms for an inclusive GT identification process will also allow for GT students of color to be identified and served in every school building (Ford et al., 2020). The policy recommendation contained in the position paper will provide stakeholders with evidence of how educators in other districts perceived the GT identification process was designed to support the development of students who may potentially qualify as GT. The position paper will include the literature and research findings to support the notion of alternative theories and strategies to promote more equitable access to GT services for students of color. My position paper includes recommendations for a systems change process regarding the GT identification process in the target district to refine the identification process to be more inclusive, more student-

centered, and reflective of the student demographics of students of color in the target district.

Review of Literature

This literature review focuses on position papers, the benefits of position papers, and the structure of position papers as this is the project genre selected to respond to the findings and address the problem in the target district. In this literature review, I also focus on educational change and how systemic change processes can be used to shift pedagogical thinking of educators in an organization regarding, how educators identify and serve GT students and how alternative practices and perspectives of giftedness may influence the identification and services afforded GT students. There are multiple change models that district leaders could use to implement the recommendations if the policy were adopted.

The conceptual framework that I used to craft the recommendations and policy change included Fullan's educational change theory and the concerns-based adoption model, (CBAM), as a change framework to meet the learning needs of the educators (see Fullan, 2020; Hall & Hord, 2013, 2014) Changing thinking is often a challenge in organizations and the processes must be designed systematically and intentionally by stakeholders in the organization in which the change is being implemented.

In this literature review I focused on policy papers and specific methods for structuring position papers as well as strategies for how students are served, systematic changes to use for identifying gifted students of color, and the rationale for effectively implementing an inclusive GT identification process. I also provide support for the

recommendations in the structure and design of a position paper to inform educators regarding the findings of this study and possible considerations for policy adoption or refined policies for GT identification and services in the target district. According to Ford et al. (2020), the severity of underrepresentation propels educators to advocate for students of color and acknowledge that discrimination in GT education promotes segregation and hampers integration. To desegregate GT education and have a more inclusive identification process, Ford et al. (2020) suggested to expand access to students for GT education and especially students of color who are underrepresented. Ford et al. recommended that educators must set equity goals and devise a plan for meeting these minimal goals related to inclusive services.

Based on the data findings in this study, the overall recommendation of the position paper is a policy change for the identification for GT students in the target district. If the recommendations are adopted, and a potential policy change was adopted, a change framework is recommended to be selected by educator stakeholders to support the process of change and shift pedagogical thinking and practices. The recommendations in the position paper could result in adopting a change in policy change regarding GT identification in the target district. For the purposes of this position paper, the conceptual frameworks I used to guide the recommendation process proposed to strengthen the stakeholders ‘acceptance of the policy recommended if it were adopted include the CBAM, a change theory, and Fullan’s model of change (Fullan, 2020). In the following sections, I describe CBAM, Fullan’s model of change,

Search Strategies

I reviewed scholarly literature related to the study findings and project genre. Several resources informed this literature review. Databases included ERIC, EBSCOhost, Walden dissertations, Scholar Google, and ProQuest Central. Search terms were *position paper, policy making, policy recommendations, policy implementation, educational change/reform, leading change, sustaining change, gifted* and *talented identification process, students of color, educators as change agents, CBAM, shifts in mindsets, inclusive GT services access,* and *systematic change*. I focused on identifying peer-reviewed literature published in the last 5 years. This review of literature provides the framework for the content of my position paper as the project genre. This section includes discussions on the following topics: (a) the structure of a position paper, (b) leadership role in systemic change, (c) application of Fullan's systematic change framework, (d) gifted and talented identification process, (e) application of CBAM model, (f) adopting universal screening procedures, (g) creating alternative pathways to GT identification, (h) establishing a web of communication, (i) viewing professional development as a lever for change, (j) supporting professional development.

Conceptual Framework

Change frameworks or models such as CBAM and Fullan's model of change are helpful for navigating and designing a change process such as is reflected in a position paper that concludes with a policy recommendation (see Fullan, 2020). A shift in mindset needs to be supported with professional development for educators so that school districts can ensure that students of color are in fair proportion in gifted education programs.

According to Trybus (2011), Fullan's model of change has three phases. The first phase is the initiation of change. During this phase, leaders determine if change were feasible. In addition, supports needed for the change to occur would be assessed as well as resources needed for implementation of a proposed change. The second phase of the change would include the actual implementation of change that could last 2-3 years depending upon the clarity of the actions that needed to be taken. During the second phase of the change model, implementing the change, piloting initiative, and measuring the outcomes would also be initiated. The final phase of change process according to Fullan's model is the continuation or routinization of change (Fullan, 2020). Trybus (2011) found that during the final phase of Fullan's model of change, stakeholders would determine whether the change will become part of the system or is discarded. It is during the final phase of change that leaders would decide whether the change will help the organization over time.

Policy makers use CBAM to facilitate the acceptance of change as reflected in the adoption of a new policy or process within an institution or organization such as a school system (Hall & Hord, 2011, 2014). CBAM is built on the premise that change is a continuous process rather than a one-time occurrence or event. Individuals involved in the change process go through a variety of affective stages of concern as well as varied levels of implementation related to the change effort (see Hall & Hord, 2019). In this change model, an individual's process is characterized by advancing through seven stages of varied personal experiences that are characterized by an individual examining how they are affected by the change. The seven stages of concern in the CBAM model

include: (a) awareness, (b) informational, (c) personal, (d) management, (e) consequence, (f) collaboration, and (g) refocusing (Hall & Hord, 2014; Hord, et al., 1987). Policy makers may question how adopting a recommended policy could affect the people who are intended to implement the policy change.

Policy Maker's Use Of Change Frameworks

By using CBAM as a framework for the change process involved in the adoption of new policy, policy makers can identify the needs of the individuals as individuals navigate through the stages of change. Interventions designed by policy makers to support individuals' movement through the stages could include additional information, assistance, professional development, moral support, coaching, mentoring, and collaboration time. One premise in CBAM is that change is a developmental process and that individuals express their acceptance of change by moving through the seven stages. Other assumptions are that change is a personal, and emotional process and that how individuals perceive the change will have a direct bearing on the acceptance of the change thereby influencing the outcome or adoption of the change.

Educators in the target district would benefit from the use of CBAM if stakeholders were to adopt the policy and implement the recommendations. The recommended policy represents a change from present practices for GT identification in the target district. Stakeholders need to understand the change process and the stages of change that everyone would experience if the proposed policy changes were implemented in the target district (see Hall & Hord, 2019). Educators' use of this conceptual framework would support their understanding of the recommendations and the process

for educators may experience when advancing through a dynamic change process such as shifting the identification process for GT students (see Hall & Hord, 2019). Assimilation of the change, or new policy, is a personal process for individuals affected by the change, and it is critical allow individuals to cycle through these stages, and to discern the support needed at each stage to successfully implement proposed changes or policies (see Marris, 1975).

District stakeholders' use of CBAM would afford educators a vehicle to evaluate the success of the change process through assessing individual's advancement through the seven stages of change by providing the prescriptive supports and interventions to help an individual advance through the sever stages and address their individual concern expressed at each stage (see Hall & Hord (2019). Assessing organizational needs prior to the adoption of new policy would provide information to decision-makers regarding the individuals' affective and emotional status regarding the proposed policy change. Recommendations to support change, that are reflected in policy recommendations, are formulated based on data from stakeholders, are designed to facilitate change that includes guidance to the change agents, or district personnel to facilitate the recommendations. In a change process, stakeholders need information about the change, including the rationale related to student benefits, collaboration time together to process the proposed changes, and knowledge and understanding of the content and design of professional development necessary to appropriately support the policy recommendation.

Policy makers, who are in leadership positions and have authority to implement changes would benefit from deeply understanding the stages their stakeholders may

experience because of a proposed policy change (see Marris, 1975). Policy changes are proposed to benefit the purposes of the organization and the stakeholders served by the organization. Therefore, to support organizational changes to serve the vision and mission of the institution and the stakeholders served, it is necessary to understand individuals' needs in relation to any proposed change in order to effectively implement change and support the process of change. Thus, I used the CBAM framework to guide the recommendations made in this position paper to support the policy change if stakeholders were to pursue adoption of the policy. In the following literature review, I describe the how the search was conducted, findings and literature that will support the development of the policy recommendation.

Structure and Benefits of Position Papers

A position paper has basic relevant information known about the problem and will conclude with recommendations to address the problem (see Ibrahim & Edgley, 2015). A position paper is based upon the target district's need to: (a) provide a clear understanding of the problem, (b) present information in a concise manner and (c) make recommendations as a summary (Ibrahim & Edgley, 2015). A position paper can contain a policy recommendation or process for considering policy changes. Before a position paper is written, it is imperative that a well-defined outline is created, identifying goals and position (Ibrahim & Edgley, 2015). The outline for my position paper will be discussed in this section.

I chose the genre of a position paper with policy recommendations to address the problem. The problem in the target school district was that students of color are not

proportionately identified for GT program relative to the total school population. The strength of the project deliverable is that recommendations offer data-driven solutions for district stakeholders who are interested in making policy changes related to GT education. In the position paper, I recommended policy changes for an inclusive GT identification process. The project, if adopted would allow district stakeholders to address the problem of the disproportionate representation of students of color in the target district.

The policy recommendations consist of the following guidelines: (a) define the objective, (b) collect data, and assemble the data (c) construct the alternatives, (d) choose the criteria, (e) predict the results, (f) challenge the trade-offs, (g) halt, concentrate, narrow, expand, choose, and (h) tell your story (Bardach & Patashnik, 2019). The stages are not automatically followed in the order above, and all of them are not required for every problem (Bardach & Patashnik, 2019). The purpose of writing this policy recommendations was to inform and persuade the target school district information to make changes to its GT identification process. In the next sections, I review the structure and rationale for the policy recommendations, as indicated in the researched literature.

Define the Objective of the Policy Recommendations

The problem in the target school district was that students of color are not proportionately identified for GT program relative to the total school population. The target district overall student population demographics are not representative of those students served in GT education. In 2019-20, Black students represented 28.5% of the general education student population but only 7.2% of the GT student population. In

comparison, White students comprised 40.2% of the general education population and 75.6% of the GT student population. Hispanic students represented 24.5% of the general education student population and 7.7% of the GT student population.

The purpose of the basic qualitative study was to identify educators' perspectives of how the GT identification process supports or hinders the identification of students of color. To achieve the purpose of the study, I explored educators' perceptions of the supports and barriers of the GT identification of students of color in exemplar districts. I gathered data in exemplar districts that contained at least 10% more students of color identified in the GT population, relative to the target district, to inform district stakeholders regarding variations of the GT identification process that could support the identification of students of color. Finding a feasible solution to this issue throughout the local setting and profession would permit traditionally underidentified students of color access to an academically rigorous curriculum that could help eliminate the achievement gap between students of color and their White student peers.

The primary purpose of the position paper is to inform and persuade the district stakeholders with policy recommendations (Herman, 2013). The district stakeholders in the target district can review the information and make informed, data-driven decisions regarding the GT identification process. According to Bardach and Patashnik (2019), the first section of the position paper, defining the objectives and problem, is an important step in the process of writing a position paper.

Collect and Assemble the Data

Data-driven decision-making has become a standard in the American education system. According to Filderman and Toste (2018), data-driven decision-making is the process of gathering, interpreting, and analyzing data to amend practice. Educators regularly use data-driven decisions to improve instruction and educational practices. According to Gelderblom et al. (2016), data-driven decision-making in the field of education is the processing of data, (i.e., assessment data, surveys, and classroom observations) by educators which includes collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data to study educational practices.

Construct the Alternatives

Bardach and Patashnik (2019) found that constructing the alternatives is a process in which the policies or alternative actions are listed. Bardach and Patashnik (2019) commented a list is a compilation of all actions related to the decision and actions that were eliminated once the data were reviewed during the decision-making process. Bardach and Patashnik (2019) suggested three questions when making a decision: (a) How would you solve the problem if cost were no object? (b) Where else could it work? and (c) Ask yourself, why not? These questions will help during the next step of choosing one option that works (Bardach & Patashnik, 2019). Herman (2013) suggested that stakeholders should look at quantitative and qualitative research, analyze and make sense of the data and remain objective in order to make the best decision.

Choose the Criteria

Choosing the criteria for the policy analysis is an essential step in the creation of a position paper because it introduces values and philosophy (Bardach & Patashnik, 2019). In a position paper written by Gibbs (2018), the selected criteria were contextual problems (i.e., income), possible alternatives, and factors, if any that were detrimental to the educational system. This position paper was focused on whether education teaches students to be more human and inclusive in an anxious world. Gibbs started the position paper with the premise that education is under a political threat. In another position paper written by Honan et al. (2017), the need to provide a phonics assessment to first year students was examined. Honan et al. (2017) used the criteria that included the effect of using ongoing assessments for instruction and the importance of research-based interventions.

Predict the Results

Bardach and Patashnik (2019) found that predicting the results by describing the anticipated impact of each alternative presented in the position paper is effective as a tool to inform the reader regarding ramifications of policy implementation. When considering the predicting results section, the author of the position paper must keep in mind that the policy is about the future (Arnold, 2012). Next, predicting policy results is about being realistic about the policy (Bardach & Patashnik, 2019). Finally, Bardach and Patashnik (2019) found when predicting results, it is important to remember that predicting what may work and produce a change in the future is never an exact science. In a policy recommendation that focused on the implementation of a European program, ready

STEM go, on the academic readiness of first-year students in STEM programs, Langie and Pinxten (2018) promoted data-based decision-making, cooperation among levels of the stakeholders, study skills, and engaging in best practices for stakeholders as results. In another position paper, DeBettencourt et al. (2016), recommended solutions for doctoral programs in need of exceptional student education faculty DeBettencourt et al. (2016) provided several predicted results, including evaluation of doctoral programs, increasing the funding for special education doctoral studies, and enacting recruitment strategies.

Challenge the Trade-Offs

The sixth step of policy analysis is described as examining the one policy recommendation that has the best expected outcome and choosing that one (Bardach & Patashnik, 2019). The process of selecting one recommendation is called dominance. The best way to choose the best policy is by revisiting the data (Bardach & Patashnik, 2019). Alternatives to the recommendations are often referred to as trade-offs. Bardach and Patashnik (2019) stated that rank ordering recommendations is a way to show stakeholders all the options in policy making.

Halt, Concentrate, Narrow, Expand, Decide

Narrowing and deepening the analysis is the seventh step in the process of creating a position paper (Bardach & Patashnik, 2019). Bardach and Patashnik (2019) suggested that the author of the position paper should analyze the data and determine the recommendations that emerge from data analysis. Miglani et al. (2018) made a recommendation for distance learning opportunities for students in trade school and high

school students who were preparing for the workforce upon graduation. Miglani et al. (2018) analyzed the data and based the recommendation solely on the collected data.

Tell Your Story

According to Bardach and Patashnik (2019), the final step of developing the position paper centers on telling the story. At this point in the process, the problem is redefined, alternatives are considered, criteria are examined, projections are reassessed, and the writing of the policy begins. Bardach and Patashnik (2019) stated that the intended audience should be considered, in determining how the results will be projected. The writing of the policy should be logical, and the author of the position paper should understand that all steps in the process may not be used. Bardach and Patashnik (2019) also suggested the use of a memo for minor policy changes, press releases, and the use of charts and graphs to present the data.

Leadership Role In Systemic Change

Educators suggested that implementing equitable processes for GT identification may help neutralize the institutional culture and make educational resources accessible to all students. Using a systematic change process to address the noted concerns could increase the representation of the number of students of color in gifted and talented education programs (see Card & Giuliano, 2016). Hubbard and Datnow (2020) found that leadership plays a pivotal role in confronting traditional norms of schooling and sustaining change over time. Fullan (2020) concluded that to understand systems change, leadership practices need to highlight joint determination, adaptability, and culture-based accountability.

To implement effective change, educational leaders need to be able to sort out ideas with others at the outset and during the entire change process. When referring to the joint determination and adaptability, educational leaders should stay close to the action and be able to adapt and resolve issues that may arise during the continuous improvement cycle (Fullan, 2020). Fullan (2020) intends for "leaders to be fully involved with the stakeholders in the change process as describing the leader's role as being close to the action" (p. 660). Regarding the culture of accountability, Fullan (2020) commented that educational leaders need to build a culture where people come to appreciate continuous improvement as something they should do.

Data findings indicated that school districts in which underrepresentation of gifted students of color was a concern, saw a need to make the identification process more inclusive to ensure that students of color were represented proportionally in relation to the district demographics and examined in the context of the identification of their White peers in gifted education. Gifted education programs have been primarily White, Asian American, and upper-level income students. This disparity has been in existence for a long time despite years of debate about how it should be addressed (Grissom et al., 2019; Peters et al., 2020).

Data findings also indicated that educators need to think differently about how students are identified for gifted education to address the proportional representation issues and to decrease the underrepresentation of gifted students of color. Peters et al. (2020) stated that schools should rely on best practices to identify a greater number of gifted students of color. Examining the data is the first step to raising the awareness level

and significance of the problem of disproportionate representation of students of color in GT education. Education leaders can use data to help educators examine the concrete reality the gap in the percentage of students of color served versus the percentage of White students served and compare those percentage to the overall demographic make-up of the school system student population.

Systematic Change Framework and Capacity Building

Using both CBAM and Fullan's model of change to inform the recommendations I make in this position paper influenced the process I outline, and phases I describe for stakeholders' consideration to adopt the policy and to implement the recommendations. I recommended a process that is composed of a sequential series of recommendations to help stakeholders implement the policy if it were adopted. Gaining new knowledge and information on a proposed change, such as the context and advantages of the proposed change is necessary for individuals to engage in the change process.

Fullan's Model of Change

The framework for the literature review is based on Fullan's work related to systemic change. According to Fullan (2020), there are two approaches to change in education. The first change approach is an innovation model in which Fullan recommends leaders look at specific innovations to evaluate how effectively they are implemented and to determine which factors supported successful implementation of the model. The second approach to educational change is capacity-building. Fullan (2020) recommends that when using capacity-building, the leaders examine how people develop the organizational capacity of personnel to engage in continuous improvement.

Educational change is formed in three categories: (a) The first category is initiation, which includes adopting the proposed change and deciding to proceed with the proposed change; (b) The second category is the implementation, which refers to putting the proposed change into action, and (c) The third category is the continuation or discontinuation with the implementation of the proposed change. Fullan (2020) also concluded that the following factors are associated with the decision to initiate change: (a) existence and quality of innovations, (b) access to innovation, (c) teacher/administrator advocacy, (d) problem-solving, (e) new policy and funds, (f) community pressure and support, and (g) external change agents. Clarity, quality, and perceived complexity of the given change were identified as factors affecting the implementation of the proposed change (Fullan, 2020).

Another factor related to implementing change is the need for examination of the local school environment and assessing the stakeholders' willingness for change. Lastly, the implementation of the proposed change is dependent upon whether the proposed change is instilled into the organizational structure, whether there are skilled educators who can implement the change, and whether there are processes and procedures established for continuous improvement. Fullan (2020) concluded that the change process is best achieved if all phases described are integrated with each other**.** Next, I discuss the CBAM change framework used to implement and support change in school settings.

Concerns Based Adoption Model

CBAM is a framework model used to support and implement change in school settings. CBAM was initially developed in the 1960s. The model is made up of three

frameworks: (a) stages of concern, (b) levels of use and (c) innovation configurations (Lo & Porath, 2017). CBAM provides a framework for implementing change, assessing the individual's experience within the change process, and assessing the stages of individual and organizational change. Next, I will discuss each component to this change framework model.

Stages Of Concern. Stages of concern assesses the attitudes and feelings that educators may have towards change. Stages of concern describes the affective dimension of change, how people feel about doing something new or different and their concerns as they engage with a new practice or program. Stages of concern provides a potential evaluation framework for considering teachers' attitudes at all stages of implementation.

Levels of Use. The implementation of research-based practices allows stages of use that go beyond the traditional use or non-use differences made in many studies of educational programs. The levels of use framework centers on the actions and behaviors of educators as they implement research-based practices. The level of use offers a precise way to describe the change process that answers the decision makers' need for accountability.

Innovation Configurations. The main purpose of the innovation configurations is to recognize that in most change efforts (a) program adaptation will occur, (b) there is a way to chart these adaptations, and (c) these adaptations have direct and indirect consequences for facilitating and assessing change processes. Using the CBAM model, educators are permitted to be able to affect the implementation of change and enhance the effective use of research-based practices. The CBAM model provides educators with a

tool that can be used as a change instrument for research-based practices and education reform (Lo & Porath, 2017).

Gifted and Talented Identification Process

For gifted education programs to be truly equitable, there are some best practices that school personnel must take under consideration. According to Peters et al. (2020) school leaders should design their gifted and talented education programs to meet the needs of its local population, instead of trying to conform to a national perspective on which students count as gifted. Peters et al. (2020) concluded designing GT education programs to meet the needs of the local population has two main benefits. The first benefit of designing a GT identification process to respond to the needs of the local population is that the process will serve the population of students for whom it should be or who it is designed. GT programs are supposed to benefit those students who are performing at high academic levels in comparison to their peers rather than being compared to student academic performance at a national level. The second benefit of designing a GT identification process to respond to the needs of the local population is that schools could identify students for GT services based on local norms and values that tend to result in far greater equity than using national, state, or even district norms (Gubbins et al., 2020; Peters et al., 2020).

GT identification processes should be proactively designed to find and eliminate barriers so that no students are denied gifted services for the wrong reasons. Stakeholders should consider designing identification processes that contain affirmative steps to find every student who would benefit from a gifted and talented education program. An

inclusive approach to identifying gifted and talented students, when designed and implemented, will not take away services from students, rather an inclusive approach would expand the opportunities for student access and possibly result in a more equitable educational system that meet the needs of all students.

Traditional GT programs are grounded on the basis of using IQ tests and achievement measures to identify giftedness in the student population. One assumption of the traditional system is that IQ measures and achievement measures are valid and reliable for all students regardless of their cultures, experiences, language dominance and background (Ford et al., 2020). Hence, when access is determined entirely on culture blindness, decontextualized philosophies, scores, and other documents, such as checklists and nomination forms, students of color are placed at a disadvantaged. An equitable referral and identification process is crucial to decrease the underrepresentation in GT education (see Ford et al., 2020). Ford et al. (2020) commented that all the forms associated with the GT referral process should reflect the background, culture, language, and socioeconomic status of the students who are being considered for referral as these factors may influence which students are referred for GT services, thus rendering the system unequitable. The design of the system must account for the differences in the students who are served in our schools.

Gubbins et al. (2020) conducted a qualitative study that provided educators with four themes, or recommendations, to improve the representation of students of color in GT programs. Based on the study findings of Gubbins et al. (2020), identifying GT students is often a multistep process. Findings of this qualitative study revealed that

barriers at each step of identifying students for GT services can limit the number of students of color identified. The findings that emerged from the Gubbins et al. (2020) qualitative study to support students of color being proportionally identified for GT education and that were perceived as strategies that could affect social change included: (a) adopting universal screening procedures, (b) creating alternative pathways to identification, (c) establishing a web of communication, and (d) viewing professional learning as a lever for change. In the next section I discuss the findings identified by Gubbins et al. (2020) that also align with Themes 1 and 2 of this study.

Adopting Universal Screening Procedures

Rather than identifying students' weaknesses to prevent them from receiving services, school leaders should seek evidence of students' strengths from a variety of sources. These data sources can include nominations/referrals, rating scales, and portfolios to support universal screening results. The findings my study indicated that administering different nonverbal ability assessments, such Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test, CogAT (nonverbal subtests), Raven's Progressive Matrices, and Universal Nonverbal Intelligence Test would provide varying perspectives on students' reasoning abilities. Also, identifying students across grade levels rather than at a one-time event on an inflexible timetable would help to decrease the underrepresentation of students of color. Ford et al. (2020) suggested that effective universal screening was a key essential in increasing the number of students of color in GT education.

Creating Alternative Pathways to Identification

Gubbins et al. (2020) found that providing talent pools and preparation programs in the early grades or after the school day allows students to have the opportunity to enhance their academics and skills needed for advance learning. This theme also allows educators to become talent scouts during this time because they will have the benefit of recognizing students' strengths early in different learning environments from the general education classroom. In this study, participants identified specialized programs to support and nurture the talents and gifts of potential GT students.

Establishing A Web Of Communication To Promote Clear GT Procedures

Gubbins et al. (2020) found that school personnel should communicate the identification procedures for gifted education to each other. Personnel should fully understand the identification procedures and create identification committees that include representatives with key responsibilities in different roles, such as, GT and general education teachers, administrators, District GT program directors, and school counselors. Clear and concise written information about the gifted identification process should be visible on school and district websites. The web of communication permits all stakeholders to be talent scouts for potential gifted students.

Implementing Professional Development As A Lever For Change

To achieve an equitable representation in GT programs, professional development needs to be offered to educators. Through professional development, educators become aware of the challenges of students of color related to identification. Parents need to also be included as part of this professional development opportunities because connections

can be made between a student's home and school experience. Professional development creates a school culture where educators recognize the goal of GT identification is to identify students' strengths instead than having students' weaknesses serving as roadblocks to identification. Ford et al. (2020) concluded that providing an extensive culturally competent training and preparation for educators will allow for an equitable access to GT education.

To increase the identification of students of color in gifted education, a paradigm shift must occur that includes supporting more culturally sensitive identification procedures and opportunities for professional development in gifted education for educators (Card & Giuliano, 2016). The paradigm shifts described could result in changes with the GT identification process that could lead to more equitable access to advanced learning opportunities for all students. Professional development is used to build knowledge and understanding of innovations, or new initiatives.

Using Systemic Professional Development to Build Cultural Capacity

Novak et al. (2020) suggested that a lack of cultural knowledge and competency contributes to the underrepresentation of students of color in gifted education. Professional development should be systematic and on-going, include feedback and reflection, and provide practical application that is embedded in everyday work. Professional development should also incorporate research-based practices that reflect the learning environment as well as increase educators' awareness of giftedness in students of color.

Professional development is a tool to support learning and retooling skills in organizations and institutions. Therefore, providing effective professional development will help educators strengthen their ability to recognize diverse students' unique skills and talents that traditional assessments used to identify giftedness fail to identify. Educators' knowledge and skills in their ability to recognize the differences in identifying giftedness in students of color is important for educators to discern cultural differences that may manifest in how students behave, communicate, and interact with others. Providing professional development on cultural variations of students of color and gifted behaviors is central knowledge that stakeholders need to possess if the proposed policy would be adopted. Another area of professional development that is recommended is around how GT students are identified in terms of the process, and assessments used. Stakeholders need information regarding alternative GT identification processes as well. The content of the professional development described is recommended to support stakeholders to shift their thinking regarding traditional GT identification processes and the typical GT student profile of characteristics based exclusively on achievement and intelligence. Hence, the shift in thinking about how giftedness is observed and how educational organizational processes are commonly structured would involve systemic change processes for individuals to support the effective implementation of the recommendations if the stakeholders were to adopt the policy recommendation.

In 2019, the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC, 2019) revised gifted education standards. The standard that was modified to emphasize the focus on inclusivity and equitability. Standard 6.3, states "All students with gifts and talents are

able to develop their abilities as a result of educators who are committed to removing barriers to access creating inclusive gifted education communities" (NAGC, 2019, p. 17). The language in this standard indicates one guiding principle for serving GT students, however the methodology of using culturally responsive strategies is not included in Standard 6.3. Thus, educators are responsible for selecting strategies to support the needs of students from diverse backgrounds and providing leaders are responsible for designing and delivering professional development for that is aligned to meet the needs of all students. (Novak et al., 2020).

Mun et al. (2020) stated that educators need practices to impart the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for educators to meaningfully partake in a multiethnic and multiracial society. The curriculum guidelines designed by The National Association for Multicultural Education designed curriculum based on the principles of inclusiveness, diverse perspectives, self-knowledge, equity, and social justice (Novak et al., 2020). Professional development designed by leaders to reflect the curriculum suggested by the National Association for Multicultural Education, reflects culturally responsive teaching techniques and an equity-based mindset. Best practices for culturally relevant professional development include characteristics and needs of gifted students who are culturally different, consistently recruiting and retaining culturally different students in gifted and talented education and eliminating discriminatory assessment and test bias (Novak et al., 2020).

Professional development should be based on the needs of the teachers so that teachers may meet the needs diverse student populations. Using a needs assessment to

individually determine the teachers' skills and knowledge levels is one way to gather data to prescriptively design professional development so that the learning needs of diverse students are addressed. In context of professional development, focusing on students' cultures to shape curriculum and instruction is an essential skill that should be taught by teachers (Muniz, 2019). Muniz (2019) stated that professional development should be individualized to the participants, by reflecting the culture of the community and the school staff culture rather than using generalizations. Muniz (2019) commented that educators cannot teach what they do not know. Therefore, educators must learn the cultures of the students they are instructing, specific to their community. Educators who are culturally competent, value diversity, and are culturally self-aware can work on institutionalizing cultural knowledge and adapting to diversity while serving the student population at large.

In most districts, there are gatekeepers who enforce the implementation of the GT identification procedures. When examining the equity in the context of professional development for educators of gifted and talented students, the main factor contributing to the underrepresentation of students of color in gifted and talented education is the role of the teacher as the "gatekeeper" to the identification process and the gifted and talented education program (Novak et al., 2020, p. 174). Professional development is an opportunity to strategically address the intricacies of the identification process, allowing for targeted, specific professional development for educators. In order to address the disproportionality of students of color being reflected in GT populations, school leaders may consider using professional development to expand educators thinking, perceptions

and to foster a deeper understanding of culturally responsive instruction. Educators with experience of either teaching or supervising gifted and talented students need continuous professional development that targets equitable identification and assessments, policies and procedures, affective development, psychological development, social development, cultural development, curriculum and instruction, and services and programming for gifted and talented students from all backgrounds and that professional development on culture and cultural differences must ongoing and applicable (Novak et al., 2020).

Cultural awareness training is recommended for teachers to heighten the awareness and understanding of diverse students' needs. Researchers contended that professional development properly designed and delivered professional development will promote equity in identification of students of color for GT services, thus promoting greater access. Social justice is related to equitable opportunities for all students to access a program or service. (Novak et al., 2020; Scarparolo, & Hammond, 2018). For example, Novak et al. (2020) suggested that frontloading provides student exposure to the kinds of questions and the curriculum they will experience in gifted education. Frontloading can include such strategies like critical or creative thinking skills and bridging the gaps in knowledge acquired through gifted and talented education.

In addition to needed professional development in cultural awareness, educators of gifted students of color may have inaccurate beliefs about gifted characteristics. Matheis et al. (2017) contended that the ingrained perspectives and opinions of educators from less diverse backgrounds and experiences negatively influenced the identification of students of color for GT programs. Hence, professional development that is focused on

understanding all cultures and diverse backgrounds of students may result in the increased identification of students of color and the delivery services to students from culturally diverse backgrounds (Matheis et al., 2017).

The content of professional development needs to center around affective supports that recruits and retains gifted students of color. Gifted students of color benefit greatly from educators who are trained in building positive relationships with their students. Culturally responsive professional development can help educators of gifted and talented students of color learn how to build these positive relationships and gain a deeper understanding of gifted traits within the culture. Culturally responsive relationships and supportive learning environments bolster support for students of color in the gifted education and in the school environment, overall (Lewis & Novak, 2019).

Professional development needs also needs to focus on incorporating elements of diversity in both a global sense and a reflective sense into a culturally responsive gifted curriculum for students. Gorski and Swalwell (2016) commented that these elements should include an increased knowledge and understanding of the cultures represented in the classroom and the community. Educators could use these elements of diversity in service-learning projects that may enhance the local community and resource materials resulting in more successfully recruiting and retaining students of color into the gifted and talented education program (Gorski & Swalwell, 2016). Gifted education programs that embrace curriculum practices that allow students to make meaningful connections between what they are learning, and cultures will provide successful learning outcomes for students of color. To appropriately respond to the needs of the gifted students of

color, educators need to monitor their school's progress by maintaining a proactive approach rather than a reactive one with support and resources (Gorski & Swalwell, 2016). Finally, a shift in educators' mindset toward equity in gifted education is a crucial part of the systematic change needed to support professional development (Gorski & Swalwell, 2016).

Critical debate and reflective conversations are important components of the process for educators participating in professional development. Meaningful conversations among educators which take a deeper dive into cultural awareness, can potentially initiate change in educators' perspectives and beliefs (Moore, 2018). Moore (2018) commented that professional development provides educators with an excellent pathway to raise awareness for gifted and talented underrepresented student populations, implement sustainable change in practices, and eventually lead to a shift in personal and systematic beliefs. Education is crucial for society to survive and thrive. Education must continuously evolve to meet the challenges of the global world. Educational change needs to be systematic and consistent. Education also needs to new ideas to make a meaningful impact to serve specific student populations (Serdyukov, 2017).

Project Description

Using the results of the study, I developed a position paper as my goal of this project is to address the problem of the target district that students of color are not proportionately identified for the GT program relative to the total school population. In this project I make policy recommendations for the GT identification process target district. I will provide the position paper stakeholders to inform them about potential

recommendations to support policy changes for their consideration. I designed the position paper to provide information to the decision-making personnel to make informed decisions and consider recommendations regarding a potential policy change focused on GT identification and support services.

Design of the Project

I designed a position paper to help the leadership in the target district provide an inclusive GT identification process that proportionately identifies students of color for GT education relative to the total school population. In the position paper, I proposed the following considerations to district leaders (a) developing an understanding of theories related to the identification of GT students and how the assumptions of the theories could be used to reinforce potential policy implementation and address the district problem of identification of students of color for GT services, (b) developing an understanding of how an inclusive GT identification process characterized by multiple entry points for students can support the identification of students of color in the target district, (c) understating the value in systemic professional development using CBAM as a framework to implement organizational change, and (d) instituting a change process, using the recommendations outlined in the position paper for possible implementation of a GT identification process that could address the problem in the target district and (see Appendix A).

The target district offers differentiated instruction to meet the needs of its advanced learners through gifted education. The target district's stakeholders recognize that the GT identification process should be equitable, and the GT process was addressed

as an area of concern in the district plans for 2019 through 2022. The target district stakeholders have been exploring ways to proportionately identify more students of color for the GT education program starting at the elementary school level and continuing through middle and high school levels. The target district executive leadership staff have articulated support for an inclusive GT education program that emphasizes the development of advanced academic achievement as well as higher level thinking and reasoning skills as supplemental programs to nurture potentially gifted students.

The implementation of this policy's recommendations, derived from the findings of the research study associated with this project, for an inclusive GT identification process involves the understanding of the educators' needs who are performing the tasks for identification of GT students. CBAM is a research-based framework with tools and techniques that have been implemented (Hall & Hord, 2019). According to Hall and Hord (2019), CBAM is a framework that provides a process-based approach for change that includes tools to support staff during the multiple stages of a change initiative. If stakeholders were to use the tools recommended, target district staff would be able to measure staff concerns related to the policy change recommending an alternative GT identification process. The CBAM framework provides a change model that the target district's staff can use to develop questions for the stages of concern inventory which is a component for assessing and evaluating a proposed change (see Fullan, 2019; Hord & Hall, 2019).

Resources and Existing Supports

The resources that would be needed, should the target district leadership determine that a policy change would be implemented, would include ongoing, systemic professional learning, alternative materials for GT identification and universal screening, materials to conduct professional learning, and monies for stipends and substitutes for participants. Although, the target district and school leaders have expressed a desire to have an inclusive GT identification process, the current GT identification process has not proportionately identified students of color compared to the total school population. If the policy recommendations were implemented, the target district would need to have participants who are ready, willing, and able to conduct a pilot practice to implement changes that support an inclusive GT identification process and that align with the agreed upon policy. Collaboration and partnership would be needed from district and school leadership if the recommendations of this position paper were implemented. The phased-in implementation process of this project would allow for the shift of existing identification practices to include alternative processes, and alternative thinking about GT education that could result in a more inclusive model of identification.

Existing supports for this project would include district and school stakeholders' interest and desire reflecting their understanding regarding the needed shift in the GT identification process for students of color. Additional existing supports would include the target district's GT plan identifying the need to explore alternative methods to identify gifted students and the allocation of funds to purchase materials and screening

assessments. Existing supports would also include space and professional development materials made available to campuses annually.

Potential Barriers

It is imperative to identify potential barriers to effectively implement an inclusive GT identification project (see Appendix A). The first potential barrier would be that educators may lack a clear understanding of the theories related to identifying GT students and how the theories may affect the identification of students of color. The failure of personnel to understand the alternative GT identification theories would be problematic because educators, possibly would not understand the need to make changes to the existing GT identification process. A second potential barrier would be that educators may need professional development to understand the CBAM framework and how to effectively implement the change model to successfully implement the recommended policy reflecting a revised GT identification process. This barrier could result in changes not being made systematically as is recommended in the CBAM framework. The third potential barrier would include funds to support the ongoing professional development in the form of stipends and paying substitutes.

Potential Solutions to Barriers

The solution to the first and second barriers would be to provide professional development so that educators in the target district understand the importance of ensuring the students of color have access to advanced learning opportunities early in their educational journey. Educators need to understand that not having access to advanced and rigorous learning opportunities can have an adverse effect on the trajectory for

students of color in their later years of education. Wright and Ford (2017) stated that a lack of access to advanced learning can lead to the gifted and talented students of color being unnurtured and not developed. Thus, the "achievement gap between White students and students of color continues to widen rather than being narrowed down" (Wright et al., 2017, p.115). A solution to the funding of stipends and substitute pay is the reallocation of existing budgets. With existing district and school leadership already indicating a desire for change related to GT identification of students of color, it would be feasible to collaboratively develop a district change process to meet the existing goals that support the recommendations and would support the policy changes.

Implementation and Timetable of the Project

If adopted by district and campus stakeholders, the recommendations I make in this position paper suggest that the policy adoption is supported by following the recommendations that would be implemented in phases over a total of 3 years at selected schools, which historically have not proportionally identified students of color for GT education in the target district student (see Appendix A). This project is a resource for educators to use as a guide for best practices regarding the identification of students of color in the GT education program. In this position paper, I provide a framework to develop a clear and equitable identification process for the GT education program beginning at the elementary school level and continuing through middle and high school levels. District and school leadership may use this position paper as a resource as they consider the potential policy changes to promote equitable educational access for all GT student learners.

Policy recommendation should take place quicky as it only needs to be approved at the district level by the executive leadership team. To make certain the policy is accepted to stakeholders, I would present the new policy and position paper to the executive leadership team at the district level of the target school district in the Spring of 2022. Executive leadership support for an inclusive GT identification process would determine whether the policy is adopted. Since the executive leadership team at the district level meets weekly, I would present the policy recommendation and position paper to the team during the third quarter of the school year in 2022 in a series of sessions allowing for reflection, dialogue, and assimilation of the recommendations to support the change in policy. Table 7 reflects the timeline for implementation of the project.

Table 7

Proposal for Implementation of Recommendations and Timeline

Recommendation	Month of Implementation
Pre-Launch of Phase 1 Overview Recommendations and Policy Change to District Leadership	**Year 1** Month 1
Phase 1	**Year 1** Months 2 through 12
1. Establish a district level GT taskforce to Guide Pilot Process • Identify Zone 1 and 2 Cohort Schools	
2. Conduct Professional Learning on Change Process, Cultural Awareness, GT identification alternative processes and assessments	
3. Design and implement professional development to promote systemic change for GT identification and service delivery.	**Year 1** Months 2 through 12
4. Develop Alternative Approaches to GT Identification • Pathway Option 1: Early Childhood Nurturing Intervention • Nurturing Program for Grades K-2 • 3-5 Grade Span	**Year 1** Months 2 through 12
5. Revise and evaluate the implementation of pilot GT school site that employs the new recommended practices.	**Year 1** Months 2 through 12
Phase 2	**Year** 2– Months 2 through 12
6. Identify Zone 3 and Zone 4 Cohort schools	
Repeat Recommendations 2- 5	
Phase 3	**Year 3** - Months 2 through 12
7. Identify Zone 5 and Zone 6 Cohort schools	
Repeat Recommendations 2- 5	

Table 8

Roles and Responsibilities

Participant	Roles and Responsibility
District Leadership	Set the District Vision and Guiding Principles for the policy change Articulate support for recommendations to all district stakeholders
Task Force	• Elect Co-Chairs for the Task Force • Guide the Recommendations of the change process • Identify the Phase 1, 2, and 3 cohorts based on agreed upon data points • Design and implement a student-centered identification for GT education using a variety of data sources • Monitor Cohort Schools Evaluation by Developing Accountability and Evaluation Plan • Examine the results of the GT referral process for efficacy • Identify professional learning to meet the needs of staff as related to GT education, and assessed individual campus needs using CBAM • Collaborate with District and Campus Leadership Design and Implement Professional Learning Implementation • Identify Innovation Configurations for Assessing Implementation and Change • Identify Data Collection for Assessment of Outcomes • Use the information collected to evaluate, refine, and revise the pilot phase of the initial cohort implementation.
Cohort Schools in Phase 1, 2, & 3	• Participate in Professional Learning • Self-Assess using Innovation Configuration and Outcomes Being Implemented • Implement Strategies and Techniques Designed to Support Change in GT Identification • Monitor and Track GT Referrals and Supplemental Programs • Engage in Outcomes-based Evaluation and work with Task Force to Refine Process for Implementation (Recommendations #2-5)

Project Evaluation Plan

The primary purpose of the position paper is to inform stakeholders about the recommendations to support the proposed policy change to the GT identification process and to provide information to educational leaders so that they can make informed decisions. Stakeholders will review the position paper, consider the findings of this study, and the actions recommended to initiate a change process that would align with the proposed policy change to the GT identification process. The changes I recommended involve educators, and parents in some professional training sessions developing new abilities, skills, and a deeper understanding of alternative materials to strengthen knowledge, hence I will use an outcomes-based assessment plan to evaluate this project. Evaluation includes the systematic collection of information about program characteristics, activities, and outcomes for use by individuals to make decisions to improve program effectiveness.

Outcomes-based evaluation involves several steps and will be used to evaluate the project (see Hammami et al., 2020). In outcomes-based evaluation, the first step is determining what the perceived outcomes will be and selecting a means of measuring all outcomes. Second, identify the specific outcomes short-term and long-term outcomes that will be targeted as priorities for evaluation. Third, select an indicator for each outcome. Fourth, determine data will be collected to evaluate each targeted outcome. Fifth, pilot the proposed policy change on a smaller scale and evaluate the resources used, problems encountered, and ways to improve the plan. Sixth, analyze the data collected for each prioritized outcome. Seventh, summarize and report the evaluation data for each

outcome. Determine who the evaluation is presented to and how the outcomes evaluation is presented (McNamara, 2008).

Justification and Goals for Outcomes-Based Evaluation

The outcomes-based evaluation is appropriate because the outcomes pertain to the implementing a policy change that would expand traditional GT identification system to a more inclusive one that reflects an authentic goal of changing the GT identification policy to include different processes and assessments to support the more equitable identification of GT students of color. Outcomes-based evaluations are based on authentic, real-world problems. The four goals of this project are that (a) Educators will understand and identify the theories related to identification of GT students and how the theory, or pedagogy undergirding a policy or process may affect the identification of students of color, (b) Educators and parents will understand and identify how inclusively designed GT identification processes that include multiple entry points for students and allow a variety of ways in which students may demonstrate giftedness is student-centered and supports the identification of students of color in target district, (c) Educators will understand the concerns-based adoption model, CBAM, for change and describe the value in professional development, and (d) The target district leadership staff will be informed and will consider implementing the recommendations that reflect a change process to initiate a policy change regarding GT identification in the target district that will address the problem of disproportionate identification of students of color. The recommendations are based on the findings that emerged from this study and are aligned with the four themes identified in the study. The recommendations I designed support all

of the themes and the process recommended to implement the policy change if it were to be implemented follow the CBAM (Hall & Hord, 2019), and Fullan's (2020) model of change to promote awareness of the individuals' affective state in response to implementing the recommendations and to support the District Task Force in monitoring and adjusting the professional learning, technical support, coaching and interventions as needed to promote successful implementation of the recommended policy.

Project Implications

Social Change

Implications for positive social change are that by informing stakeholders with of the findings and sharing recommendations including a process to support a policy change, that stakeholders will be persuaded to implement the recommendations and adopt the policy changes. If the recommendations are initiated, educators will develop a deeper understanding of giftedness, diversity and cultural differences, alternative strategies to address the problem of disproportionately identifying students of color. The process designed promotes data-driven decision-making regarding an inclusive GT identification process. The policy recommendations would provide an inclusive approach for GT identification that may increase the number of students of color who are identified to receive GT education services.

When a school district implements more inclusive policies, all students have an equal opportunity to gain access to educational services that increase student achievement while narrowing the achievement gap among students (Mun et al., 2020). Mun et al. (2020) found that implementing inclusivity in policy changes is crucial to making

systemic changes while working towards goals of equity. The recommendations are reflective of the second literature review and findings of the study that included using alternative means of identification for GT students, using student-centered strategies such as support programs that nurtured students who were potentially gifted, expanding screening times so that there are multiple opportunities for students to be identified for GT services, shifting the organizational thinking related to giftedness and increasing knowledge of diverse populations, different cultures, and understanding the change process.

Importance to Stakeholders

This project may benefit the education personnel and students in the target district. The problem that this study addressed was that students of color are not proportionately identified for the GT program relative to the total school population in the target district. The findings of the study supported developing recommendations to support a policy change in how GT students are served in the target district. Each theme identified from the data analysis has been incorporated into the recommendations outlined in the position paper. As the goals of this project are met, education personnel will become more knowledgeable of cultural differences about students of color, alternative, student-centered, individually crafted support services to nurture giftedness in students and parents' understanding of giftedness and how to refer their student for services will be strengthened. The identification of more students of color for GT education would afford these students access to more rigorous curriculum opportunities thereby providing a benefit to students as well. Overall, the recommendations support a

more inclusive GT policy that is aimed at serving more students of color and preparing them for university transition and facilitating more equitable access to all educational services afforded students in the district.

Conclusion

Section 3 outlined the project, described the project goals and the scholarly rationale for selecting a position paper that makes a policy recommendation. A review of literature was also conducted with a focus on the project genre and policy recommendation. In Section 4, I discuss my personal reflections and conclusions, the project strengths and limitations, recommendations for alternative approaches, reflections as a scholar and practitioner, implications for future research, and conclusions.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

In Section 4, I present my reflections and conclusions regarding my qualitative study. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to identify educators' perspectives of how the GT identification process supports or hinders the identification of students of color. I used two research questions to examine educators' perspectives in local exemplar school districts on how the GT identification process supported identification of students of color and how they described barriers to the GT identification process for students of color. I used semistructured interviews, via a video platform, to collect information from 11 participants who were employed in exemplar school districts and met the participant inclusion criteria. I used a priori coding by using the conceptual framework for this study to assign codes to the transcripts from participants. Subsequently, I used open coding to identify codes, categories, and themes and to examine the relationships between the a priori coding and the open coding. Participants' perspectives revealed that the supports for the GT identification process in the districts where they were employed were multifaceted and student-centered. Participants described that the barriers to the GT identification process were related to institutional culture in addition to parents' language and experiences. As a result of these findings, I selected the project genre of a position paper as a means of providing an informative and persuasive summary of the study findings for target district stakeholders.

I developed a position paper recommending GT identification processes to promote proportional identification of gifted students of color that has the propensity to result in social change. Providing these study results for target district stakeholders may

serve to inform decision-making by educators pertaining to GT policies and identification processes for students of color. In the next section, I include a discussion of the project strengths and limitations. I also provide a reflective analysis about my personal learning and growth as a scholar and practitioner specific to the research and project development. I describe the potential for positive social change based on the project and its implications. I conclude this section with recommendations for practice and future research.

Project Strengths and Limitations

There are several strengths associated with this project. A position paper is written to inform and persuade an audience. The first strength of the project is that the position paper contains evidence from exemplar school districts that have existing systems which have been effective in identifying more proportional representation of students of color relative to their total student population. Therefore, the practices that are recommended originated from exemplar districts that have successfully implemented feasible solutions to support GT identification for students of color. Another strength of the project is that the position paper will provide district stakeholders with data-driven decision-making to the long-standing problem of underrepresentation of students of color in GT education. Through the examination of educators' perspectives in exemplar school districts regarding this phenomenon, I was able to understand possible differences more deeply in terms of practices or pedagogical approaches that could have some bearing on the students identified. Through the study of practices used in exemplar districts, I was able to compare the differences in practices to exemplar districts to the target district.

Gaining the information on practices that supported more inclusive GT identification processes, as well as describing barriers to the identification process for students of color, allowed me to develop a position paper that will inform the target district stakeholders about policy recommendations to potentially address the problem that was the focus of this study.

While strengths of research project studies are acknowledged, one must also look at limitations of research project studies. A limitation of this project included the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. While many states have lessened their stay-at-home mandates, there is still a need to socially distance and limit space capacity when gathering in large spaces, especially if participants involved are not fully vaccinated. In the position paper, I recommend the creation of a district GT taskforce as well as professional development to facilitate a change process of that includes stakeholders in the development of potential changes in GT identification and services policies. Meetings with educators have typically occurred in in small groups or virtually to allow for social distancing due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The second limitation was that technical assistance may be needed if an online platform is used for professional development presentations that I note as recommendations in the position paper. Another limitation of this project was that the need for ongoing professional development would be necessary for the implementation of policy changes. It would be preferable to conduct the ongoing professional development face-to-face rather than via an online platform.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

This position paper included policy recommendations. An alternative approach to this project would be to provide a professional development opportunity for educators to gain a more in-depth understanding of the characteristics of gifted students, and giftedness for students of color. Since giftedness occurs in all racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups, professional development opportunities would help increase educators' awareness of the needs of students who do not share their cultural or socioeconomic backgrounds. Additionally, professional development regarding best practices to support inclusive GT identification services used in exemplar districts could have been shared with the target district stakeholders to inform educators of alternative ways to promote more inclusive GT identification of all students. These alternative approaches may have resulted in providing stakeholders with a deeper understanding of GT identification for students of color and considerations for alternative practices.

Reflections as a Scholar and Practitioner

As a scholarly educator, I had the opportunity to contribute to the education profession. This study afforded me the opportunity to engage in conversations with other educators on best practices to help gifted students of color gain access to more advanced and rigorous coursework. As a researcher, I gained confidence in knowing that I can lead change to improve student learning outcomes, especially for students who represent underserved populations. Throughout this doctoral journey, I was dedicated and persevered on spending the necessary hours to revise, research and attain my goal of obtaining a doctoral degree and making a contribution to perhaps influence social change.

I learned, despite the many obstacles and challenges that I encountered throughout this doctoral journey that I am a goal focused and aim to achieve what I determine is the right course of action for myself. As a scholar-practitioner, I feel that this journey has increased my skills to address problems in educational practices by reviewing the literature, engaging in discussions with fellow colleagues, analyzing data pertaining to educational problems, and equipping me to with the skills to devise possible solutions to problems of education practice. Lastly, analyzing data for this study has helped me in my role as a school leader. As I work with my teachers to strengthen their skills for data analysis, I will continue to use the analysis skills I have gained during this doctoral journey.

Implications for Future Research

The implication for future research is warranted to decide how generalizable the results of the study are to other districts nationwide by conducting a quantitative study of exemplar school districts and the gifted and talented identification process to examine the relationship between alternative GT identification processes and GT students identified. Proportionality in the exemplar districts could be a focus of the hypothesis in this quantitative study. In addition, a quantitative study could be conducted regarding early identification for GT services and the nurturing GT support programs and outcomes of GT students related to college admittance, success in school and graduation of study outcomes for GT students focusing on students of color.

The implications for GT identification, as noted in this study, are critical due to the rigorous curriculum and experiences afforded GT students. Additional research is also

warranted to regarding best practices for an inclusive gifted and talented identification process and long-term effect on the accessibility of students of color to advance through the education system successfully. The continued efforts of future researchers could provide data to support the enhanced the identification of students of color using strategies that yield more proportional identification. Continued future research in inclusive GT identification and programming could demonstrate that researchers are mindful that inclusive GT identification processes, if designed accordingly as is suggested by the findings of this study, could strengthen access to services and support for the development of students of colors' academic potential.

Conclusion

After identifying a problem with GT identification for students of color in a local southeastern U. S. suburban school district, I designed a basic qualitative study to examine educators' perspectives of how the GT identification process supports the identification of students of color and educators' descriptions of barriers to the GT identification process for students of color. After conducting data analysis from interviews with 11 educators from 7 exemplar school districts, I was able to determine that the educators' perspectives were that a GT identification process that is multifaceted and student-centered supports the identification of students of color.

I developed a position paper making recommendations for GT identification processes to encourage proportionately identifying students of color relative to the total school population, thus providing stakeholders with critical information to inform decision making regarding policies for GT identification possibly resulting in social

change. In the position paper, I provided educators of the target district with key information pertaining to the disproportionate identification of students of color in GT education to possibly persuade school officials to consider policy changes to the GT identification process to design a more inclusive identification process thereby enabling students of color improved access to the GT services. I have learned the value of investigating best practices in exemplar districts and engaging in dialogue with fellow educators to address changes in our educational systems. I have a deeper understanding of examining practices or "how" processes are implemented and also seeking to understand the "why" or motive that underlies such actions. Findings of this study may provide information to school officials to enable them to engage in processes and explore changes to strengthen the GT identification process in the target district to promote greater inclusivity and possibly invoke social change for students of color.

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Appendix A: The Project

Executive Summary

This position paper is designed to address the problem of students of color not being proportionately identified for the Gifted and Talented program relative to the total school population in the target district. The purpose of this paper is to recommend solutions to the problem of the disproportionate representation of students of color in the target district, based on findings derived from this qualitative study and a review of the professional literature related to research findings and the services for students of colors exemplar GT programs. The thrust of this position paper is to inform, persuade, and propose possible recommendations for the target district educators to consider addressing the problem identified. Educators must expand access to GT education for students of color who are under identified (Ford et al., 2020).

District and campus personnel at the target site district noted they were concerned about the identification of students of color in proportion to the overall student district populations. The purpose of the study was to identify educators' perspectives of how the GT identification process supports or hinders the identification of students of color. A basic qualitative study was conducted to determine the perceived identification best practices used in similar school districts that increase representation of students of color in GT programs. Exemplar school districts that were similar to the target district demographically and contained 10% or more students of color in the GT program were selected. Educators' perspectives from seven exemplar district of the identification, support, and possible hindrances of GT identification of services for this population of students was investigated.

The overall policy recommendation is to adopt a more inclusively designed GT identification system and support services. The vehicle to accomplish a more inclusively designed GT program is to engage in a carefully orchestrated change process, accompanied by evaluating the objectives of the process using a pilot program approach with a feedback loop. Tools to support the change process include professional development, technical support, coaching, data-driven decision-making, visible and articulated support, and commitment to the GT policy recommendations and engaging in a systemic and sustained change process.

The policy recommendations for addressing the findings include the use of alternative pathways that are student-centered and more inclusive in identifying gifted students of color, professional development, and using a suggested change framework for implementation over a 3-year phase in period. A suggested process is outlined in steps (a) through (f), for a total of five recommendations for implementation of the policy recommendation. Specifically, the recommendations include: (a) Establish a District level GT Taskforce to Guide the Pilot Process and Select Zone 1 and 2 Elementary Cohort Schools (b) Conduct Professional Learning on Change Processes, Cultural Awareness, GT Identification Alternative Practices and Assessments, (c) Design and Implement Professional Development to Promote Systemic Change for GT Identification and Service Delivery, (d) Develop Alternative Approaches to GT Identification through establishing Pathway Options for Identification and Support, (e) Revise and Evaluate the Implementation of the Pilot GT School Sites that Employed New Practices. In Phase 2 and 3 the process outlined in (a) through (e) is recommended as well as additional using

refinements obtained from the prior year cohort school implementation. In Phase 2, it is recommended to identify Cohort Schools, and have the school personnel cycle through recommendations outlined in a-e replicating the process in the Pilot Phase (Cohort Schools, Phase 1), and (g) Identify Zone 3 and 4 Cohort Schools in Phase 2 of implementation, and have them engage in recommendations (a) through (e) replicating Phase 1 with refinements learned from Phase 1 Implementation, and (h) Identify Zone 5 and 6 Cohort Schools in Phase 3 of implementation and repeat the process described.

Findings of Research Study

There is giftedness in all racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups, yet students of color are underrepresented in gifted and talented education programs. For example, consider a school that has a student population of 1,200 with a student demographic makeup of 50% Hispanic, 25% White and 25% Black. If the gifted and talented program accepts 15% of the school's student population or 180 students, then then a proportional representation of students of color in the gifted and talented program would include 90 Hispanic students, 45 White students, and 45 Black students. Too often, students of color are underrepresented in gifted and talented education programs. Lewis et al. (2018) found that assessment and identification tools, such as standardized tests may contribute to this underrepresentation of students of color as these measurement tools have been found to culturally biased and not designed to measure the giftedness of students of color. Lewis et al. (2018) also found that teachers' lack of knowledge about giftedness and their implicit biases about students of color may contribute to the underrepresentation of students of color. The reason for this is that one's perception of the world is filtered through their social

values and experiences which contribute to their perceptions of gifted or talented students. Therefore, one who has been raised in a middle-class environment and who has had limited exposure to other environments and cultures may inadvertently overlay their perspectives regarding student behavior and learning potential that may affect which students are referred for the gifted and talented services. According to Lewis et al. (2018), teacher perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, and understandings have a direct influence on student learning potential and student behavior as they relate to gifted and talent services.

In school systems that are focused on serving all students, researchers have found that a multifaceted approach to gifted and talented identification, including portfolios, observations, nonverbal assessments, teacher checklist, and parent/teacher nomination was recommended to promote more inclusive gifted services. (Gubbins et al., 2020). Gubbins et al. (2020) also recommended that a well-defined selection criterion is included in the GT identification process, accompanied by professional development to ensure implementation fidelity. Following a review of the literature, I conducted a basic qualitative study to address the problem of students of color are not proportionately identified for GT program relative to the total school population in the target district in a Southeastern state. In this study, I examined educators' perspectives of how the GT identification process supports identification of students of color in local school districts and educators' descriptions of barriers to the GT identification process for students of color in local school districts.

Educators were defined as teachers, school and district level administrators, instructional specialists and gifted and talented program managers. From a sampling of seven exemplar school districts, I conducted 11 semi-structured interviews using open-ended questions to examine the participants' perspectives of the identification process and how it supported or hindered the identification of students of color in their school district was explored. In addition to the criteria of being an educator, participants recruited for this study were employed by the local, exemplar district and had: (a) knowledge of the identification process for GT students in their respective school district and (b) had taught or supervised GT students for at least 1 year. The following research questions which the qualitative study addressed were:

1. What are educators' perspectives of how the GT identification process supports identification of students of color in local exemplar school districts?
2. How do educators describe barriers to the GT identification process for students of color in local exemplar school districts?

Following the interviews with the participants via a video platform, I transcribed, and analyzed the information collected using a qualitative data analysis software program, MAXQDA, which had four phases: (a) organized and prepared data, (b) transcription of interviews, (c) use of analytic technique for codes, and (d) generation of categories and themes. Upon completing the data analysis process, four themes emerged from the information to answer the two research questions for this study. Themes based on the findings of all interviewed educators from the exemplar school districts were as follows: (a) educators perceived the identification process for GT education to be multifaceted. (b)

educators perceived the GT identification process of students of color as student-centered. (c) educators perceived institutional culture as a barrier to equitable access to GT education for students of color, and (d) educators perceived parental language and lack of experience as barriers to equitable access to GT education for students of color.

The rationale for the recommendations is based upon the findings that emerged from the themes described. The participants' perspectives in the exemplar districts were based on their district leaders' approach to GT identification. Participants conveyed that belief systems regarding the GT identification process were influenced by district leaders' vision and belief systems regarding the identification process for GT students which was that the GT systems should be student-centered and inclusively designed. Teachers perceived that their belief systems regarding how students learn, demonstrate giftedness, should guide the design of GT school services. Data findings showed that having a multifaceted approach to identifying gifted students led to a more inclusive process and resulted in more students of color being identified as gifted compared to districts that employed a more traditional approach to identifying students for gifted services that was based on student achievement and aptitude. Educators described their GT identification processes as having multiple points of entry for the student to gain access to GT services, being focused on students' needs, using alternative means to demonstrate giftedness, and being designed to promote equity and inclusiveness in the identification of GT students. Educators related that the characteristics of the identification process in their districts were associated with the district leaders' vision and vision of staff regarding how to support all students.

The educators' descriptions of multiple entry points in their GT identification processes throughout the school year were reflected in systems that were created to provide students with many opportunities to access the gifted services and to develop any possible skills that needed strengthening. Exemplar school district participants reported that their districts had special district programs designed to close the gap for students demonstrating gifted and talented qualities who did not yet meet the district criteria. In addition, the multiple entry points approach was bolstered through the special services designed to accelerate student skills and close achievement gaps. These uniquely designed student-centered services were used for students who did not immediately qualify for GT services and were implemented as vehicles to support students' skill development to potentially qualify for GT services; one district designed a student-nurturing program to achieve this goal. Educators described the variety of ways that students could be referred for GT identification through parent and teacher nominations and evaluated by alternative means, such as, using nonverbal IQ tests, portfolio assessment, aptitude testing, observations, and work samples.

Overall, the findings of this study were that processes within exemplar school districts created a more inclusive and comprehensive opportunity to identify students of color for gifted and talented services. Without changes to the identification process for gifted and talented services, students from underrepresented groups will be excluded for qualification of gifted and talented education programs (Card & Giuliano, 2016). Because of these findings, this position paper will provide the target district leadership with

evidence of alternative theories and strategies to promote more equitable access to GT services for students of color.

Policy Recommendations Based on Local Research

The overall policy recommendation is to adopt a more inclusively designed GT identification system and support services. The vehicle to accomplish a more inclusively designed GT program is to engage in a carefully orchestrated change process, accompanied by evaluating the objectives of the process using a pilot program approach with a feedback loop. Tools to support the change process include professional development, technical support, coaching, data-driven decision-making, visible and articulated support, and commitment to the GT policy recommendations and engaging in a systemic and sustained change process. This section of the position paper will provide recommendations offering best practices found to have significant effectiveness for increasing the number of students of color in the gifted and talented education programs. The problem reflected that although the target district leadership expressed a need to design the identification process for gifted students more inclusive, the gifted students of color were not proportionally identified for the GT program relative to the total student population in the target district. In this position paper, I describe recommendations for district stakeholders' consideration to make informed decisions on GT identification in the target district.

The recommendations in this position paper are driven by results of the study and literature findings related systemic change; consequently, the inclusive systems for GT identification and service delivery should be characterized as having a multifaceted and student-centered approach. GT programs characterized by these qualities, appear to support

the identification of gifted and talented students of color. Next, I will discuss three overarching recommendations for the target district stakeholders to consider implementing the policy change for the identification of GT students. There are three Phases of the implementation process is designed to support incremental change and promote acceptance and understanding of the professional learning, new processes, and shifts in thinking for a cohort of schools each year. Each Phase involves 1 year. The same five recommendations are implemented in each Phase. Each Phase involves the refinement of the prior year's cohort implementation over a 1- year period and expands to include a new cohort of schools each year for 3 years. There are a total of five recommendations.

Recommendation One

Establish a district level GT taskforce to Guide Pilot Process

- Identify Zone One and Two Cohort Schools
- Conduct Professional Learning on Change Process, Cultural Awareness, GT Identification, Alternative Processes and Assessments

It is recommended that the target district stakeholders appoint a GT district-level taskforce. Hubbard and Datnow (2020) found that leadership has a crucial role when shifting to new innovations and sustaining change over time. This GT taskforce should be comprised of district-level and school-level administrators, regular education teachers, GT teachers, school counselors, parents, and any other school personnel pertinent to a student's academic potential. Handelzalts (2019) stated that collaboration among educators has a positive influence and supports acceptance of innovations when

collaborative school teams are used to benefit student learners. This GT district taskforce will play a critical leadership role in the implementation process for establishing the pilot practices for GT identification.

The Task Force members will identify the Cohort schools for Zone 1 and Zone 2 that will participate in the pilot launch. For the pilot program implementation, the taskforce will collaboratively design with campus stakeholders, professional development to support the understanding of GT student characteristics for students of color, cultural proficiency professional learning, GT identification alternative processes multiple assessments for identification of giftedness. The pilot program will be designed and include professional learning for educators regarding referrals for students of color. Lewis et al. (2018) found that professional learning may provide educators who serve GT students with the support they need to be successful in the GT education program.

This district-level GT taskforce would also provide professional development to increase the understanding of educational personnel at the pilot site regarding the nomination process for students of color and the varied use of assessments in GT identification. This taskforce would monitor nomination practices in response to the professional development provided to educators. The GT referrals should also be monitored in terms varied identification approaches and how these shifts in practices contribute to the identification of GT students, particularly GT students of color.

The taskforce will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the new identification process, professional learning to support the change process, fidelity of the recommended practices, and ongoing formative evaluation the new implementation GT identification

process. During the early implementation, the evaluation of the process will be essential to the establishment and sustainability of the pilot practices. The district-level GT taskforce should establish the implementation of the pilot practices with fidelity. Laures and Fowler (2020) found that pilot practice is important when implementing change because it allows for an organization to see if the practice change is feasible and effective before integrating and sustaining the new practice into the organization.

This GT taskforce will write the procedures for the implementation process as well as plan, organize, and schedule the professional learning throughout the 3-year implementation phases. This task force would also oversee the changes to the identification process and plan for the changes to be implemented incrementally, or in phases so that each change in the identification process can be implemented and then monitored for fidelity. Changes to the identification process should be completed in phases with the task force assigning the new changes to the identification process to cohorts. Using phases of change is an effective strategy identified by Hall and Hord (2019) for implementation of new processes. Cohorts of campuses can be identified to initiate the implementation of the new procedures for GT identification each year for a total of a 3-year phase in process modeled on CBAM and Fullan's model of change.

The first phase of cohorts should consist of school level administrators who are agreeable to implement the pilot practices for GT identification beginning the summer of 2022. Having a cohort that is comprised of willing participants will help the district GT taskforce evaluate, monitor, and refine the pilot practices for full implementation for the entire target district in the latter phases if the change process.

This district-level GT taskforce should ensure that GT screening, referral, and identification procedures respond to underrepresented populations of the gifted and are responsive to LEA demographics. The duties of the district-level GT taskforce would include the following: (a) design and implement a student-centered identification for GT education using a variety of data sources, (b) examine the results of the GT referral process for efficacy, (c) identify professional learning to meet the needs of staff as related to GT education, and (d) use the information collected to evaluate, refine, and revise the pilot phase of the initial cohort implementation.

In an innovation, calibration of the process is very important to the implementation with fidelity as the system evolves. Meyers and Brandt (2016) defined fidelity as "the degree to which a particular program follows a program model" (p. 9). Per the findings of the study and in research literature, multiple forms of assessment are recommended. The nomination and subsequent identification of students of color should include authentic procedures for evaluation such as student portfolios or performance assessment, analyzing subtest scores for strengths, anecdotal notes, observations, and developing culture-specific checklists and rating scales. The choice of assessments is critical in the identification process (Callahan et al., 2017). Callahan et al. (2017) found that one measure can be used as a filter which sets the minimum requirement before students are further assessed for placement (i.e., teacher nomination or universal screener). This assessment could be a teacher nomination form or data from a universal screener in which a general standardized test is given to all students at a particular grade level. Then, the next step would be the

administration of another assessment or a collection of data on students who would meet a minimum criterion to qualify for services (Callahan et al., 2017). This school-level based team would use the various pieces of information to make an informed decision for identifying these students for gifted and talented services. Next, I discuss the second recommendation of designing and implementing professional development to support the change process related to a new policy for GT identification.

Recommendation Two

Conduct Professional Learning on Change Process, Cultural Awareness, GT Identification, Alternative Processes and Assessments

Recommendation 2 is based on the premise that professional learning should be designed and implemented to promote systemic change for GT identification and service delivery. Scarparolo and Hammond (2018) found that effective professional development supports the growth of teachers' skills and knowledge. It is recommended that the target district provides on-going professional learning for school personnel who are involved with meeting the needs of gifted and talented students. This recommendation also suggests that on-going professional learning should be tailored to address the specific needs of those school personnel as it relates to GT identification and service delivery. This on-going professional learning will ensure that school personnel learn through monthly professional learning communities that focus on recognizing the characteristics of gifted and talented students, with specific attention given to culturally relevant considerations. Barriers that often prevent underrepresented population identification would be explored and discussed as well as opportunities for creating change within schools are identified and implemented.

Professional learning is fundamental to achieving effective school improvement and stakeholders can use professional learning to support and drive the changes at both the district and school levels (Brown & Poortman, 2018). Mun et al (2020) found that the district in the case study used professional learning on cultural proficiency and GT identification to promote universal screening for GT services at multiple points. The professional learning suggested topics include:

- 1. Shifting conceptions of giftedness
- 2. Supporting students of diverse backgrounds
- 3. Behaviors, characteristics of gifted students
- 4. How systemic change connects to positive student learning
- 5. concerns-based adoption model (CBAM)

Each cohort would engage in professional development prior to implementing the new identification procedures for GT students. Professional development would include the understanding of the pathway options for grade spans of K-2 and 3-5. Professional development will also include an understanding of gifted characteristics of students who perform at an advanced academic level. Recognizing the gifted characteristics of advanced students will help staff to give more informed attention to referrals for GT identification and service, especially among underrepresented student groups. The influence of stakeholders can reaffirm the sway of educational policy and systemic reform (Mun et al., 2020). In a case study conducted by Mun et al. (2020), the state's gifted education plan was used to showcase exemplary programming. The district in the study used the state's definition to create an equity policy and influence efforts in equitable access for GT

identification and inclusive programming. As a result, the district implemented multiple entry pathways to identify gifted students, increasing the number of students of color who received GT education services.

Year 2 would include initiating the change process reflected in Recommendations #2 through #5 and include feedback and refinement discerned from the pilot in Phase 1. In the 2nd Phase, Phase 2, Year 2, the schools which were not included in the pilot program would be assigned to a cohort. The new cohort of schools would cycle through Recommendations 2 through 5 with refinements based on the prior year cohort's data and feedback. Cohorts will be established to implement the changes to the GT identification. Using cohorts can help the target district monitor the pilot practices during the implementation (Hall & Hord, 2019). There will be 3 cohorts of elementary schools phased in over a three-year period. Each cohort will be based on the school attendance zone. Since there are six school attendance zones and five elementary schools in each zone, each cohort will consist of two school attendance zones initiating Phase 2 in the fall 2023 following the initial professional development. Each cohort will participate in professional learning the summer before the new phase is initiated by the new cohort of schools during the 3-year implementation period. For example, Cohort 1 would complete professional learning during the summer of year 1 and the implementation will begin in the fall of year 1. Table 7 presents a sample plan for professional learning and implementation process by cohort.

Table 1

Sample Plan for Professional Learning and Implementation Process by Cohort

Recommendation	Month of Implementation
Pre-Launch of Phase 1 Overview Recommendations and Policy Change to District Leadership	**Year 1** Month 1
Phase 1	**Year 1** Months 2 through 12
1. Establish a district level GT taskforce to Guide Pilot Process • Identify Zone 1 and 2 Cohort Schools	
2. Conduct Professional Learning on Change Process, Cultural Awareness, GT identification alternative processes and assessments	
3. Design and implement professional development to promote systemic change for GT identification and service delivery.	**Year 1** Months 2 through 12
4. Develop Alternative Approaches to GT Identification • Pathway Option 1: Early Childhood Nurturing Intervention • Nurturing Program for Grades K-2 • 3-5 Grade Span	**Year 1** Months 2 through 12
5. Revise and evaluate the implementation of pilot GT school site that employs the new recommended practices.	**Year 1** Months 2 through 12
Phase 2 Identify Zone 3 and Zone 4 Cohort schools *Repeat Recommendations 2- 5*	**Year 2** - Months 2 through 12
Phase 3 Identify Zone 5 and Zone 6 Cohort schools *Repeat Recommendations 2- 5*	**Year 3**- Months 2 through 12

Recommendation Three

Design and Implement Professional Development to Promote Systemic Change for GT identification and Service Delivery

The third recommendation is to create a screening and referral process that may lead to more inclusive GT identification at all grade levels for all students. Findings of this study identified that other school districts exemplar in GT identification for students of color, similar in demographics to the target school district, in size and student demographics, used alternative pathway options in identifying gifted students. The alternative pathway options should include multiple entry points that facilitate the identification of students throughout a school year rather than having a fixed window of time when referrals can be made. Multiple entry points for grade level spans of K-2 and 3-5 can be established as some students may exhibit a need for accelerated instruction and more advanced, rigorous coursework during any of these grades. The provision of accelerated instruction and learning experiences that are accelerated in terms of critical thinking and problem solving have been shown to support the development of fluid reasoning and strengthening students' problem-solving abilities. Consequently, the strengthening of specific skills can facilitate the increased likelihood of GT identification given different learning opportunities, challenges, and expectations.

Recommendation Four

Develop Alternative Approaches to GT Identification

Pathway Option 1

This pathway option 1 is designed to include a nurturing program that would foster and develop students' gifts and critical thinking abilities in the early years of their educational journey. Wright et al. (2017) found that early access to rigorous learning environments is essential in preventing disengagement and negative attitudes towards school for young students of color during their primary years. During this time, all students will be afforded an opportunity to gain the advanced thinking skills needed to be successful in an advanced learning program. GT teachers could work with all students to develop their academic potential for future years in their education. In the next paragraph, I will discuss a nurturing program for grades K-2.

Nurturing Program for Grades K-2. In this GT program option, the GT teachers would work with all students in grades K-2 to provide exposure to and experiences with thinking skills embedded in the curriculum, thereby allowing all GT teachers to stimulate advanced thinking and develop academic talent potential in students at an early age. At the K-1 level, if a student demonstrates the need for services above the grade-level classroom environment, the GT teacher or regular education teacher may refer the child for the GT identification process to best meet the needs of the child through the various service delivery options. In the spring of the 2nd grade year, the target district personnel may administer a universal screener for identifying potential gifted and talented students. The universal screener should

also include an option to administer a nonverbal assessment. In addition, during this Pathway Option 1, teachers, administrators, parents can make nominations throughout the school year. In the next paragraph, I will discuss how Pathway Option 1 is designed to identify potential GT students in grades 3-5.

3-5 Grade Span. In Pathway Option 1, the GT teachers would develop a talent pool using the general population in 3rd grade with the Beginning-of-Grade reading assessment who scored at or above the 85th percentile would be referred for the GT identification process. The Beginning-of-Grade reading assessment is administered to all third graders within the first 10 days of school (State Tests, 2020). This reading assessment would be used as a screener for further consideration for GT identification. In each of the grades 3 through 5, students who score at or above the 85th percentile on End-of-Grade tests in reading and/or math would also be referred for the GT identification process. In addition, teachers, administrators, or parents can continue to nominate students throughout the school year. Using more than one pathway to GT identification expands inclusive programming and facilitates equitable GT identification for students (Mun et al., 2020). In a case study conducted by Mun et al. (2020), 61 elementary district and school level personnel, which included district GT coordinators, teachers, and GT facilitators, were interviewed about their perspectives at improving equitable identification and services in their respective GT education program.

Mun et al. (2020) found that when the participants of the case study transitioned from the traditional model of GT identification that focused on rigid cutoff scores and consistent high achievement to an inclusive model that focused on fostering the whole child and academic potential, there was an increase in the number of students of color who were nominated and identified for GT education. The findings of this case study also showed that after completing professional learning on shifting in conceptions of giftedness, teachers actively sought potential students of color and subsequently, nominated students of color for GT education services when there were multiple entry points provided for GT identification. In the case study conducted by Mun et al. (2020), the district officials built a system characterized as being driven by student needs and therefore provided students with a variety of ways to demonstrate their giftedness, bolstered educational skills for students reflecting aspects of giftedness, and an open timeline for demonstrating giftedness by using an open timeline for GT referrals, and identification for services. In addition, teacher nominations were also used to increase the number of GT students of colors that were identified to receive GT services. Next, I will discuss the second pathway option for GT identification.

Pathway Option 2

Pathway option 2 is designed to focus on the whole child rather than solely on the academic achievement of a student. Sointu et al. (2017) found that using a sole indicator for GT identification may cause biased findings and therefore using multiple indicators to determine GT identification may provide a more objective view of student's capability.

This pathway option would include criteria that contains both qualitative (for example, test scores) and quantitative data (for example: student portfolio, teacher recommendations, parent referrals) to develop a comprehensive learner profile (Sointu et al., 2017). Both quantitative (i.e., test scores) and qualitative data will measure student aptitude, achievement, or academic potential and will become a part of each student's comprehensive profile. Portfolio assessment would include a minimum of three performance artifacts that support the student's advanced ability and achievement and need for GT services. Artifacts may include but are not limited to the following: above grade level work samples; student writing samples; interviews; outstanding achievement outside of the classroom; ESL progressions; teacher recommendations; student observation rubrics, and other standardized assessment measures. Mun et al. (2020) found that using multiple measures to identify students increased the number of students who were identified as GT. In the next section, I will discuss the evaluation for the implementation for the GT identification process.

Recommendation Five

Revise and Evaluate the Implementation of Pilot GT School Site That Employs the New Recommended Practices.

At the end of each implementation year, the district GT taskforce will review the GT referrals and identification recommendations from each cohort of schools. The GT taskforce would monitor the new procedures for fidelity of implementation before the cohorts for Year 2 implementation initiate the change process. The GT taskforce would

utilize information acquired from the prior year of implementation to refine the implementation process for subsequent implementation years.

Table 2

Project Goals and Alignment to Themes

Themes Identified in the Research Study	Goals	Recommendations and Policies
Theme 1	Goal One: Educators and parents will understand and identify the theories related to identification of GT students and how the theory, or pedagogy undergirding a policy or process may affect the identification of students of color	1. Establish a district level GT taskforce to Guide Pilot Process • Design and implement professional development to promote systemic change Parent PD
Theme 2	Goal Two: Educators and parents will understand and identify how inclusively designed GT identification processes that include multiple entry points for students and allow a variety of ways in which students may demonstrate giftedness is student-centered and supports the identification of students of color in target district.	2. Conduct Professional Learning on Change Process, Cultural Awareness, GT identification alternative processes and assessments 4 Develop Alternative Approaches to GT Identification • Pathway Option 1: Early Childhood Nurturing Intervention • Nurturing Program for Grades K-2 • 3-5 Grade Span
Theme 3	Goal Three: Educators and Parents will understand the concerns-based adoption model, CBAM, for change and describe the value in professional development.	3. Design and implement professional development to promote systemic change for GT identification and service delivery, parent PD
Theme 4	Goal Four: The target district leadership staff will be informed and will consider implementing the recommendations that reflect a change process to initiate a policy change regarding GT identification in the target district that will address the problem of disproportionate identification of students of color	2.Design and implement professional development to promote systemic change for GT identification and service delivery

Project Evaluation

Evaluation includes the systematic collection of information about program characteristics, activities, and outcomes for use by people to make decisions that are used to improve program effectiveness. Outcomes-based evaluation involves several steps and will be used to evaluate the project (Hammami et. al., 2020). In outcomes-based evaluation, the first step is determining what the perceived outcomes will be and selecting a means of measuring all outcomes. Second, identify the specific outcomes short-term and long-term outcomes that will be targeted as priorities for evaluation. Third, select an indicator for each outcome. Fourth, determine data will be collected to evaluate each targeted outcome. Fifth, pilot the proposed policy change on a smaller scale and evaluate the resources used, problems encountered, and ways to improve the plan. Sixth, analyze the data collected for each prioritized outcome. Seventh, summarize and report the evaluation data for each outcome. Determine who the evaluation is presented to and how the outcomes evaluation is presented (McNamara, 2006).

The evaluation of the new identification process for GT should be consistent and ongoing (see Sanetti & Collier Meek, 2019). It is recommended that a district-level GT taskforce be created and engage in ongoing dialogue and develop a consistent meeting schedule to discuss the GT referrals and identification nominations. Once fidelity has been established, I am recommending that the district GT taskforce design an evaluation rubric to gather immediate data on whether the new identification pathway options are effective in making the process for identifying GT students more inclusive. The evaluation rubric can serve as a guideline for the GT district taskforce to determine what next steps need to

occur for schools during the implementation process. Using the evaluation rubric, the district GT taskforce can also determine what the school-based staff members need to support the inclusive procedures.

Conclusion

This position paper offers recommendations to help strengthen the GT identification process in the target district as well as proportionately identify students of color for GT education services relative to the total school population in the target district. The target district can use this information to build systemic capacity at both the district and school levels where policies for GT education are created and implemented. Building systemic capacity and shifts in changes in GT identification processes share in leading to a more inclusive and equitable GT identification procedures. Providing multiple pathways to GT identification has the potential to identify more GT students overall who would benefit from GT services, building a more inclusive GT population, and begin to shift conceptions of giftedness, especially for GT students of color in the target district.

By broadening GT services to all students, the target district stakeholders will consciously and intentionally address the needed changes for the creation of equitable policies and practices in GT identification. As the district stakeholders strive to strengthen the inclusive processes for GT identification of students of color, it will be important to keep the vision, mission, guiding principles, and core values of the school district at the forefront of the process so that the policies created align with the vision, mission, guiding principles, and core values of the district stakeholders and community to meet the needs of GT students from all diverse cultures and backgrounds in the target district.

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Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

Date of Interview:
Start Time:
End Time:

Introduction

- Welcome participant and introduce myself.
- Give participant a copy of the consent form to keep.
- Explain the general purpose of the interview and why the participant was chosen.
- Discuss the purpose and process of interview.
- Explain the presence and purpose of the recording equipment.
- Outline general ground rules and interview guidelines such as being prepared for the interviewer to interrupt to assure that all the topics can be covered.
- Address the assurance of confidentiality.
- Inform the participant that information discussed is going to be analyzed in aggregate form and participant's name will not be used in any analysis of the interview.

Discussion Purpose

The purpose of this basic qualitative study is to discern educators' perspectives of how the gifted and talented identification process supports and/or hinders the identification of students of color.

Discussion Guidelines

Interviewer will explain:

Please respond directly to the questions and if you do not understand the question, please let me know. I am here to ask questions, listen, and answer any questions you might have. If we seem to get stuck on a topic, I may interrupt you. I will keep your identity, participation, and remarks private. Please speak openly and honestly. This session will be tape recorded because I do not want to miss any comments.

General Instructions

When responding to questions that will be asked of you in the interview, please exclude all identifying information, such as your name and names of teachers, principals, superintendents, and other parties, and the name of the school. Your identity will be kept confidential and any information that will permit identification will be removed from the analysis.

Possible Probes

- Could you elaborate more on that?
- That was helpful, but could you provide more detail?
- Your example was helpful, but can you give me another example to help me understand further?

Interview Questions

1. Describe the process for identifying gifted (GT) students in this district.
2. What is the culture or philosophy of the district educators regarding identification of students of color?
3. What are your perspectives about this process?
4. What words would you use to characterize the process?
5. What information is used to identify students for GT services?
6. What are advantages to the identification process used for GT students?
7. How would you describe the benefits of the GT identification process?
8. Describe your perspective about what works well about this GT identification process.
9. What does the school district do in its identification process that supports the identification of students of color for GT education?
10. How could the GT identification process be strengthened to support the identification of students of color, if at all?
11. What is your perspective regarding possible barriers that may interfere with equitable access to education for all students?
12. How does district and campus leadership support an inclusive GT program in this district?

Conclusion

- Ask and answer any questions and thank the participant for his or her time.