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Administrators' Perceptions of Minoritized Students' Underrepresentation in K-8 GATE

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

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Walden University
2024

Abstract

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MA, University of Phoenix, 1998

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Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand SWSD administrators' perceptions of the practices and identification criteria that exacerbated this underrepresentation, guided by a culturally responsive school leadership framework. For this basic qualitative design, eight SWSD administrators with direct knowledge of the GATE programs participated in semistructured interviews. Data analysis involved initial and axial coding, resulting in three key themes: limited cultural awareness among administrators, the importance of incorporating community perspectives, and the need to reevaluate traditional GATE identification practices. Based on these themes, it is recommended to enhance cultural competency training, to engage community members in decision-making, and to reform selection processes to improve accessibility for minoritized students. These insights promote positive social change by advocating for inclusive educational policies that ensure all minoritized students have equal access to GATE programs.

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Acknowledgments

I want to start by expressing my deep gratitude to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, for His unfailing love and guidance throughout this journey, which have been vital in helping me complete my doctoral degree. He has sustained me and continually reminded me that "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me!"

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I also want to express my sincere appreciation to my local school district, the superintendent, and my colleagues in the trenches. Thank you for consenting to be participants in this research; your insights and perspectives were crucial in bringing this study to fruition. I hope that your contributions will help shape more effective policies that promote lasting social change for all students.

Finally, I am profoundly grateful to my mother, Ursula Sharpe, whose unwavering love and belief in the value of education inspired her to mortgage our family home so I could begin my undergraduate degree. You have been my pillar of strength and my greatest cheerleader throughout my career and this doctoral journey, and I cannot thank you enough for your steadfast support.

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Section 1: The Problem

The Local Problem

In a landscape where diversity should flourish, the stark underrepresentation of minoritized students in gifted and talented education (GATE) programs within a southwestern school district (SWSD, a pseudonym) raises urgent questions about equity and access in the realm of academic excellence. This study examined the underrepresentation of minoritized students in K-8 GATE programs within a SWSD. Research by Peters et al. (2019) highlighted a 50-year struggle in the GATE field to address ethnic disproportionality. The 2020-2021 State of the States in Gifted Education report, which analyzed data from 23 states, found that African American and Hispanic students constituted less than 10% of the total gifted population, despite representing 43% of national student enrollment (National Association for Gifted Children, 2021; National Center for Education Statistics, 2023). Additionally, Native American and Alaska Native students accounted for less than 1% of the gifted population (Rinn et al., 2022).

Gentry et al. (2019) noted that although African American, Hispanic, and Native American or Alaska Native students had access to schools that identify gifted and talented students, they remained underrepresented in these programs. The demographics of the SWSD diverged significantly from national averages, as highlighted by Statista (2023). Table 1 shows that minoritized students are more highly represented in the SWSD, with Hispanic students making up 47% of the population. Peters et al. (2019) indicated that the significant absence of minoritized students in GATE programs

suggested that inequitable access to accelerated education could negatively impact student achievement.

By addressing these disparities, this study highlighted administrators' perception of the systemic barriers that prevent minoritized students from accessing GATE programs and aims to foster an inclusive educational environment. Furthermore, the underrepresentation of minoritized students in gifted education affect student outcomes and perpetuate broader societal inequities for academic and professional opportunities. By identifying effective strategies for enhancing access and representation, this research study aimed to promote meaningful change within the SWSD and serves as a model for other districts facing similar challenges.

Table 1

Fall 2021 K-12 enrollment in the US and the southwestern states.

Groups	White	Black/African American	Hispanic	Asian	Pacific Islander	Native American/ Alaskan Native	Multiple Ethnicities
US	42.2%	14.9%	28.4%	5.3%	0.4%	0.9%	4.7%
SW state	35.8%	5.7%	47%	3%	0.4%	4.2%	3.9%

Note. Adapted from an infographic from Statista, (2023, June 2).

The National Center for Education Statistics (2023) reported a decline in the percentage of White students in public schools across all 50 states from 2010 to 2021. In contrast, the percentage of Hispanic students increased in every state during this period. For the 2020-2021 school year, the report indicated that approximately 64% of students in the SWSD identified as non-White, with Hispanic students representing the largest group at around 47%.

Similar trends were observed statewide, where White and Asian students were overrepresented in GATE programs, while several minoritized groups were underrepresented compared to the overall ethnic makeup of enrolled students. The SWSD reflected these broader patterns, with data indicating significant underrepresentation of Native American/Alaskan Native, Black/African American, Hispanic, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students in GATE programs within their K-8 schools. Table 2 illustrates these disparities, highlighting the need for targeted efforts to improve equity in GATE programming.

Table 2

SWSD 2022-2023 Total and GATE Enrollment Demographics

Local K-8 School District Enrollment	*n*	%	Local K-8 School GATE Enrollment	*n*	%
All Students	11,027	100%	All GATE Students	1,046	100%
Native American/ Alaskan Native	764	6.9%	Native American/ Alaskan Native	31	2%
Asian	232	2.1%	Asian	53	5%
Black/African American	1395	12.7%	Black/African American	47	4%
Hispanic	5774	52.4%	Hispanic	342	33%
White	2136	19.4%	White	494	47%
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	175	1.6%	Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	9	1%
Multiple Ethnicities	551	5.0%	Multiple Ethnicities	71	8%

Note. Adapted from *Public School Review* (2023)

Rationale

Data in Table 2 indicate a 33.6% underrepresentation of minoritized students in the GATE program of the SWSD compared to their enrollment proportions. While minoritized groups made up 81% of the district's student population (see Table 1), White and Asian students consistently outnumber their minoritized peers in all acceleration programs. Specifically, Table 2 shows that 53% of GATE enrollees come from

minoritized backgrounds. The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) estimates that 6 to 10 percent of students in the United States should be enrolled in gifted and talented programs. Using the more conservative 6% estimate for the subgroups in the SWSD from Table 2 reveals negative underrepresentation for Native American/Alaska Native (-4.9%), Black/African American (-8.7%), Hispanic (-19.4%), and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students (-0.6%). In contrast, White (27.6%), Asian (2.9%), and multiethnic students (3%) shows overrepresentation in the district's GATE program. This noticeable underrepresentation of certain ethnic groups in the SWSD's acceleration initiatives raised concerns among district leaders, leading to the launch of this project study.

In 2020, SWSD leadership prioritized standardized assessments to boost student achievement, especially for subgroups like GATE, English language learners, and special education. The Director of School Leadership noted a lack of funding for GATE services, as many identified gifted students performed at average or above-average levels. Data revealed that students referred for gifted services often did not qualify due to rigid standardized score criteria, which served as the only means of admission, raising concerns about their educational paths. Although certain middle school students were able to enroll in honors courses without qualifying for the gifted program, primary-level students were denied accelerated learning opportunities. Consequently, they received instruction at or below grade level in general classes and achieved average or lower scores on assessments.

The COVID pandemic shifted focus away from these issues, and leadership changes followed. The director of gifted services emphasized the need to evaluate every student's contribution to achievement, highlighting the underrepresentation of Black/African American, Hispanic, and Native American students in GATE. Many high-ability, minoritized students were denied challenging instruction despite not being identified as gifted.

In 2022, the new superintendent tasked principals with developing strategies to enhance student achievement, recognizing GATE as a valuable resource for advancing minoritized students. Understanding leadership perspectives is crucial to addressing underrepresentation. According to Ford et al. (2021), leaders play a key role in promoting equity through diverse recruitment, training in gifted education, culturally responsive teaching, and universal screening.

My research study centered on addressing the substantial underrepresentation of minoritized students in GATE programs within a SWSD. The primary objective was to gain administrators' perspectives on the factors contributing to this disparity, aiming to pinpoint barriers that impede the equitable inclusion of minoritized students in GATE. This initiative aimed to ensure that students from all backgrounds have equal opportunities to participate and thrive in advanced educational settings. The overarching goal was to contribute valuable insights to educational policies, promoting an inclusive and representative educational environment for minoritized students in the district.

In addition to delving into the perceptions of district and school administrators, it was imperative to consider broader systemic and policy factors contributing to the

underrepresentation of minoritized students in GATE programs. This entailed scrutinizing district-wide policies related to student identification and placement, resource allocation, and teacher training practices in GATE education. By examining these factors, the study aimed to uncover any underlying structural issues. Understanding this broader context was essential for a comprehensive approach to addressing the root causes of underrepresentation in GATE programs in the SWSD.

Definition of Terms

Minoritized students: These are students who have been subject to both overt and covert power dynamics within school systems and other institutions in the United States, resulting in racial oppression and marginalization (Wingrove-Haugland & McLeod, 2022).

Gifted and talented students: These are students who demonstrate higher performance levels than their peers of the same age, experience, and environment in one or more areas (National Association for Gifted Children, 2021).

The Marland Report of 1972: This was the first national report on gifted education, defining "gifted and talented children" as those recognized by qualified professionals who possess exceptional abilities and are capable of high performance. These children require specialized educational programs and services beyond what is typically offered by standard school curricula to reach their potential and contribute to themselves and society. In addition to defining giftedness, the report included recommendations aimed at addressing the inequities present in gifted and talented education at that time (Wai et al., 2022).

Underrepresented groups in education: These student groups are disproportionally represented in school programs, including those from low-income backgrounds and various racial, linguistic, and cultural identities compared to their overall presence in the general student population (Worrell & Dixson, 2022).

Culturally Responsive School Leadership: This conceptual framework encompasses principals, assistant principals, teacher leaders, and district administrators who acknowledge the importance of implementing policies and practices aimed at addressing inequities in school systems that lead to the underrepresentation and underperformance of minoritized students (Khalifa et al., 2016).

Significance of the Study

This study was significant because it aimed to explore administrators' perspectives on the underrepresentation of minoritized students in K-8 GATE programs. Administrators play a crucial role in developing and implementing GATE initiatives within their schools, providing a unique viewpoint on the challenges and barriers faced by these students. Additionally, the research investigated the identification criteria used for K-8 GATE programs in the SWSD. This study assesses how these criteria contribute to the underrepresentation of minoritized students.

The findings from this study could be instrumental in informing the development of more equitable and inclusive identification processes. It also emphasized how current identification systems and services for gifted and talented students often limit access, leading to opportunity gaps across various programs. These restrictive systems can

significantly hinder access to enrichment and acceleration programs, adversely affecting overall student achievement and perpetuating inequalities.

By illuminating administrators' perspectives and examining the role of identification criteria, this study has the potential to improve the identification and placement of minoritized students in K-8 GATE programs in the SWSD. Gaining a deeper understanding of these dynamics can facilitate the creation of more effective strategies to address the underrepresentation of minoritized students. This research sought to drive social change and advocate for equity within the district, ensuring that all high-performing students can thrive in advanced educational programs.

Research Questions

Minoritized students were significantly underrepresented in K-8 GATE programs within a SWSD. This disparity raised important questions about the potential barriers these students faced in accessing advanced educational opportunities. By examining administrators' insights using the CRSL framework, the research sought to uncover potential biases in identification processes, the influence of resource allocation, and the impact of various cultural and socioeconomic factors that may have affected the admission of minoritized students in GATE programs. Additionally, the study investigated the administrators' perceptions of equity and inclusion within these programs and how their policies and practices might have contributed to or mitigated disparities. By collecting data on their viewpoints, I aimed to develop strategies for enhancing access and ensuring that all students, regardless of their backgrounds, could

take advantage of advanced educational opportunities. The study focused on two research questions:

RQ1. What are administrators' perceptions of the current practices that have contributed to the minoritized student underrepresentation in K-8 GATE in a SWSD?

RQ2. What are administrators' perceptions of the identification criteria that have contributed to the minoritized student underrepresentation in K-8 GATE in a SWSD?

Review of the Literature

Culturally Responsive School Leadership

The grounding concept of this study was culturally responsive school leadership (CRSL), defined by Khalifa et al. (2016) as an approach that emphasizes the integration of culturally relevant practices within educational leadership. CRSL prioritizes understanding, respecting, and incorporating the cultural backgrounds of students and their communities into decision-making processes and the overall school climate. In addressing the underrepresentation of minoritized students in GATE programs within a SWSD, CRSL is particularly relevant. This framework combines culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) and culturally responsive teaching (CRT), providing a comprehensive strategy for tackling educational inequities.

Conceptual Framework

The CRSL framework served as the conceptual framework for this study, aiming to drive educational reform and ensure equitable opportunities. The framework asserts that reform efforts should extend beyond classroom practices to encompass the roles of

superintendents, district-level leadership, and principals. This broader focus is essential for making a significant impact on education and facilitating systemic school reform.

The study focused on the four key components of CRSL as outlined by Khalifa et al. (2016): critical self-reflection on leadership behaviors, the development of culturally responsive teachers, the promotion of inclusive school environments, and active engagement with students, parents, and indigenous contexts. The CRSL framework served both as a theoretical lens and a practical guide, emphasizing school reform to enhance school climate, teacher effectiveness, and student outcomes. In today's educational landscape, characterized by shifting cultural and racial demographics, the role of culturally responsive school leaders is increasingly vital.

As Campos-Moriera et al. (2020) highlighted, courageous leadership is essential for implementing anti-racist policies and fostering an environment that meets the diverse needs of the student population. CRSL offers a transformative approach that addresses the underrepresentation of minoritized students in GATE programs. By confronting biases, encouraging cultural responsiveness among educators, nurturing inclusive school environments, and actively involving students and their communities, CRSL aims to create educational settings where all students, regardless of their cultural backgrounds, have equal opportunities to succeed in advanced educational programs.

The main objective of my research was to examine and implement the CRSL framework, offering valuable insights that foster inclusive and equitable educational environments for minoritized students in GATE programs. By examining the nuances of the CRSL framework, my study aimed to clarify the fundamental assumptions and

perspectives that informed the research, guiding a thorough analysis and interpretation of the collected data. This approach ensured a detailed understanding of the factors shaping educational settings, with a specific emphasis on fostering inclusivity and equity for minoritized students within GATE programs.

Review of the Broader Problem

Several search databases were used to locate relevant research about the topic: Walden University Thoreau, ERIC, ProQuest Central, EBSCOhost, Google Scholar, and SAGE. Peer-reviewed English research articles on the seminal work by experts and published between 2019 and the present were used to find relevant literature using the terms: *gifted education, talent development, minoritized students in GATE, history of gifted education, underrepresentation of minority students in GATE, teacher bias, culturally responsive education, culturally relevant pedagogy, cultural, linguistic, identification of gifted students, equity, multicultural education, social justice leadership, African American education, Hispanic education, Native American/Alaskan Native education, racial mismatch, culturally relevant gifted assessments, racial and ethnic enrollment in public schools, school caused trauma, achievement gap, statistics on immigrants*, and *English language learners*. This thorough approach related to the topic of the underrepresentation of minoritized students in GATE assured a saturation of the relevant literature related to the facets of the problem in the SWSD.

In the following subsections, the history of educating minoritized students in the US, the history of GATE in the US, and the underrepresentation of minoritized students in GATE will be discussed. An explanation of the recommendations given by

researchers and experts in the field to remedy the problem of the underrepresentation of Hispanic, Black/African American, and Native American/Alaskan Native students in GATE will also be given.

History of Educating Minoritized Students in the United States

Hispanic or Latino immigrants encompass individuals from Mexico, Central and South America, and some Caribbean nations (Rosenbloom & Batalova, 2022). This category also includes those who identify as Spanish or Spanish-American (Ward & Batalova, 2023). Many Hispanic students face trauma related to the immigration experience, living in overcrowded conditions, and encountering limited access to healthy food, medical care, and employment opportunities (Pumeriega et al., 2022). Notably, 78% of immigrants to the United States speak a language other than English, with Spanish being the most-spoken foreign language (Ward & Batalova, 2023).

In the SWSD, many students speak Spanish as their first language. The district adheres to guidelines from the US Department of Justice and the US Department of Education (2015) to create English language acquisition programs that integrate English language learning with instruction in English Language Arts. These programs typically involve 1-2 hours of focused English instruction within the framework of ELA. However, this approach often limits equitable access to grade-level content, as general ELA instruction sometimes occurs concurrently without additional time allocated for English learning. Consequently, ELL are often denied the chance to meaningfully participate in grade-level academic content due to the belief that they must first be proficient in English (Mentan et al., 2023).

Fu (2024) noted that the Bilingual Education Act (BEA) of 1968 provided essential support for English language learners, including Hispanic students, by honoring their home languages and offering federal funding for content learning through bilingual education. However, over time and with the implementation of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in 2002, much of the federal funding and the emphasis on bilingual education diminished, shifting the focus to achieving English literacy in the shortest time possible (Fu, 2024). As a result, many policies governing the education of English language learners at the local level continue to place Hispanic students at a disadvantage.

From 1619 until the ratification of the 13th Amendment in 1865, enslaved Africans in the United States were prohibited from receiving an education due to fears that literacy would undermine White authority (Givens, 2022). This fear persisted even after emancipation, as approximately 10% of self-taught, literate former slaves existed within the enslaved population (Givens, 2022). Social systems and policies were implemented to prevent Black/African American individuals from truly benefiting from their newfound freedom, effectively keeping them in a state of unofficial bondage.

Givens (2022) noted that many laws from the 1800s explicitly prohibited teaching ex-slaves to read and write, which drove Black/African American individuals to seek education through clandestine means or Black-led institutions. Roby et al. (2023) argued that these historical policies laid the groundwork for contemporary systems of anti-Blackness, resulting in the devaluation of Black/African American students within public education. The normalization of violence against Black/African American communities

has contributed to mass incarceration, limited access to education and healthcare, and diminished opportunities that ultimately affect lifespans.

Roby et al. (2023) called for the dismantling of systems that disproportionately marginalize Black/African American students in advanced educational environments, such as GATE, STEM, Maker Spaces, honors courses, and Advanced Placement. Researchers highlight practices that perpetuate inequity in education, including disproportionate disciplinary actions, neglecting to recognize giftedness, offering insufficient challenges, and allowing underperformance among Black/African American students (Roby et al., 2023; Grier, 2020).

Native American and Alaskan Native people endured significant suffering due to the actions of White settlers in North America, characterized by genocide and forced assimilation into Christian culture (Pumariega et al., 2022). Indigenous children were made to attend boarding schools aimed at destroying their cultural identities; these facilities enforced uniforms instead of traditional clothing, required the cutting of long hair, assigned Anglo names, and banned traditional foods as well as the use of native languages, even among peers (Ehlers et al., 2022). As a result, Native American and Alaskan Native students in the southwestern United States continue to feel the lasting effects of generations of unresolved trauma linked to their identities, cultures, and languages, all of which have been systematically targeted for elimination (Pumariega et al., 2022).

By the 1920s, various marginalized groups, including Black/African American, Mexican American, Native American, Alaskan Native, and Asian American communities

in the US, began to raise awareness of civil rights issues in courts, advocating for fair wages, education, and housing. These groups recognized education as a critical foundation for self-sufficiency and improved quality of life, and they sought their fair share of educational opportunities (Martinez-Cola, 2022). This push for equitable access to education laid the groundwork for future civil rights movements, emphasizing the importance of education in achieving social and economic mobility.

The 1960s saw intensified civil rights advocacy, marked by organized marches, sit-ins, and picketing aimed at securing equality and equity for minoritized residents of the United States. Activists highlighted the systematic disparities in educational and economic opportunities faced by these communities compared to their White counterparts. In response to widespread unrest, Loessberg (2022) noted that the national race riots of 1967 prompted the U.S. president to establish the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders. The commission was tasked with examining the societal shortcomings that led to the riots, culminating in the Kerner Report, which identified White racism as the primary cause of civil disorder across numerous U.S. cities. Unfortunately, the findings of the Kerner Report were largely disregarded by the federal administration and faced opposition from conservatives, underscoring the challenges of addressing systemic racism.

In the wake of these events, there was a renewed concern for the state of social systems and education in the U.S., leading policymakers to commission equity programs in the 1960s and 1970s. During this period, federal funding was allocated to address the longstanding inequities faced by minoritized populations in areas such as housing,

employment, welfare, media, law enforcement, and education (Loessberg, 2022). While federal courts mandated desegregation and initially saw improvements in the academic achievement of minoritized students, public interest in these issues began to wane over the following two decades. As school districts appeared to comply with federal mandates, support and oversight for funding gradually diminished. This culminated in the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in Board of Education of Oklahoma City Public Schools v. Dowell in the early 1990s, which permitted a return to segregated schools. Consequently, many of the equity gains achieved through forced integration were eroded over time, illustrating the fragility of progress in social programs and education (Loessberg, 2022; Edwards, 2023).

Some Hispanic, Black/American, and Native American groups in the SWSD experienced historical traumas and continue to suffer from the negative effects of governmental policies and practices that keep many in poverty as Petrone and Stanton (2021) described. The authors explained that poverty affects access to appropriate education, housing, healthcare, childcare, nutrition, and community safety. Petrone and Stanton (2021) further studied the effects of additional and compounded traumas schools may inflict on students by practices that make them feel unsafe, unwanted, and devalued. The authors recommended that institutionalized trauma-producing structures must be dismantled to create systemic justice for students.

History of Gifted and Talented Education

Gifted education has its history in educators striving to distinguish highly intellectual students from other students through IQ testing. Matthew and Jolly (2022)

explained after the 1920s, definitions and identification of different intelligences related to giftedness were recognized. In 1956, Guilford identified 120 different aspects of intelligence in his Structure of the Intellect Model. He was the first to bring awareness to the connection between intelligence and creativity, leading to creativity's inclusion in most definitions of giftedness (Matthew & Jolly, 2022).

The launch of the Sputnik satellite was the impetus for creating the National Defense Education Act in 1958 in the US. The focus was on identifying more academically talented students poised to lead in the race for technological superiority over the Russians and build the United States' military might. Out of this effort, Advanced Placement courses in high schools were developed to give US students an intellectual edge (Matthew & Jolly, 2022). The Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s shed light on educational systems that discriminated against minoritized students and created achievement gaps. Congress commissioned a study in 1972, and the resulting Marland Report provided the first federal definition of gifted and talented children. It also recommended equitable opportunities for racially marginalized students (Jolly & Robins, 2022).

Gifted and Talented Identification and Underrepresentation

The identification systems and approaches used in the SWSD have contributed to the underrepresentation of minoritized groups in GATE programs. It was not until recent years that the SWSD began to recognize and develop talent at the K-5 level. Grades 6-8 had honors classes, but no official talent development instruction. Cohen (2022) noted that teacher referrals and parent input are the primary methods for selecting students for

testing in GATE. This has been the prevailing model in SWSD. However, Cohen pointed out that this system is flawed. Many teachers in the U.S. are middle-class White individuals, which can lead to historical biases where Black/African American, Native American, Alaskan Native, Hispanic students, those with disabilities, linguistically diverse students, and those qualifying for free or reduced lunch are less likely to be nominated for GATE programs by these teachers.

The low nomination rates for minoritized students may stem from low expectations, teacher bias, and a limited understanding of how cultural backgrounds and socioeconomic factors influence expressions of giftedness (Cohen, 2022; Hemingway, 2022). Many teachers tend to have a narrow view of giftedness, often equating it solely with high IQ scores, specific testing thresholds, and exceptional performance on ability tests (Kuo, 2022; Gentry, 2022).

To combat the underrepresentation of ethnically minoritized and culturally diverse students, experts recommend that educators acknowledge the harm caused by systemic inequities and expand their definition of giftedness. This broader perspective should include recognizing talents in diverse forms and ensuring that all students have opportunities to develop their unique abilities (Gentry et al., 2021).

Teachers' Contributions to the Problem

Research scholars focused on equity in GATE have long acknowledged the significant impact of teachers on the inclusion of minoritized students in gifted programs. Many have pointed out that issues such as formal teacher training, reliance on teachers' discretion in identification practices, and attitudes shaped by prejudice and bias need to

be addressed (Ford et al., 2021; Gray & Gentry, 2023; Peters et al., 2023). The lack of identification of minoritized students for GATE often leads to underachievement, low motivation, and disengagement due to unmet academic, psychological, and social-emotional needs (Ford et al., 2022).

Racially minoritized, unidentified GATE students would benefit significantly from having teachers who share their racial and ethnic backgrounds (Ford et al., 2020). Research indicates that ethnically minoritized teachers are more likely to refer and identify Hispanic, Black/African American, and Native American/Alaskan Native students for GATE than their White counterparts. Existing systems in U.S. public schools have been designed to advantage White students, making systemic reform essential to create opportunities for the growing population of minoritized students in GATE (La Salle et al., 2020; Ford et al., 2020).

Reforming GATE programs includes diversifying the teaching workforce to better align with the needs of ethnically and racially diverse students. Many unidentified minoritized GATE students suffer from low self-esteem and disengagement, often due to teachers who act as gatekeepers and overlook or discourage their talents (Haller-Gryc, 2022). Addressing these issues is essential for creating an inclusive and supportive educational environment.

Childs and Wooten (2023) argued that teacher bias—whether explicit or implicit—contributed to the ongoing underrepresentation of ethnically diverse students in GATE (Ford et al., 2020; Childs & Wooten, 2023). When prejudice and negative stereotypes inform teacher referrals to GATE, systemic reforms become imperative.

Comprehensive training in cultural and linguistic responsiveness, along with equity-based policies and practices guided by culturally responsive strategies is essential to address the underrepresentation of minoritized groups in GATE programs (Ford et al., 2020).

Other Contributions to the Problem

Research has extensively examined referral and identification practices for GATE services to assess their effectiveness in promoting equity for minoritized students (Peters et al., 2023). Teachers often act as gatekeepers, which can limit the admission of diverse gifted students, while many nationally normed ability assessments are biased and inherently flawed for specific groups (Peters et al., 2019). This combination of factors highlights the need for reform to ensure equitable access to GATE programs.

Many researchers in the GATE field agree that abilities can be nurtured and advocate for an approach that identifies gifts and talents early in a student's educational journey. Schools should offer learning experiences that help develop these gifts (Renzulli & Tsai, 2022; Subotnik et al., 2023). In 1986, Joseph Renzulli (2021) introduced scales based on 40 years of research, designed for classroom teachers to assess characteristics of giftedness such as learning, creativity, motivation, leadership, artistic talent, musicality, dramatic skills, communication (expressiveness and precision), planning, mathematics, reading, technology, and science (Renzulli, 2021).

Renzulli noted that there are not enough opportunities in a student's school career to be assessed for gifts and talents. He recommended several annual opportunities for universal screenings, as well as educating and encouraging parents about the characteristics of gifted and talented students and available programs in schools.

Additionally, since a cultural mismatch exists between many teachers and their students, he emphasized teacher training in culturally responsive environments to identify giftedness and talents in students, allowing for self-recommendations and peer recommendations. It is crucial to make culturally responsive curriculum decisions and implement policies and practices that promote equal access for culturally diverse students in GATE (Ford et al., 2021; Peters & Carter, 2022; Subotnik et al., 2023).

Researchers agree that addressing the underrepresentation of students of color in GATE programs and its negative consequences requires school leaders to confront existing practices that uphold inequities (Mun et al., 2020; Ford et al., 2020). Ford et al. (2021) pointed out that racism, prejudice, stereotyping, and deficit-oriented thinking contribute to disproportionality, which they refer to as segregation, violating the principles of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the rulings of Brown v. Board of Education (1954). The National Association for Gifted Children (2021) listed barriers to identification of students from diverse backgrounds and proposed strategies to improve identification and assessment practices. These strategies include aligning the identification process and assessments with the district's definition of giftedness and talented; using multiple, unbiased assessments; ensuring staff are fully trained in the latest research on identification and data utilization; and periodically evaluating GATE program systems (NAGC, 2021).

Coleman (2022) recommended employing multiple criteria that encompass various types of information, such as students' cognitive abilities, academic achievements, performance in different contexts, interests, creativity, motivation, and

learning characteristics. Considering diverse sources of information, including test scores, school grades, input from teachers, counselors, parents, peers, and the students themselves could increase access to GATE programs. Additionally, providing multiple opportunities throughout the school year to gather data and conduct further assessments can help identify overlooked students (Coleman, 2022).

Implications

The implications of this study could significantly affect the 81% of the SWSD who identify as other than White. Examining administrators' perceptions of what data are showing about racial disproportionality in GATE enrollment of Hispanic, Black/African American, and Native American/Alaskan Native students who are from low-income households, may show that GATE programs might be a missed opportunity to increase student outcomes if not addressed. Administrators' perception of the current practices and identification criteria may provide valuable insights into factors contributing to the underrepresentation of minoritized students in GATE programs. For example, administrators identified specific practices that were disadvantaging minoritized students. Administrators also described the identification criteria as too narrow or biased. Comprehending administrators' perspectives is a pivotal step for the SWSD to formulate and execute effective strategies to tackle equity issues. By addressing the concerns highlighted in this research study, avenues may be opened for more high performing, minoritized students to access superior instruction tailored to their needs. This, as emphasized by Ford et al. (2022), holds the promise of propelling these students to fulfill their academic, social, and future economic potential.

The study's qualitative design served as a catalyst for enhancing equity and inclusivity in the SWSD's K-8 GATE programs, making a positive impact beyond academic areas. The potential implications of the findings reach into the practical domains of policy and practice within GATE programs. By bringing to light administrators' perceptions and the systemic factors influencing these programs, the study holds the potential to shape more equitable and inclusive practices in the identification and support of minoritized students. The recommendations stemming from this research carry the weight to guide policymakers and educators in transformative actions. They can influence the restructuring of criteria for GATE program admissions, the development of inclusive curricula, and the implementation of targeted professional development for educators. Ultimately, the study's insights have the power to bridge the gap between research and tangible improvements in policy and practice within GATE programs, fostering an inclusive and supportive educational environment for all students.

Summary

In the first section of my study, the problem of access to GATE being restricted by policies, practices, bias, and racial prejudice was discussed. There is no single or simple solution to the problem of the underrepresentation of minoritized students in K-8 GATE in the SWSD. CRSL was recommended to create equitable opportunities in schools and is the conceptual framework that was used as the foundation of the interview questions. It guided the interpretation of the answers to the research questions. Section 1 concluded with an explanation of the implications of the study and its contribution to social change. In the next sections of the study, the methodology including the qualitative

research design and approach is described. A description of the participants and the strategies used to gather and analyze the data will be presented.

Section 2: The Methodology

Research Design and Approach

This study answered research questions about district and school administrators' perceptions of current practices and identification criteria contributing to minoritized students' underrepresentation in K-8 GATE at the SWSD. A quantitative research approach was considered for this study when deciding on how to research the topic. A quantitative approach is most appropriate when a researcher wants to test a theory by analyzing numerical statistical data to understand and describe a phenomenon, behavior, or issue (Burkholder et al., 2019). Because I wanted to hear directly from district and school administrators about their perceptions of the problem of the underrepresentation of minoritized students in GATE programs in a SWSD, a qualitative approach more appropriately served that purpose.

A qualitative approach yielded rich insights into administrators' perceptions and beliefs that a researcher might not effectively capture through quantitative research methods. Burkholder et al. (2019) described the qualitative research method as an interpretive, naturalistic approach to research in a natural setting. My study dealt with a complex and nuanced phenomenon in a SWSD. Ravitch and Carl (2021) stated that qualitative research is an inquiry mode centered around the complexity and subjectivity of lived experiences. It concerns the research participants' meaning-making, perceptions, feelings, and beliefs (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Through my research, I sought to understand district and school administrators' unique perspectives and feelings about their experiences related to GATE program processes.

Qualitative research designs are approaches used to gather and analyze non-numerical data, often involving in-depth exploration and understanding of social phenomena. There are six standard qualitative designs to choose from when conducting qualitative research. They are case studies, phenomenology, ethnography, grounded theory, narrative analysis, and basic qualitative research (Burkholder et al., 2019). The following is a brief description of each design.

The goal of conducting a qualitative case study is to thoroughly investigate a particular instance, case, or defined unit related to a specific phenomenon. This bounded unit may encompass various entities, including an individual, a program, a group, an institution, a community, or a specific policy (Burkholder et al., 2019). Typically, a case study incorporates diverse data sources like observations, document analysis, and interviews. Researchers analyze the collected data through cross-case comparisons to discern patterns. In my research, I opted not to utilize a qualitative case study as I did not center my focus on a specific case.

Phenomenological research investigates and elucidates how individuals collectively perceive a shared phenomenon (Burkholder et al., 2019). This involves collecting data through in-depth interviews, focus groups, and surveys conducted with individuals across various settings who have lived through a particular experience. Subsequently, the researcher analyzes the gathered data to extract the shared meaning of the experience and discerns common themes (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). As I was not trying to derive meaning from participants' shared experiences, I did not opt for phenomenological research.

Ethnographic research is designed to investigate people, their culture, and behaviors within their natural environment. This methodology requires the researcher to undergo long-term immersion in a cultural group to gather data and comprehend discernable patterns of ideas, beliefs, values, behaviors, and rituals (Burkholder et al., 2019). Since my research would not entail long-term immersion in a culture, I chose not to adopt ethnography as a qualitative research design.

Narrative research centers around individual storytelling from a personal perspective regarding a specific phenomenon. Interviews serve as the primary data source in narrative analysis, supplemented by other artifacts like journals, emails, letters, photographs, and video and audio recordings (Burkholder et al., 2019). The analysis of narrative research delves into the structure and content of the stories, identifying embedded themes and meanings. Since my research would not elicit participants' narratives, I opted not to employ a narrative research design.

Grounded theory is a research design explicitly geared towards theory development. Burkholder et al. (2019) outlined that grounded theory researchers may conduct their studies in diverse settings, employ multiple units of analysis, and involve various participants based on the specific study. During data analysis, researchers seek emergent patterns, identifying categories and concepts. These patterns may prompt follow-up interviews to refine ideas contributing to theory development. Since my research did not aim to formulate a theory, I decided to utilize a research design other than grounded theory.

As per Hurst (2023), a basic qualitative research design serves to acquire knowledge, relying on a single data source to address the research question. The researcher aims to comprehend the essence of reality surrounding a specific phenomenon, exploring a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals (Hurst, 2023). In my study, I sought to understand the perspectives of K-8 district leaders and school administrators regarding the underrepresentation of minoritized students in GATE programs. To achieve this, I opted for a basic qualitative research design, which facilitated the exploration of insufficiently understood phenomena.

The utilization of a basic qualitative research design was particularly apt for my small-scale study within the SWSD, encompassing 22 schools with one to three administrators each. This design proved practical when dealing with a limited number of participants and facing time constraints. Employing semistructured interview questions allowed me to stay receptive to unexpected findings, providing avenues for further exploration. Basic qualitative research offered the advantage of allowing the research design to evolve as the study progressed. This adaptability enabled me to modify interview questions and approaches based on participants' responses, ensuring that the study remained responsive and pertinent to the evolving research context.

Participants

Purposive sampling was used to select 30 participants to explore the perceptions of K-8 district leaders, school principals, and assistant principals of the underrepresentation of minoritized students in K-8 GATE programs in a SWSD. Purposive sampling is non-random and is also known as purposeful, judgmental, or

selective sampling (Gill, 2020). Using purposive sampling, I efficiently selected individuals with firsthand knowledge and/or supervision of GATE programs. The participants' responses to the interview questions provided rich, in-depth information that contributed to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. The participants provided valuable insights and perspectives based on their personal experiences. In using purposive sampling for participant selection, every effort was made to achieve a level of representativeness, ensuring a diverse range of experiences were included to get the richest data. Participants from K-5, 6-8, K-8 schools, and district leadership were selected. By inviting as many as 30 school and district leaders for the basic qualitative research study, I wanted a final sample size of between five and 10 participants from the SWSD.

The 30 administrators were contacted to participate in the interviews for the research study after receiving IRB approval from Walden University (Approval no. 03-14-24-1144128). This approval ensured that the research adheres to ethical standards and protects the rights and welfare of participants. The administrators were selected based on specific criteria, including having supervised GATE programs or possessing firsthand knowledge of such programs. This targeted approach ensured that the sample was relevant and could provide valuable insights into the research topic. To simplify the invitation process, I utilized the administrators' publicly available district email addresses. This approach enhanced communication efficiency and ensured transparency in connecting with qualified individuals who made valuable contributions to the study.

Data Collection

A self-developed semistructured interview protocol (Appendix A) was utilized for the research study. The interview questions were focused on gathering insights from district and school leaders regarding the underrepresentation of minoritized students in K-8 GATE programs. This approach allowed for the preparation of open-ended questions in advance, framed through the lens of CRSL.

The semistructured format also enabled the development of follow-up probes to deepen the understanding of participants' unique perceptions, experiences, and beliefs. Data collection involved audio recordings of interviews lasting 45 to 60 minutes. Interviews were conducted in person whenever possible, as this format fosters a closer connection between the interviewer and the participant, enhancing the richness of the collected data. In-person interactions facilitated the observation of facial expressions, pauses, and other subtle body language cues that conveyed important meaning and helped build rapport. If in-person interviews were not feasible, as a last resort, telephone interviews were conducted, though this method was least preferred due to the lack of visual elements. Before each interview, I obtained informed consent from the participants, informing them about the date, time, and location of the interview, its maximum duration, the recording of the session, and their voluntary participation. Participants were informed that they could request off-the-record responses that would not be included in the research (Knott et al., 2022). With permission from the SWSD, student enrollment data, and GATE demographic information were shared with participants during the interviews.

During and after each session, I composed memos to document significant moments, noting where responses aligned or diverged from others and my reflections on positionality and personal biases (Knott et al., 2022). I ensured that I did not include individuals I previously supervised or had personal relationships with to maintain the study's credibility. To protect anonymity and confidentiality, names and personal details were omitted from the data and the research findings.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in a qualitative research study begins with the important step of data preparation (Knott et al., 2022). One method to prepare the data was through transcription. Transcription involves the transformation of the recorded interview into written form (McMullin, 2023). I chose a technological transcription tool to facilitate this process. The verbatim written transcript of recorded interviews was void of non-verbal cues, such as sarcasm, pauses, laughter, and voice tone. To produce a precise portrayal of the interview, I listened to the audio content for accuracy while cross-referencing it with the written transcript and incorporating any pertinent details into the transcribed responses. As a concluding measure, member checking was used. Member checking, also known as respondent validation or participant verification, is a research technique to enhance the credibility and validity of qualitative research findings (Saldana, 2021). This method involved sharing the transcribed data and interpretations with the study participants to seek their feedback or confirmation. The primary goal was to ensure that the participants recognized and agreed with how their experiences, perspectives, or contributions were represented in the transcript.

Following multiple rounds of transcription, the next phase involved initiating coding cycles. Coding is a systematic process encompassing the methodical exploration of patterns and the discernment of emerging themes within the dataset (Knott et al., 2022). The overarching goal was to capture and identify shared elements across multiple interviews systematically. After this coding process, synthesized codes were strategically employed to construct nuanced and fresh interpretations that offer a comprehensive understanding of the meaning derived from the coded data, as advocated by Saldana (2021).

Employing a thematic analysis approach involves a multi-step procedure. It commences with the initial coding phase, where data were systematically categorized and labeled. Following this, there was a deliberate and focused search for overarching themes that encapsulate patterns and connections within the coded data. I conducted a meticulous review of these identified themes, allowing for a deeper exploration of the relationships and their significance within the research context.

Data triangulation using coded data from various participants to validate findings was used. The idea behind triangulation was to enhance the credibility and reliability of research results by cross-verifying information from different perspectives. Incorporating triangulation, I increased the validity and reliability of the findings, providing a well-rounded and trustworthy basis for drawing conclusions and making interpretations in the research.

The subsequent steps included defining and naming themes, a critical process that adds specificity and clarity to the identified patterns. This phase ensured that each theme

was well-articulated, contributing to a nuanced and detailed understanding of the dataset. Finally, the research culminated in producing a comprehensive report that encapsulated the synthesized codes, identified themes, and their respective definitions. This report provided robust documentation of the research findings, providing a detailed and insightful account of the patterns and meanings derived from the thematic analysis.

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In the coding process, incongruent or conflicting results may arise within the data, indicating inconsistencies or contradictions. To assess their impact, I scrutinized the data for potential biases, whether stemming from my perspective or that of the participants. If deemed influential, steps such as reanalyzing the data, delving deeper into the conceptual framework, gathering additional data, and evaluating the robustness of the constructs would be taken (Burkholder et al., 2019). According to Burkholder et al. (2019), addressing discordant data is essential, and an explanation for its presence should be incorporated into the research study for transparency, regardless of its utility. Consequently, allocating a section in the capstone to document these discrepant cases would become imperative.

Limitations

When interpreting findings from qualitative research, it is crucial to acknowledge inherent limitations. Subjectivity and biases may permeate the entirety of the qualitative study, as it relies on interpretations of opinions, emotions, and unique perspectives (Burkholder et al., 2019). Unlike quantitative research, there is no avenue for mathematical verification of results due to the subjective nature of qualitative inquiry. Additionally, the small-scale nature of this qualitative research, specifically focusing on perceptions of the underrepresentation of minoritized students in GATE programs within a specific SWSD, limits the transferability of findings. It is essential to exercise caution in generalizing these results to all school types or every GATE model within the SWSD. The wide range of school models—such as Montessori, preschools, traditional schools, and dual language programs—brings distinct characteristics and educational methodologies. Consequently, the relevance of the findings differs across various school settings and GATE models, highlighting the need for a thoughtful examination of these specific elements in any general conclusions.

To further enrich the study, it would be imperative to consider perspectives beyond those of administrators. Including the viewpoints of teachers, students, and parents becomes invaluable in constructing a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics within the GATE program. Teachers can provide insights into classroom practices and student interactions, while students and parents can contribute their experiences and perceptions concerning inclusivity and support within the program. While the current study primarily centered on administrators, recognizing the value of

these additional perspectives and potentially incorporating them in future research endeavors could pave the way for a holistic grasp of the underlying issues.

Data Analysis Results

This qualitative research study explored the perspectives of administrators in a SWSD on the underrepresentation of minoritized students in GATE programs for K-8 students using the CRSL framework. Eight district and school administrators participated in the study. They included principals, assistant principals, program directors, and a principal supervisor. Some of the participants had previously served as school principals and supervised GATE programs. Others had intimate knowledge of these programs. The administrators were asked to answer ten semistructured self-created interview questions about their experiences and perceptions of minoritized students' underrepresentation in GATE programs within the district. The participants were provided pertinent information about the interview topic, procedures, risks and benefits of participating, and their right to privacy. After obtaining verbal consent to participate, the interviews were recorded and transcribed for data analysis using Otter.ai software. The data were refined by constructing complete thoughts and eliminating repetitive or filler words. The transcriptions were then shared with the participants to verify that their intended messages were accurately represented. Participants reviewed the transcripts, made corrections, deletions, and clarifications before returning them to me. This process, known as member checking, ensures the credibility of the research data.

A careful qualitative analysis of the interview data unfolded through a structured process of coding, categorization, and refinement. The initial open coding phase using

NVivo software yielded 53 initial codes, which were subsequently refined through axial coding to 43. Following selective coding, the codes were distilled to 9 core categories. These codes and categories finally converged into three distinct themes that emerged as dominant patterns in the data. These themes offer a rich and nuanced understanding of the experiences and perspectives shared by participants, providing answers to the research questions, and focused on CRSL principles. The analysis of participant quotes revealed distinct categories and themes. Themes 1 and 2, presented in Tables 3 and 4, addressed research question 1 by examining CRSL principles critical self-awareness and culturally responsive community engagement. A third theme related to inclusive school environments emerged from the responses to research question 2, as illustrated in Table 5. The quotes highlight participants' experiences and insights, aligning with the categories of critical self-awareness, community engagement, and inclusivity. This organization allows for a deeper understanding of the participants' perspectives on these crucial educational principles.

Theme 1:

The SWSD administrators recognized that their own limited cultural awareness and understanding had contributed to a system where minoritized students were historically underrepresented in GATE programs.

Table 3

Critical Self-Awareness

Categories	Codes	Example quotes
Systemic Bias	Teacher race/cultural influences	"We tend to identify with people who are the same race or culture as us." P7
	Teacher biases	"Teachers come with their unique beliefs and prejudices." P1 "We're more likely to refer Caucasians." P1
	Focus on inequities	"We must mitigate the inequities in our systems." P5
	Unintentionally discriminate	"We don't realize how those processes can inherently and unintentionally discriminate against minority students." P5
	Deficit mindset	"When some people think of our students of color, there's automatically a deficit mindset." P6
Limited enrichment opportunities	Welcoming schools	"How welcoming we are and how much they feel they can come and just talk about anything." P3
	Less access	"Minorities just have less access, less support, less opportunities for exposure to higher level instruction." P5
	Advocacy	"Everyone deserves a world class education." P6 "Looking at everyone as a possible gifted student." P2
Limited cultural awareness	Negative self-talk	The negative self-talk, especially in middle school, saying, "I'm not smart." P2
	Behaviors interfere	"Teachers mistakenly think their behavior is telling us about their ability." P3
	Quiet student	"There are common beliefs about the ability of certain quiet students." P1
	Teacher diversity	Caucasian teachers are less likely to refer students from minority populations." P1

Note. Data from participants answering RQ1: What are administrators' perceptions of the current practices that have contributed to the minoritized student underrepresentation in K-8 GATE at the SWSD?

Findings: Research Question 1

The 2022-2023 data in Table 1 that was presented to the administrators revealed that access to GATE programs in the SWSD was disproportionately limited for minoritized students. Participants analyzed the data from Tables 1 and 2 and described the existing systems for qualifying students for GATE programs. They identified barriers stemming from systemic bias, limited understanding of diverse backgrounds, and a lack of enriching experiences. Participants 1 and 3 noted that most teachers in the SWSD were

Caucasian females, which may lead to implicit biases and a lack of awareness of diverse cultures, languages, and abilities. Participant 1 stated, “Most of our teachers are still female, Caucasian...I think there is some internal bias.” Participant 3 added, “Another barrier is the perception or the unintentional bias of the teachers on campus.” This bias can result in misunderstandings and the underrepresentation of minoritized students in GATE programs. Participant 3 noted that “they believe that a student is unable to do something just because of their behavior.” Minoritized students’ behavior can often be misinterpreted as misbehavior by teachers from the dominant culture due to differences in cultural norms, communication styles, and social contexts. For instance, behaviors that are commonplace or acceptable within a minoritized community may not align with teachers’ expectations, leading to misunderstandings.

Participant 6 pointed out that some teachers often approach students of color with a deficit mindset, stating, “When some people think of our students of color, there is automatically that bias or that deficit mindset.” This perspective can create the impression that certain marginalized students are not capable of performing at high levels, which may result in restricted experiences and learning opportunities. Participant 5 lamented that because of their underrepresentation in GATE programs, “minoritized students just have less access, less support, and they see instruction that stimulates advanced learning less often.” The cumulative effect of these disadvantages can perpetuate cycles of inequality, reducing their chances of academic success and limiting future opportunities in higher education and the workforce.

Participant 5 proposed that teachers could enhance classroom learning by providing “more higher-level learning experiences and project-based opportunities within the classroom that more students could get access to.” They also suggested that schools could “try to differentiate our curriculum further, so that teachers could give them the support and the skills necessary to bring in some of that higher-level learning for all their students.” Participant 7 inquired, “Are teachers asking deeper level questions?” Participant 1 noted that students’ confidence levels can significantly affect their performance, sometimes leading to poorer outcomes. Participants 3 and 4 emphasized the importance of the testing environment in enabling students to reach their full potential, highlighting the need for familiar testers who can create a supportive atmosphere. Additionally, students should feel at ease with their teachers, having established strong relationships over time. Participant 4 stated, “If the student doesn’t feel comfortable or built a good relationship with a teacher, I don’t believe the student would actually show their full potential during those assessments.”

Comfort with teachers can significantly impact students’ performance and overall experience during assessments, as a positive teacher-student relationship fosters a supportive environment that reduces anxiety and encourages open communication. Meanwhile, Participant 3 highlighted the importance of culturally responsive teacher training, saying, “I think having some more culturally responsive training for teachers just to understand the different cultures we serve and different parental expectations of the students in our classes.” By connecting with the cultural backgrounds and values of students' families, educators can foster more inclusive learning environments that honor

and integrate these differences, ultimately improving student engagement and success. This critical self-awareness improves the educational experience for students and encourages educators to reflect on their own beliefs and practices, promoting an equitable approach to teaching.

Theme 2:

The SWSD administrators recognized it was essential to incorporate community perspectives and involve diverse stakeholders in GATE processes to create more inclusive and equitable opportunities for minoritized students.

Table 4

Culturally Responsive Community Engagement

Categories	Codes	Example Quotes
Cultural influence	language differences	"Monolingual gifted kids may not express their giftedness in a second language."
	Expectations	"Gifted education should not be for a select group of students." P6
	Unlike the norm	"Skin color or racial background does factor in whether students are identified." P4
		"We tend to identify with people who are the same race or culture as us." P7
	Mistrust	"Instead of being perceived as the antagonists, we need to be perceived as the protagonists." P3
Relationship with schools	Next steps	"Talking about it amongst our community, then we can start to develop our next steps." P5
	Technology	"If parents are not using the website, how will they know this? P2
	Welcoming schools	"How welcoming we are and how much they feel they can come and just talk about anything." P3

Note. Data from participants answering RQ1: What are administrators' perceptions of the current practices that have contributed to the minoritized student underrepresentation in K-8 GATE at the SWSD?

Theme 2 emerged from the responses to research question 1, highlighting issues such as limited access to enriching experiences, language barriers, and unwelcoming school environments. Participant 1 observed that minoritized students, who frequently confront the added obstacles of poverty, often do not have access to the same range of

enriching experiences, resources, and opportunities needed to develop their talents and acknowledge their gifts. She stated, “Those living in poverty don’t get out and have experiences that their more affluent counterparts do.” Participant 4 emphasized, “If a student doesn’t have those cultural rules, those background experiences that might be referred to in the gifted test questions, there might be a disconnect there.” To perform well on normed assessments, students need experiences that align with those of the group on which the tests were normed. Participants 1 and 3 observed that the quiet, minoritized student could possess exceptional talents. Participant 7 commented that “different cultures have different expectations of children. Parents may instruct their children to ‘not speak and don’t ask a lot of questions.’” Participant 7 explained that “Those kids who are quiet may be super gifted.” Their quietness may hinder teachers from recognizing their giftedness. Participant 7 suggested “provide some cultural awareness training so that teachers become aware of different communities’ expectations for their kids.”

Some participants expressed concerns that parents of minoritized students may be unaware of GATE program options or face challenges in engaging with schools due to language and cultural barriers. Participant 4 explained that “Working with the Hispanic population…it would be great to explain to them what GATE is and the benefits that would come out of it for their kids in their home language.” He further noted that some parents require information to be “simplified or given in layman’s terms.” Participant 2 highlighted that the district’s website outlines the gifted testing dates and referral process but questioned, “If parents are not using our website, how would they know?” Participant

2, who is also a parent, mentioned that she typically accesses the website only when searching for specific information, suggesting that many parents might miss critical announcements about GATE testing and programs.

Participant 1 pointed out that “between 80 to 90 languages are spoken in our district.” She emphasized the need for school announcements—including GATE information—to be provided in the languages represented by SWSD families. Participants 1 through 7 collectively stressed the importance of sharing comprehensive information about GATE programs with the parents of minoritized students, recognizing that informed families are essential for promoting equity. Participant 5 said, “I think we could mitigate this by doing more outreach to our families and provide opportunities for them to learn about these programs.” Enhanced communication and outreach efforts could better engage communities, fostering a sense of belonging and support for students from diverse backgrounds. Participant 5 added, “I think making parents more aware will help them advocate for their children and allow them these opportunities.”

Participant 3 discussed her experience with some parents and asked, “How welcoming are we and do parents feel they can come and just talk to us about anything?” She noted, “Instead of communication being focused on behavior and what their children are not doing in class…” Participant 3 shared, “We should work on changing parents’ attitudes towards school by the way and what is communicated about their children.” Participant 3 further elaborated on the experiences of some parents who have developed a distrust of schools, feeling that any positive acknowledgment of their children could invite negative scrutiny. She noted that “One of the things we’ve struggled with at our

site is parents feel like there is a big divide between them and the school." Some parents view schools as adversarial, often associating them with negative comments about their children. Participant 3 said, "Instead of being perceived as antagonists, we need to be perceived as protagonists and try to bring them in and get them involved." She further explained that "because we cannot connect to the lifestyles that our students are living because of our different cultures…I think public schools have to make it a mission to become the friend of parents again." These approaches align with culturally responsive community engagement, which aims to empower families, build trust, and ensure equitable access to GATE programs.

Theme 3:

The SWSD administrators recognized the necessity to reevaluate traditional methods of preparing, selecting, and communicating for participation in the GATE programs.

Table 5

Inclusive School Environments

Categories	Codes	Example quotes
	Single data point	"It's still just a singular assessment we are using." P5
	CogAT format	"Assessment should focus on the students' skills and not necessarily the lived experiences." P4
	Biased assessments	"It is unintentional, but it perpetuates the status quo." P5
	No test preparation	"They just have less access, less support, and they see it less often." P5
GATE assessment	Universal screening	"I think a second screener at a later year." P8
	94^{th} or 97^{th} percentile	"They have to be at the 94^{th} or 97^{th} percentile or above to participate in gifted and talented services." P1, P2
	Environment	I don't think the testing environment lends itself to showing off what their talents are." P2
	Familiar tester	"If the student doesn't feel comfortable and built a good relationship, they won't show their full potential on the assessment." P4 "Without a good relationship with the teacher, students would not show their full potential." P7
	Prior exposure	"Provide exposure to practice problems and enrichment opportunities prior to the test." P8
Referral Process	Self-referral	"Students were not given the opportunity to self-refer to honors class or GATE." P6
	Single data point	"It's still just a singular assessment we are using." P5
	CogAT format	"Assessment should focus on the students' skills and not necessarily the lived experiences." P4
	Biased assessments	"It is unintentional, but it perpetuates the status quo." P5
	No test preparation	"They just have less access, less support, and they see it less often." P5
	Parent referral	"Mostly Caucasian parents coming in and asking for their kid to be gifted tested." P2
Local Norms	Middle School	"Even though middle school students may not be identified through a gifted test, they have to show proficiency in other things for honors courses." P2
	Honors	"For honors classes in middle school, teacher recommendation, benchmarks, or state assessments results are used." P6
	Achievement data	"If minoritized students are not receiving the high rigor instruction they need, they are not going to help our student achievement data." P7
	Empowerment	"Teachers have all the tools they need to be able to adequately teach and identify gifted minoritized kids." P1
	Limited differentiation	"Teachers must try to differentiate our curriculum further." P5
	Other assessments	"Assessment should focus on the students' skills and not necessarily the lived experiences." P4
Programs	Self-contained	"We have limited minority students in self-contained programs." P1
	Achievement data	"If minoritized students are not receiving the high rigor instruction they need, they are not going to help our student achievement data." P7
	Push in	"We can push in and provide more higher-level learning opportunities." P5
	Pull out	"We have pull out programs." P5

Note. Data from participants answering RQ2: What are administrators' perceptions of the identification criteria that have contributed to the minoritized student underrepresentation in K-8 GATE at SWSD?

Findings: Research Question 2

The data collected from participants addressing research question 2 revealed four key categories. These categories included gifted testing, the referral process, local norms, and GATE programs. Each category highlights a distinct aspect of the identified issues. Together, they provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing GATE identification in the SWSD. Participants shared their knowledge of the current identification criteria for GATE in the SWSD and their proposals for improvement. Table 5 shows how the CRSL's principle of inclusive school environments was used to frame the themes, categories and codes from the data.

Participants 1 and 3 noted that the SWSD currently assigns the responsibility of referring students to GATE programs to classroom teachers. Additionally, Participants 3 and 4 expressed concerns that implicit biases among teachers could affect the referral process for minoritized students. Participant 7 stated, "I think teachers look at classroom performance, at grades, but more than that, they look at student behaviors in the classroom." This emphasis on perceived negative behaviors may cause some teachers to overlook the potential of certain students, leading to deserving individuals being excluded from GATE assessments and programming. Consequently, the existing referral system, which relies on teacher judgment, may unintentionally reinforce inequities in access to gifted education.

In examining the insights shared by participants regarding the qualification processes for GATE programs, it is crucial to consider their contributions through the lens of culturally responsive instructional leadership. Participant 1 explicitly identified the Cognitive Ability Test (CogAT) as the primary assessment tool for qualifying students for GATE programs. In contrast, participants 4 and 8 discussed the CogAT and its relevant domains of giftedness without naming it directly. Additionally, participants 2 and 6 emphasized the use of local admissions norms for honors classes at the middle school level. Participant 6 noted that "for honors classes in the middle school, it has been teacher recommendation or benchmark assessments, or state assessment results."

To enhance diversity within GATE programs, two participants proposed innovative strategies. Participant 6 suggested a trial-based self-selection process that empowers students to choose to participate in GATE programs. He said, "If a student has a driving desire and wants to apply for the honors program, I must approve it. It is opening another door for minority kids to experience higher level education." Similarly, participant 1 recommended allowing students who score near the GATE criteria on the CogAT, but do not meet eligibility, to engage in GATE programs on a probationary basis. Participants 1, 2, 3, and 8 noted that universal testing occurs in second grade at SWSD K-5 schools, while teachers can refer students for gifted testing in other grades. Participant 8 articulated a vision for more inclusive practices by advocating for the integration of local norms to ensure that diverse, high-performing students are not inadvertently excluded from GATE services. She said, "I would love to see a more diversified programming, different levels of programming. Consideration of local norms,

not just at the state level, or district level, but within a school. I also think a gifted screener should be given at a later year." These approaches reflect a culturally responsive methodology by recognizing and valuing multiple pathways to identify giftedness and talents.

Two participants highlighted that a significant barrier to the admission of minoritized students into GATE programs is their preparation for assessments. Participant 7 suggested implementing "talent development programs for teachers to work with those minoritized students who have potential." Participant 8 emphasized the importance of "providing opportunities for exposure to sample test questions to all students in the schools rather than providing them to caregivers," as this can create inequities in preparation for assessments. Many minoritized students may lack essential test-taking skills and experiences necessary for success on standardized tests due to the quality of instruction they receive. The assessments used to qualify students for gifted programs are typically nationally normed and require a level of rigor that is often not available in standard general education curricula. Thus, creating more inclusive school environments that address these gaps is essential for supporting the potential of all students.

Discrepant Cases

In this basic qualitative research project, I conducted a thorough analysis of interview transcripts to identify emerging themes and categories. Employing a systematic coding approach enabled me to assess the data for potential discrepancies. I determined that no significant discrepancies warranted the exclusion of any information. However,

participants offered a range of opinions and insights, which enriched the analysis. These diverse perspectives were instrumental in enhancing the overall study's credibility. The inclusion of varied viewpoints contributed to a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the research topic.

Interpretation of the Findings

I conducted this qualitative research study to explore the following questions: "How do administrators perceive the current practices that contribute to the underrepresentation of minoritized students in K-8 GATE at SWSD?" and "What are administrators' views on the identification criteria that have led to the underrepresentation of minoritized students in K-8 GATE at SWSD?" This study is grounded in the conceptual framework of CRSL (Khalifa et al., 2016), which focuses on promoting effective instructional practices, driving transformation, and tackling challenges related to educational equity for minoritized students. I used the five behavioral strands of the Culturally Relevant School Leadership (CRSL) framework to develop my research questions and improve the interview questions. These strands emphasize critical self-awareness, the creation of culturally responsive curricula, and the enhancement of teacher preparation. Additionally, they highlight the importance of fostering inclusive school environments and encourage active engagement with students and parents in the context of their communities. This comprehensive approach effectively refined my research methodology.

The emergent themes effectively addressed the research questions posed in this project study. The findings align with existing literature on the underrepresentation of

minoritized students in GATE programs. According to Campos-Moriera et al. (2020), CRSL encompasses cultural competence grounded in cultural humility, serving as a framework for enhancing self-awareness and critical self-reflection. Belgarde et al. (2022) emphasized the necessity for teacher preparation programs to address the complexities of providing equitable education for diverse student populations. Over the past decades, minoritized students have increasingly faced discrimination and prejudice within U.S. schools, highlighting the urgent need for policymakers and school leaders to foster fair, just, and inclusive environments that promote a sense of belonging (Killen & Rutland, 2022). Furthermore, Mun et al. (2021) highlighted the crucial role that parents play in identifying and fostering talent among minoritized students, emphasizing the importance of their perspectives in the identification and support of GATE students.

Theme 1

The first theme emerging from the research study indicates that the SWSD administration has come to recognize their own limited cultural awareness and understanding of the challenges faced by minoritized students. This realization has highlighted how their lack of cultural competence has historically contributed to the underrepresentation of minoritized students in GATE programs. The findings align with the work of scholars who assert that district and school leaders who lack cultural awareness cannot perform effectively within the increasingly diverse landscape of today's schools (Gooden et al., 2023). In recognizing these implications, the administration must be motivated to understand their individual biases and the broader patterns of discrimination embedded in district policies and practices. Through this

reflection, they must aim to create an equitable educational environment that supports all students.

To tackle these deeply rooted inequities, administrators and educators must conduct a thorough examination of how privilege, power, and oppression influence students' experiences within the school system (Gooden et al., 2023). This process requires a willingness to confront uncomfortable truths about historical disparities and the systemic issues that perpetuate them. By analyzing their own racial and cultural identities, leaders can better identify the biases and assumptions that may affect their decision-making processes. Such introspection is crucial for fostering an inclusive atmosphere that respects and represents students' diverse backgrounds. This examination of identity and privilege can serve as the foundation for transformative action within the educational landscape.

As change agents, school leaders must navigate the complex social and political contexts that surround their institutions (Gooden et al., 2023). Understanding the external factors that impact students, families, and communities can inform more equitable policies and practices within the school system. This also involves a commitment to advocating for the needs of minoritized students and fostering relationships with families and community organizations. By addressing concerns that extend beyond the school environment, leaders can help dismantle the barriers that hinder academic achievement and social equity. This proactive engagement is essential for creating greater inclusive and equitable educational experience for all students.

Furthermore, CRSL requires a continuous commitment to professional development focused on cultural competence (Ezzani et al., 2021). It is recommended that school leaders and educators participate in ongoing training that enhances their understanding of diversity, inclusion, and social justice. Such training can help individuals recognize their biases and develop strategies to support students from various cultural backgrounds effectively. By investing in professional growth, leaders signal a commitment to equity that extends throughout the entire institution (Washington, 2021). This dedicated approach helps improve outcomes for minoritized students and enriches the educational experiences of all learners within the school community.

Finally, Genao (2021) noted the cultivation of an equity-minded leadership approach necessitates collaboration and transparency within the school district. Engaging stakeholders, including educators, parents, and community members, allows for a holistic view of the challenges and opportunities within the educational system. By fostering open dialogue, leaders can gather valuable insights that inform decision-making and increase accountability. Establishing a culture of trust and shared responsibility encourages a collective effort toward achieving equity in educational opportunities (Parkhouse et al., 2022). Collaboration can lead to systemic change that benefits all students and fosters a just and equitable society.

Theme 2

The interviews revealed a significant theme: SWSD administrators acknowledged the importance of including community perspectives and engaging diverse stakeholders in GATE processes. They recognized that fostering inclusive and equitable opportunities

for minoritized students requires an active partnership with the broader community. By involving various stakeholders, such as families, community leaders, and local organizations, administrators can better understand the unique needs and strengths of their students. This collaborative approach facilitates better decision-making and ensures that programs are reflective of the diverse population they aim to serve.

Central to this theme is the tenet of CRSL, which emphasizes the need for culturally responsive community engagement (Khalifa et al., 2016). This principle underscores that building inclusive school environments goes beyond the classroom and requires deep connections with the community. When school leaders engage authentically with families and community members, they cultivate relational trust that enhances participation and investment in the educational process (Lucido et al., 2024). This trust forms a foundation for meaningful collaboration that extends to all stakeholders, ensuring that the educational experiences of minoritized students are valued and enriched.

CRSL encourages schools to embrace the unique heritages and cultural knowledge students bring with them (Lucido et al., 2024). By recognizing and integrating diverse backgrounds into the educational framework, schools can create relevant and inclusive atmospheres for learning. This practice affirms students' identities and strengthens engagement and motivation in academic pursuits. Acknowledging cultural differences and leveraging them as assets benefits both students and the educational community.

Involving the community and leveraging its resources greatly enriches the support available for student learning. By harnessing local knowledge and expertise, schools can offer more well-rounded educational experiences that cater to the unique needs of their student populations. This approach fosters a sense of belonging and connection among students, which can positively impact their academic success and personal development (Lucido et al., 2024). SWSD administrators' recognition of the importance of community engagement reinforces a commitment to equity and inclusion for all students, especially those from minoritized backgrounds.

The integration of community perspectives in education is vital for creating equitable opportunities for minoritized students. The commitment of the SWSD administrators to do more to involve diverse stakeholders reflects an understanding of the essential role that culturally responsive practices play in school leadership. By establishing trust-based relationships and valuing the unique contributions of each community member, schools can foster environments that promote success for all students. This collaborative framework addresses the complexities of educational equity and empowers students by validating their identities and experiences. These efforts serve as a foundation for an improved inclusive and supportive educational landscape.

Theme 3

The data unearthed a critical theme that underscores the urgent need for school and district administrators in the SWSD to reassess their conventional methodologies concerning the preparation, assessment, and communication surrounding participation in GATE programs. Historically, the reliance on standardized assessments, such as the

CogAT, has created barriers that restrict the qualification of students, predominantly impacting minoritized student representation. As educational landscapes evolve, it becomes increasingly essential for decision-makers to embrace a broader, more inclusive array of assessment tools that can better capture the diverse talents and abilities of all students, particularly those from underrepresented backgrounds.

To address the underrepresentation of minoritized groups in GATE programs, the data suggest a multifaceted approach that involves revisiting the tests used for qualification and implementing more frequent screening processes. Regular assessments could increase dynamic evaluation of students' abilities, allowing educators to identify potential giftedness that may be overlooked in a singular, high stakes testing environment. By using a range of assessments, including both standardized tests and alternative measures, schools can create a holistic and equitable system that encourages participation from a wider demographic. This shift could lead to greater diversity within GATE programs, reflecting a richer tapestry of student capabilities and achievements.

Another pivotal recommendation emerging from the data is the adoption of local norms in evaluating students for GATE eligibility. By establishing criteria based on the specific demographics and characteristics of the local student population, schools can develop a relevant and applicable assessment framework. This localized approach levels the playing field and acknowledges the unique talents that may exist within different community contexts. Through the combination of more frequent screenings, varied assessment methods, and the use of local norms, SWSD administrators can foster an

environment of inclusivity that expands access to GATE programs and improves the learning experiences for all students.

In summary, the recent reflections of the SWSD administration reveal a desire to have a significant shift in their approach to serving minoritized students in GATE programs. This transformation can be summarized through the three key themes. First, the administration recognized their own limitations of cultural awareness and understanding of the challenges faced by minoritized students. This acknowledgment highlights a crucial awareness of the systemic barriers that these students encounter, prompting administrators to confront their biases and gaps in knowledge that may hinder equitable educational opportunities. Second, there is a newfound commitment to inclusivity with the realization that the SWSD administrators acknowledged the importance of including community perspectives and engaging diverse stakeholders in GATE processes. This theme emphasizes the necessity of collaborative approaches that integrate insights from families, educators, and community members. By valuing these diverse perspectives, the administration aims to create more responsive and relevant programs that resonate with the needs of all students. Lastly, the administrators emphasized the need to "reevaluate traditional approaches in preparing, selecting, and communicating about participation in GATE programs." This reassessment signifies a willingness to innovate and adapt practices that may have perpetuated inequities. By moving beyond conventional methods, the SWSD administration is poised to create an inclusive environment that truly reflects the diverse talents and potentials of its student body. The SWSD administration's journey toward greater cultural competency,

community engagement, and alternative identification practices serves as a vital step in fostering an equitable educational experience for minoritized students.

After thorough data analysis and discussions with my committee, I determined that professional development would be the most effective way to address the themes identified in the project study. This approach will equip district and school administrators with the skills necessary to enhance cultural competency and engagement within the community. Additionally, improved educational practices will support the creation of equitable experiences for minoritized students. This initiative represents a crucial step toward fostering inclusivity in our educational system.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

The project is a three-day interactive professional development program tailored for SWSD administrators (see Appendices B-G). The goal is to empower school and district administrators with the knowledge and strategies needed to increase the participation of minoritized students in K-8 GATE programs within the SWSD. The framework of the project was based on research suggesting that a series of professional development sessions can effectively enhance skills and knowledge over time (Davis et al., 2020). The content and structure of these sessions were crafted using insights obtained from one-on-one interviews with the administrators. This professional development will focus on cultivating CRSL skills to foster meaningful changes that increase enrollment of minoritized students in GATE programs.

Goal of the Professional Development Project

The goal of this three-day professional development program is to empower school and district administrators with the knowledge and strategies needed to increase the participation of minoritized students in K-8 GATE programs within the SWSD. By educating and training these administrators on the underrepresentation of minoritized students, the initiative aims to equip them with strategies for instigating meaningful change. Insights gathered from interviews with SWSD administrators suggest that fostering critical consciousness will enhance understanding of the importance of addressing this underrepresentation. Given the current lack of awareness among administrators, the focus of the professional development will be on self-reflection,

heightening awareness, and facilitating change. Over the three days, participants will have the opportunity to collaborate and build connections with each other while reflecting on effective methods to boost enrollment of minoritized students in K-8 GATE programs.

Components of the Professional Development Project

On the first day of the professional development project, administrators will be introduced to and reflect upon implicit bias. This introduction will highlight how existing biases, deficit mindsets, and longstanding traditions have undermined the original intentions of these policies, leading to significant disparities in representation. On the second day, administrators will explore the principles of culturally responsive school leadership, an approach designed to foster equity and inclusivity in educational settings. They will also engage in a preliminary equity audit, utilizing available national and district data to assess the current state of their schools with equity. On the third and final day, administrators will continue the equity audit and begin to develop a 90-Day Plan, ensuring that it aligns closely with the tenets of culturally responsive school leadership and better addresses the needs of all students, particularly those from minoritized backgrounds.

Rationale

In the SWSD, there was a noticeable lack of awareness among administrators regarding how the current identification criteria and practices contributed to the underrepresentation of minoritized students in K-8 GATE programs. I conducted semi-structured interviews with eight district and school administrators to investigate this issue further. The data analysis revealed that these administrators recognized the presence of

systemic biases, largely influenced by individual biases, within the district's practices. Additionally, the majority voiced concerns that the assessments used to identify students for GATE programs were inadequate in fostering diversity.

As a direct outcome of this study, I developed a professional development program to equip administrators with strategies for identifying systemic and individual implicit biases. This initiative aims to empower them to create more equitable learning opportunities for students and ensure GATE program identification processes are inclusive of all students. By addressing these biases, the program seeks to enhance the representation of minoritized students in the district's GATE programs, thereby promoting a diverse and supportive educational environment.

Relying on a mere three days of professional development to effectuate a meaningful transformation within a system that has endured for over a century is unrealistic. Such a brief intervention is unlikely to instigate the comprehensive changes necessary to address entrenched practices and ideologies. Nevertheless, these initial three days of professional development may be foundational in fostering awareness regarding the imperative for change. This preliminary engagement can catalyze dialogue among stakeholders, identify key areas for improvement, and stimulate a collective commitment to ongoing educational initiatives. These early efforts can lay the groundwork for a sustained and multi-faceted approach to systemic reform, providing the necessary momentum to drive long-lasting and impactful changes within the institutional framework.

Review of the Literature

The literature review is a thorough investigation of research on culturally responsive practices in GATE programs and to analyze how these practices can be effectively implemented to bring about institutional changes for educators and administrators in the SWSD and a changing society. By investigating existing literature and successful case studies, this literature review can provide insights into creating more equitable GATE programs that recognize and nurture the diverse talents of all students, particularly those from historically underrepresented backgrounds. Additionally, I sought to identify strategies for professional development that equip educators with the necessary skills to implement culturally responsive practices, fostering an educational environment that supports the academic and social growth of every student in the GATE program.

I conducted a literature search using the Walden University online library and Google Scholar, focusing on several key terms. These included *gifted, gifted and talented education, GATE, culturally responsive school leadership,* and t*eacher professional development*, among others. My search also encompassed concepts related to *equity, policy, practices, implicit bias, strategic planning, deficit mindset, and enhancing leadership effectiveness*.

GATE programs are specialized educational initiatives designed to meet the unique needs of students who demonstrate exceptional abilities or talents in various domains, such as academics, arts, or leadership (Rinn et al., 2022). These programs aim to provide enriched learning experiences, advanced curriculum options, and opportunities

for personal growth, enabling gifted students to reach their full potential. Pearman and McGee (2022) explained that the importance of diversity and inclusion in GATE programs cannot be overstated, as a diverse cohort enriches the learning environment and promotes creative thinking by integrating various perspectives and experiences. Peters (2022) posited that ensuring that GATE programs are accessible to students from different backgrounds, including those from underrepresented and underserved communities, helps to eliminate barriers and fosters equity in education. By embracing diversity, GATE programs can cultivate an innovative, empathetic, and well-rounded educational experience that prepares all students to become engaged and informed global citizens.

Development of Culturally Responsive Practices in GATE Programs

CRSL (Khalifa et al., 2016) involves recognizing and valuing the rich diversity within a school community to create an inclusive and equitable learning environment for all students. This approach emphasizes the importance of cultural competence among school leaders, who must understand their students' and families' backgrounds, experiences, and needs. By fostering relationships built on trust and mutual respect, culturally responsive leaders can implement policies and practices that reflect the cultural identities of their students, improving engagement, academic achievement, and the overall school climate. Such leadership involves ongoing training, reflection, and collaboration with families and community stakeholders to ensure educational experiences are relevant for all learners.

Efforts to bring about change and implement policies that ensure equity in GATE programs rely heavily on the actions of district and school leadership. Researchers like Ford et al. (2020) and Mun et al. (2021) emphasized that leaders who aspire to be culturally responsive must possess an unwavering commitment to establishing equitable policies, procedures, tools, and attitudes. The prevailing issues of cultural deficit perspectives, racism, unequal access to resources, biased standardized assessments, inflexible cutoff scores, and insufficient culturally responsive professional development contribute to the underrepresentation of minoritized students in GATE education (Mun et al. 2021). To address these challenges, initiating policy changes at the district level is essential.

Due to the constraints imposed on educational institutions regarding identifying gifted students by state departments of education and a lack of awareness on the part of practitioners, some school districts have shifted their focus away from qualifying minoritized students for gifted programs. Renzulli and Tsai (2022) indicated that certain districts have focused on offering educational opportunities that align with the abilities of high-achieving minoritized students, aiming to better equip them for potential success in gifted assessments, regardless of the outcome. Hendrix (2022) explicated that some of these limitations of the traditional gifted assessments are rooted in the enduring impact of eugenic ideologies, which have perpetuated the use of racially and ethnically biased frameworks for the identification of giftedness. Consequently, this has led to the underrepresentation of Black/African American, Latinx, and Indigenous students in gifted programs, while White students are disproportionately overrepresented.

To effectively implement equitable approaches to GATE, school administrators must reflect on their biases and definitions of giftedness. This self-examination should be followed by training that helps them recognize how their beliefs and policies may have contributed to existing disparities at the school level. Finally, administrators must support teachers in applying these new policies and practices, with a strong focus on equity in the classroom.

Various authors and educators have discussed the concept of "low-hanging fruit" as potential first steps to tackling equity in GATE programs. However, one notable figure who has addressed this issue is Peters (2022). He emphasized the importance of identifying straightforward and practical changes to make GATE programs more inclusive at the local level. School administrators ought to explore actionable steps to promote equity within their institutions. Some suggestions include redefining the criteria for what constitutes giftedness, screening all students who may benefit from advanced learning opportunities based on school-specific norms, and establishing GATE classes to provide challenges for students who need to be adequately engaged through current services (Peters, 2022).

While tackling these "low-hanging fruit" initiatives does not directly address the underlying issues contributing to the systemic inequities in GATE programs, it represents a crucial first step toward enhancing equity. Adopting a culturally responsive school leadership framework, too, is arguably the most impactful approach to addressing issues of inequity. Campos-Moreira et al. (2020) described the personal actions of school administrators who seek to understand the sociocultural, political, and historical context,

engaging in a distributive leadership style that is inclusive and transformative, and taking actions that lead to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Case Studies and Examples of Successful Practices

To address the shortcomings in the referral, identification, and servicing of GATE students that have led to disparities, researchers have documented successful efforts to increase the representation of minoritized students in GATE programs across various regions. Many schools, districts, and state departments of education have initiated this process by conducting an equity audit of their GATE programs. After completing the audit, they developed plans to implement systemic changes aimed at correcting the inequities identified.

Mun et al. (2021) emphasized the importance of unifying administrators, teachers, and other key stakeholders around a common vision, mission, and goals to enhance the educational system within a school district. The authors highlighted a district that provided culturally responsive professional development for both administrators and staff, integrating it with GATE training. Within their Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and Response to Intervention (RTI) frameworks, school personnel engaged teachers in collaborative learning methods that catered to students needing advanced learning opportunities, while still addressing the needs of those requiring remediation. The school administration initiated targeted efforts to implement program changes through effective and competition-driven policies, reshaping the perceptions of giftedness through professional development. The district adopted a modified two-phase entry system for its gifted program, beginning with universal screening of kindergarten,

followed by formal evaluations of students who were successful on the screener. To promote equitable identification and services, the district aimed to create a system that advocates for underrepresented student groups during the identification process. They adjusted cutoff scores using local norms based on campus demographics, thereby increasing the number of students eligible for consideration. As part of its systematic screening approach, the district maintains a performance watchlist for students in grades K-2 who are close to the cutoff, offering them planned experiences to help build portfolios as an alternative route for identification. This comprehensive reform initiative illustrates that changing nomination and identification practices can effectively combat disproportionality in gifted education.

Reorganizing the district and its personnel involves implementing structures and processes that encourage challenging discussions surrounding race, ethnicity, and language in relation to gifted education. Achieving equity in GATE programs for culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse students requires educators to act with moral conviction and reassess their traditional notions of giftedness, thereby dismantling long-standing beliefs that have led to inequitable practices.

In her study, Hemingway (2022) explored the underrepresentation of English language learners, students from low-income backgrounds, Hispanic/Latinx and Black/African American students in gifted education programs. She noted that teachers often act as gatekeepers due to deficit thinking and a limited understanding of how factors such as cultural differences, socioeconomic status, disabilities, and language barriers adversely affect academic performance. The lack of attention and funding for

gifted and talented education had perpetuated these inequities. Hemingway's research highlighted the crucial need for professional development for educators, encouraging them to view academic scores as just one indicator of giftedness among marginalized students. She urged teachers to expand their definitions of giftedness and adopt universal screening methods that utilize alternative protocols to identify and nurture students with high intellectual and creative potential, irrespective of their backgrounds. Additionally, she proposed the use of rating scales that require teachers to recognize gifted behaviors in all students, moving beyond reliance on IQ scores and allowing for more flexible interpretation of those scores. By adopting these strategies, the aim is to foster an inclusive understanding of giftedness. Overall, rethinking the processes of referral, identification, and retention can significantly enhance the representation of minoritized students in GATE programs.

In their research study, Renzulli and Tsai (2022) presented a fundamentally different strategy for enhancing student achievement that avoids the conventional practice of designating certain students as gifted. Instead, their approach offers a wide array of advanced enrichment experiences to all students. Their research strongly supports broader definitions of talent development, challenging the restrictive selection methods used in previous identification practices. This school-wide talent development model leverages the expertise of gifted programs while ensuring accessibility for all learners. It aims to cultivate the talent potential of numerous minoritized students who have often been limited to only the most basic curricular opportunities. Renzulli and Tsai (2022) described the creation of the Schoolwide Enrichment Model (SEM) that has successfully

integrated advanced-level learning experiences and critical thinking skill development through strategies that increase student effort, enjoyment, and performance.

Factors that Hinder Effective CRSL Implementation

While efforts to reform systems that perpetuate inequity are underway, it is imperative to recognize the necessity of reducing the underrepresentation of minoritized students in GATE programs. Renzulli and Tsai (2022) expound on the implications of the inequities in GATE programs. Beyond the inherent ethical obligation to provide equitable learning experiences that address diverse student needs, which is a matter of fairness and justice, there exists a broader societal imperative: the enhancement of educational outcomes for students nationwide.

The persistent wave of criticism directed at public schools has considerably influenced public receptivity toward investing in education, concomitantly fostering a climate of low morale across all professional levels within the field. This unrelenting scrutiny has resulted in an educational terrain increasingly devoid of professional pride. Politicians are often quick to critique educators for alleged deficiencies, prescribe restrictions on curricular content, and offer directives on pedagogical approaches. They underscore the necessity for a nuanced and cautious treatment of topics related to diversity, equity, and inclusion (Renzulli & Tsai, 2022). Because of this, educators frequently turn to international models to respond to the perceived deficiencies of the American educational system, and it appears that nearly every month witnesses the emergence of new articles or news reports addressing the so-called crisis in educational leadership. While it may be tempting to seek a simplistic or “magical” resolution to these

complex challenges, the reality is that effective leadership aimed at improving schools can only emanate from those individuals directly engaged in the educational process at the local level (Renzulli and Tsai, 2022).

Emergent work that integrates race with organizational theory and improvement perspectives reveals a significant gap in the current discourse on school leadership. Diamond & Gomez (2023) explained that much of the research focusing on leadership for school improvement tends to overlook critical issues related to social justice, particularly those that pertain to anti-racist and culturally responsive frameworks (Diamond & Gomez, 2023). The omission of critical issues related to social justice is problematic as it diminishes the relevance of leadership practices in diverse educational contexts and undermines the potential for genuine reform in schools that serve marginalized communities. By failing to incorporate these essential theoretical frameworks, leaders may inadvertently perpetuate existing inequities rather than challenge and transform them.

In environments increasingly characterized by demographic diversity and social complexity, it is imperative for leadership research to address the multifaceted nature of oppression and privilege. Kozleski & Proffitt (2020) described critical and anti-oppressive educator practices that emphasize the importance of understanding power dynamics and systemic inequities in educational institutions. Leadership that does not engage with these concepts risks prioritizing narrow definitions of improvement that ignore the lived experiences of students and staff from historically marginalized backgrounds. To foster truly inclusive and equitable educational environments, there

must be a concerted effort to blend organizational policies with social justice principles, thereby ensuring that the dialogue around school improvement reflects the realities of all stakeholders. This alignment enhances the effectiveness of leadership strategies and serves as a moral imperative in the pursuit of a just and equitable education system (Diamond & Gomez, 2023). Leaders undertaking the vital task of enhancing education for all encounter a myriad of challenges.

Implementing CRSL often encounters significant challenges, with resistance to change being one of the primary hurdles. This resistance may arise among staff, parents, and even students who are accustomed to traditional approaches to education. Some educators may feel uncertain about adopting new practices that prioritize cultural awareness and responsiveness, viewing the changes as an imposition on their established methods (Ciampa et al., 2022). Additionally, there can be fears surrounding potential backlash from community members who may not fully understand the value of culturally responsive principles. Recognizing these sentiments is essential, as ignoring them can lead to disengagement and undermine the effectiveness of the leadership approach.

Actions to Overcome Barriers to Effective CRSL Implementation

Much of the CRSL transformation requires professional development. Carter et al., (2020) detailed what school administrators should consider. 1. Being realistic about what training can accomplish on its own. 2. Selecting the proper goals for the programs. 3. Deciding how to manage attendee discomfort. 4. Minimizing counterproductive effects of discussing bias. 5. Demonstrating impact.

It is crucial to maintain a realistic understanding of the limitations associated with training alone. To effectively address these challenges, it is important to implement targeted strategies that foster engagement and understanding among all stakeholders involved. A highly effective method is to establish clear and open communication channels, keeping everyone informed about the objectives, goals, and expected benefits of the change (Lomba-Portela et al. 2022). Ciampa et al. (2022) indicated that staff felt comfortable discussing topics such as selecting materials, addressing important classroom issues, and concerns related to the school and community. However, the same staff members expressed discomfort and low confidence when confronting issues of race, racism, implicit bias, White fragility, and meritocracy. It is therefore essential to clarify the goals and advantages for all students when these issues are approached with openness and an equity mindset. Initiatives that can help alleviate concerns and demonstrate the positive impact of such practices on student outcomes represent the work of CRSL (Gooden et al., 2023). Furthermore, establishing dialogue opportunities among educators, such as through professional learning communities, allows individuals to share their experiences and insights. This collaboration fosters an environment where everyone feels that their voice is valued (Lomba-Portela et al., 2022). In addition to conducting school equity audits, school leaders should leverage community-based equity audits to identify the policies, procedures, and practices that perpetuate organizational inequities.

Implementing large-scale reform in education is an intricate and challenging endeavor, often fraught with obstacles. The quest for sustainable change highlights the multifaceted nature of educational systems, where the interplay of various factors can

complicate the process. Acton (2021) wrote that the pursuit of enduring educational reform is akin to navigating a complex ecosystem. It requires resilience, flexibility, and a strategic alignment of goals and resources to create an environment conducive to meaningful change. Without the inclusion of essential elements that address the underrepresentation of minoritized students in GATE programs, the aspirations for meaningful and equitable educational improvement may remain out of reach. This reality underscores the importance of recognizing that true transformation requires more than merely well-meaning initiatives; it calls for a deliberate and strategic approach that comprehensively considers the complexities within the educational setting. To achieve a culturally responsive school environment requires a strategic plan.

Developing a Strategic Plan to Implement Culturally Responsive Practices

To initiate this process, Stanley and Gilzene (2023) recommended assembling a diverse leadership team from within the school, which might include teachers, cafeteria workers, counselors, and other staff members, to develop a strategic plan. This collaborative team will focus on several key objectives: To effectively advance equity and justice within their institution, the stakeholders will embark on a structured, three-step process.

First, they will collaboratively work to establish a shared understanding of equity and justice. This foundational step is crucial as it brings together faculty, staff, and administrators to engage in meaningful dialogue about what equity and justice look like in their specific context. Hauk and Kaser (2024) suggested beginning the dialog with an

equity audit. By fostering open conversations and learning from diverse perspectives, the team will create a common framework that guides their actions moving forward.

Next, with this shared understanding in place, they will strive to prioritize, operationalize and institutionalize equity standards. This involves developing concrete policies and practices aimed at challenging and transforming any existing deficit-based mindsets among faculty and staff that might be driven by data (Bertrand & Marsh 2021). By embedding these equity standards into the institution's culture and daily operations, they will ensure that everyone is aware of the principles of equity and is actively participating in practices that promote inclusivity and justice.

Finally, recognizing that true progress requires a collaborative approach, they will involve parents and the wider community in these discussions and the formulation of plans. This engagement is essential for enhancing mutual understanding and cultivating support for culturally responsive initiatives. By bringing in the voices of parents and community members, the institution will foster a sense of ownership and shared responsibility, leading to effective and sustainable promotion of equity and justice for all. Campos-Moreira et al. (2020) articulated that by promoting an inclusive approach, educational institutions can confront and dismantle systemic inequities, thereby creating an enhanced equitable educational environment.

Monitoring of Culturally Responsive Plan Implementation

Flexibility and continuous reflection are also vital components of successfully implementing culturally responsive practices (Gooden et al, 2023). Leaders should be prepared to adapt their strategies in response to ongoing feedback and challenges

encountered along the way. This may involve revisiting initial plans based on the reactions of staff and students or modifying professional development sessions to better meet the needs of participants. Lomba-Portela et al. (2022) recommended creating a culture of continuous improvement, where taking risks and sharing failures is normalized, addressing resistance, and empowering staff to embrace the principles of cultural responsiveness. By monitoring the implementation of the strategic plan, schools can overcome implementation challenges and ensure that the culturally responsive practices are truly embedded in the fabric of the school community.

Evaluation of Culturally Responsive Plan Implementation

To effectively promote equity in GATE programs, stakeholders must critically examine existing policies and practices that may unintentionally exclude minoritized students. Renzulli and Tsai (2022) contended that modifying a singular component within a broader educational framework may create an illusion of improvement, rather than fostering the enduring and substantive changes essential for enabling all students to achieve their maximum potential. True reform will not take place by addressing the issue of the underrepresentation of minoritized students in GATE alone, but thoughtful equity audits and re-evaluation of identification processes, curriculum accessibility, and support systems is necessary to ensure that minoritized students have equitable opportunities to excel in all programs including GATE, gifted, advanced placement, honors, international baccalaureate, ELL, special education, etc. Achieving lasting change and creating pathways for all learners to thrive in US public schools requires fostering an inclusive

environment that actively addresses barriers within systems, from the school district down to the classroom.

Project Description

My research study centered on the underrepresentation of minoritized students in the GATE program within a specific school district, referred to here as the SWSD, led to the identification of two critical themes that warrant focused attention: the administrative practices employed within the district and the identification process used to evaluate students for GATE eligibility. These themes were found to be interconnected and play a significant role in perpetuating the disparities observed. In response to the findings of my research, I developed a comprehensive professional development project designed to raise awareness and provide actionable strategies for SWSD administrators. This professional development initiative spans three days and aims to equip the administration with a deeper understanding of the systemic barriers that contribute to the inequitable representation of minoritized students in the GATE program. By addressing these themes and fostering an inclusive approach to identification and evaluation, the ultimate goal of this project is to create an equitable educational environment where all students could thrive and receive the support they need to succeed in schools.

Project Evaluation Plan

Before committing time and resources to evaluate a professional learning initiative, it is essential to assess the initiative's alignment with the characteristics of high-quality professional learning as outlined in the literature (Breslow & Bock, 2020). I will first utilize the Professional Learning Design Checklist to evaluate the project's

quality before presenting it to the administrators. This checklist ensures that the content is focused, incorporates active learning, promotes collaboration, utilizes effective practice models, provides coaching and expert support, offers feedback and reflection, and maintains sustained duration. Following each day of professional development, evaluations for the three-day program will be based on Guskey's five critical levels of professional development, as detailed by Breslow and Bock (2020). These levels encompass questions regarding participants' reactions, learning outcomes, organizational support and change, application of new knowledge and skills, and student learning outcomes.

Project Implications

When assessing the effects of the professional development initiative for administrators focusing on bias, culturally responsive leadership, and strategic equity planning, several key areas deserve careful consideration. Stakeholders will engage in specialized training aimed at recognizing both explicit and implicit biases. This initiative seeks to enhance cultural competence among leaders by fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation for the diverse cultural backgrounds of students and their communities.

Moreover, the project will guide stakeholders in performing equity audits to assess the current state of equity within their schools. Analyzing this data and their implications will be crucial for making informed, data-driven decisions. Additionally, the program will integrate strategies for soliciting feedback from staff, students, and families on how policies and practices impact equity.

The potential for transformative change stemming from this professional development initiative on stakeholders' biases, ability to lead with cultural responsiveness, and commitment to equity-centered planning is profound. By enhancing awareness and competencies in these vital areas, schools can advance towards cultivating environments that are genuinely equitable and beneficial for all students. Achieving this vision demands an unwavering dedication to continuous learning and evolution, ensuring that administrative practices are aligned with an inclusive and just educational framework.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Project Strengths and Limitations

I developed a qualitative research study to explore the underrepresentation of minoritized students in K-8 GATE programs within a southwestern school district. It was crucial to anchor the findings in the relevant literature. A key strength of the study was the qualitative interviews conducted with administrators, which added context and depth to the quantitative data they analyzed. Integrating qualitative data enrich the understanding of the complexities within educational environments that may not be captured by quantitative measures alone.

By focusing on the perceptions of district and school administrators, the study reveals significant insights into the institutional practices and policies that affect GATE participation. Understanding the attitudes and beliefs of those involved in educational decision-making is essential for addressing equity issues in gifted education. Identifying limited cultural awareness among administrators reflects findings that systemic biases can contribute to the underrepresentation of minoritized groups in GATE programs. By highlighting these barriers, the study elucidates areas that may require reform and guides future policies to enhance inclusivity. Additionally, the emphasis on involving diverse stakeholders in GATE processes reinforces the necessity of community engagement in creating equitable educational opportunities. This perspective is supported by advancements in culturally responsive pedagogy, which advocated for integrating community insights to better connect educational systems with the experiences of minoritized students.

A limitation of the study is that the findings from a single southwestern school district may not apply to other districts or regions with different demographics, cultures, or governance structures. Educational systems are highly contextual, so the specific challenges identified in this district may not represent the broader issues of GATE underrepresentation in diverse settings. Additionally, the reliance on administrators' perceptions could introduce bias, as self-reported data may be influenced by the tendency to provide socially acceptable responses. This raises concerns about the accuracy of the insights gathered in the interviews regarding the actual practices and beliefs within the district.

While the study effectively highlighted administrators' perspectives, it overlooked the voices of minoritized students and their families, which are essential for a complete understanding of the obstacles encountered in GATE programs. Incorporating student and family viewpoints can create a comprehensive picture of the educational experience and lead to more equitable and representative data. Furthermore, despite acknowledging the need for change and the significance of community involvement, the study does not address the practical aspects of implementing these recommendations within the district. Systemic change frequently faces resistance due to established policies and existing practices. Therefore, while the study identifies key issues and potential strategies, it may not offer concrete actions for enacting change.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

Addressing the underrepresentation of minoritized students in GATE programs necessitates a comprehensive approach that addresses the multifaceted nature of the issue

and considers alternative definitions and solutions. Insights from conversations with administrators reveal that this underrepresentation is not merely a numbers problem; it represents systemic inequities in access to enrichment opportunities. Schools must look beyond GATE program metrics and examine more extensive systemic barriers, such as resource allocation and support services. Cultural biases in identification processes and curricula often fail to acknowledge diverse forms of intelligence and potential, underscoring the importance of implementing culturally responsive teaching and assessment methods that celebrate the strengths and talents of all students. Furthermore, community disengagement in the GATE identification process, coupled with limited awareness of the program's benefits, highlighted the need for enhanced collaboration with families and communities to promote understanding and engagement in GATE opportunities.

Alternative solutions to this issue include using assessments that recognize various types of intelligence, such as creativity and problem-solving skills that align with cultural contexts of multiple languages and varied lived experiences. Schools can create multiple pathways for identifying giftedness, incorporating teacher recommendations, parent nominations, and peer evaluations rather than relying solely on standardized tests. Training programs to increase teachers' understanding of cultural diversity and implicit biases can also help reshape perceptions about student potential. Additionally, implementing co-teaching strategies that involve both general and gifted education teachers can further nurture diverse classroom potential. Educational initiatives designed to inform families in minoritized communities about GATE benefits and application

processes can help dispel misconceptions. Collaborating with community organizations to host engaging workshops, mentoring relationships between current GATE and minoritized students, and after-school programs that focus on skill-building can foster an inclusive environment. Continuous assessment of GATE demographics, student performance, and feedback mechanisms involving students, parents, and teachers will ensure that underrepresentation challenges are effectively addressed. By applying these definitions and solutions, school districts can work towards inclusive and equitable educational frameworks that empowers all students to realize their potential.

Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change

Throughout this quantitative study's research and development process, a profound understanding of the systemic issues surrounding the underrepresentation of minoritized students in GATE emerged. The gathering of qualitative data through structured interviews with district and school administrators allowed for an in-depth exploration of their perceptions regarding the current practices and identification criteria utilized within the SWSD. This methodological approach illuminated the dynamics at play, facilitating a comprehensive analysis of the barriers that impede minoritized students' equitable access to GATE programs.

Reflectively, the journey of conducting this research has catalyzed a significant evolution in my own development as a scholar, practitioner, and project developer. Engaging deeply with the narratives of administrators has reinforced my understanding of the complexities of educational equity. As a scholar, I have cultivated the analytical skills necessary to synthesize qualitative data and discern underlying themes that inform

educational practices. This analysis process has nurtured a critical lens through which I view educational systems, prompting an ongoing commitment to advocating for policies that promote inclusivity. As a practitioner, the findings of this study have galvanized my resolve to engage in collaborative efforts to dismantle systemic barriers within educational settings. Recognizing the pivotal role that cultural awareness plays in shaping administrative practices serves as a reminder of educators' responsibility to foster inclusive environments. This realization compels me to seek opportunities for professional growth and community engagement, ensuring that a diverse range informs my practice of voices and perspectives.

In my capacity as a project developer, the insights gained from this research have provided a framework for designing interventions that are both equitable and responsive to the needs of minoritized students. Understanding the importance of incorporating community perspectives in developing GATE programs has encouraged me to adopt a participatory approach. This endeavor necessitates building authentic partnerships with communities to ensure that the initiatives designed reflect the aspirations and cultural contexts of all students.

Reflection on the Importance of the Work

The qualitative research study conducted in a SWSD underscores the critical importance of addressing the systemic underrepresentation of minoritized students in K-8 GATE programs, revealing valuable insights that can drive meaningful change. The findings indicate that the SWSD administrators' limited cultural awareness has historically contributed to the exclusion of these students from GATE programs, prompting a needed acknowledgment of their biases and blind spots. Furthermore, it became clear that incorporating community perspectives and

engaging diverse stakeholders is essential to fostering inclusive environments that provide equitable access to GATE opportunities. Additionally, the study highlighted the necessity for SWSD administrators to reevaluate traditional practices regarding the preparation, selection, and communication strategies for GATE participation, suggesting that transformative change is possible through conscious reflection and collaboration. Overall, this research sheds light on the barriers faced by minoritized students in GATE and offers a pathway toward creating an equitable educational experience, emphasizing the importance of cultural competence and community involvement in addressing disparities.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

The findings from the qualitative research study examining the underrepresentation of minoritized students in K-8 GATE programs within the SWSD hold significant potential for positive social change across multiple levels: individual, family, organizational, and societal/policy. At the individual level, increased cultural awareness among SWSD administrators can lead to more equitable treatment of minoritized students, empowering these learners to excel in their academic pursuits. Families of minoritized students may experience enhanced engagement and support as schools prioritize their voices, fostering a home-school partnership that nurtures student potential. Organizationally, the identified need to incorporate community perspectives and involve diverse stakeholders in GATE processes can lead to the development of more inclusive policies, ensuring that all students have access to GATE opportunities. By reevaluating traditional selection and communication methods, schools can create pathways to recognize and celebrate diverse talents, thereby dismantling existing barriers to entry into GATE programs. On a broader societal and policy level, these insights can

inform systemic reforms in educational practices, prompting districts statewide—and potentially nationwide—to adopt more inclusive frameworks that challenge historical inequities. This could lead to policy changes prioritizing culturally responsive education, ensuring that minoritized students are represented and supported in GATE programs. These changes could contribute to a just and equitable educational landscape where every student could thrive, thereby fostering a generation of diverse leaders and innovators.

Based on the qualitative research on the underrepresentation of minoritized students in K-8 GATE programs within the SWSD, several future research recommendations arise. First, conduct longitudinal studies to assess the impact of changes in cultural awareness, community engagement, and selection processes. Second, explore the perceptions and experiences of minoritized students and their families regarding the GATE selection process. Third, perform comparative studies between districts with differing success in representation. Fourth, evaluate the effects of community engagement initiatives on GATE accessibility. Fifth, investigate the effectiveness of cultural competence training for educators. Sixth, analyze existing policies governing GATE selection and propose equity-focused reforms. Finally, engage in interdisciplinary research to holistically address these systemic issues. Collectively, these recommendations aim to enhance understanding of barriers to access and support the development of equitable interventions for minoritized students in GATE programs.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this qualitative research study illuminated the issue of the underrepresentation of minoritized students in K-8 GATE programs within a SWSD, highlighting the existing gaps and potential pathways for transformative change. Through in-depth interviews with administrators, three themes emerged: the critical need for enhanced cultural awareness among educators, the necessity for inclusive and transparent selection processes, and the powerful impact of community engagement in uplifting minoritized voices. These findings challenge the education community to dismantle systemic barriers and reimagine a GATE program that is truly reflective of and accessible to all students.

The findings will be disseminated through a multi-faceted approach to facilitate meaningful change. This will include presentations in the SWSD and collaboration with local educational organizations to share best practices. Additionally, workshops and professional development sessions will be offered to educators and administrators to foster cultural awareness and implement inclusive practices. The research aimed to galvanize collective efforts toward systemic change in GATE by actively engaging stakeholders and promoting dialogue around these critical issues. At this critical juncture, there exists an opportunity and an obligation to advocate for policies and practices that prioritize equity and inclusion. Ensuring every student has access to the necessary resources and support to reach their full potential is imperative. The urgency for action is clear; a commitment to systemic change that empowers, embraces, and elevates every learner is essential.

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Appendix A: 3-Day Professional Development

School & District Administrator Training	
Meeting Agenda	**Day 1 – Implicit Bias**

Collective Agreements
• Take risks. Try new things. Be bold. • Invest your presence. • Advocate for all students. • Tackle problems. Bring solutions. Share ideas. • Seek and receive feedback with an open mind. • Respect everyone's time. Stay focused on the topic at hand.

Topic	**Facilitator**	**Time**
Welcome & Collective Commitments *Desired Outcome: Administrators will review collective agreements and watch a video introducing Equity.* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-zSbx6eG6vw	Facilitator	9:00-9:10 *10 mins*
Implicit Bias Introduction *Desired outcome: Administrators will be introduced to implicit bias training and workbook.* https://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/implicit-bias-module-series	Facilitator	9:10-9:20 *10 mins*
Module 1: Understanding Implicit Bias • Closing • Scenario Workbook • Lesson 1: What is Implicit Bias? • Module 1: Recap and Quiz	Facilitator & Participants	*9:20-9:50* *30 mins*
Module 2: Real World Implications • Additional Resources • Lesson 2: Implicit Bias in Action • Lesson 2: Implicit Bias in School Discipline • Lesson 3: Access and Evaluation • Lesson 4: Implicit Bias and Structural Racism • Module 2: Recap and Quiz	Facilitator & Participants	*9:55-10:55* *60 mins*
Module 3: Understanding Your Own Biases • Lesson 3: Origins of Our Bias • Lesson 1: How do We Measure Our Implicit Associations? • Lesson 2: What is the IAT? • Lesson 3: Learn Your Biases (IAT) • Lesson 4: Understanding Your Results • Module 3: Recap and Quiz	Facilitator & Participants	10:55-11:55 *60 minutes*
Lunch	Facilitator & Participants	12:00-1:00 *60 mins*

Module 4: Mitigating Unwanted Biases • Lesson 1: Implicit Bias in Academic Achievement • Lesson 2: Identifying Susceptibility to Unwanted Bias • Lesson 3: Individual Interventions • Lesson 4: Institutional Interventions • Lesson 1: Implicit Bias in Academic Achievement • Module 4: Recap and Quiz	Facilitator & Participants	*1:00-2:00* *60 mins*
Module 5: Certificate Test • Final Thoughts • Lesson 1: Our Brains are Malleable	Facilitator & Participants	*2:05-2:50* *45 mins*
Recap of Day 1 & Looking Ahead to Day 2 **Implicit Bias: Survey**		*2:50-3:00* *10 mins*

School & District Administrator Training	
Meeting Agenda	**Day 2 – Culturally Responsive School Leadership**

Collective Agreements
• Take risks. Try new things. Be bold. • Invest your presence. • Advocate for all students. • Tackle problems. Bring solutions. Share ideas. • Seek and receive feedback with an open mind. • Respect everyone's time. Stay focused on the topic at hand.

Topic	Facilitator	Time
Welcome & Collective Commitments *Desired Outcome: Administrators will review collective agreements and watch a video about equity.* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-zSbx6eG6vw	Facilitator	*9:00-9:10* *10 minutes*
Culturally Responsive School Leadership Introduction *Desired outcome: Administrators will be introduced to the framework of culturally responsive school leadership in a jigsaw activity.* **Appendix: Culturally Responsive School Leadership Framework**	Facilitator	*9:10-9:40* *10 minutes*
Dr. Muhammed Khalifa – Keynote Introduction to CRSL *Desired outcome: Administrators will be introduced Dr. Muhammed Khalifa's framework of CRSL.* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t3ad-g6COIY Table Reflections: What part of the presentation resonated with you?	Facilitator & Participants	*9:40-10:45* *45 minutes*
10 Minute Break	Participants	*10:25-10:35* *10 minutes*
Understanding School Equity Audits *Desired outcome: Administrators understand the components of the Equity Audit and the sources of data.* **Appendix: Equity Literacy**	Facilitator & Participants	*10:35-11:30* *55 minutes*
Lunch	Facilitator & Participants	*11:30-12:30* *60 minutes*
Conduct Equity Audit on Your School *Desired outcome: Administrators will continue to conduct equity audits and share findings.*	Facilitator & Participants	*12:30-2:50*
Recap of Day 2 & Looking Ahead to Day 3 **Culturally Responsive School Leadership: Survey**		*2:50-3:00*

Meeting Agenda	**Day 3 – Cultural Diversity, Equity Audit & 90 Day Plan**

Collective Agreements
• Take risks. Try new things. Be bold. • Invest your presence. • Advocate for all students. • Tackle problems. Bring solutions. Share ideas. • Seek and receive feedback with an open mind. • Respect everyone's time. Stay focused on the topic at hand.

Topic	**Facilitator**	**Time**
Welcome & Collective Commitments *Desired Outcome: Administrators will review collective agreements and watch a video about brain research on equity.* TED Talk - Diversity Does Not Matter - Equity Does	Facilitator	*9:00-9:10* *10 minutes*
Continue Conduct Equity Audit on Your School *Desired outcome: Administrators will continue to conduct equity audits and share findings.* *BREAK at participants' discretion*	Facilitator	*9:10-11:00* *110 minutes*
Why Cultural Diversity Matters *Desired outcome: Understand the concept of cultural diversity and its significance in schools.* TED Talk - Why Cultural Diversity Matters Table Reflections: What are some practical strategies that individuals and organizations can implement to actively promote cultural diversity and inclusion, and how might these strategies impact innovation and social cohesion? Table Talk & Share	Facilitator & Participants	*11:00-11:30* *30 minutes*
Lunch	Facilitator & Participants	*11:30-12:30* *60 minutes*
School 90 Day Plan *Desired outcome: Administrators will create a plan aligned with CRSL that can serve as a roadmap for meaningful change.*	Facilitator & Participants	*12:30-2:50*
Recap of Day 3 **Cultural Diversity, Equity Audit & 90 Day Plan: Survey**		*2:50-3:00*

Appendix B: Handout – Culturally Responsive School Leadership Framework

CRSL INSTITUTE | Culturally Responsive School Leadership

Culturally Responsive School Leadership Framework

Critically Self-Reflects on Leadership Behaviors

- **Is committed to continuous learning of cultural knowledge and contexts** (Gardiner & Enomoto, 2006)
- **Displays a critical consciousness on practice in and out of school; displays self-reflection** (Gooden & Dantley, 2012; Johnson, 2006)
- **Uses school data and indicants to measure CRSL** (Skrla, Scheurich, Garcia, & Nolly, 2004)
- **Uses parent/community voices to measure cultural responsiveness in schools** (Ishimaru, 2013; Smyth, 2006)
- **Challenges Whiteness and hegemonic epistemologies in school** (Theoharis & Haddix, 2011)
- **Using equity audits to measure student inclusiveness, policy, and practice** (Skrla et al., 2004)
- **Leading with courage** (Khalifa, 2011; Nee-Benham, Maenette, & Cooper, 1988)
- **Is a transformative leader for social justice and inclusion?** (Alston, 2005; Gooden, 2005; Gooden & O'Doherty, 2015; Shields, 2010)

Develops Culturally Responsive Teachers

- **Developing teacher capacities for culturally responsive pedagogy** (Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2000; Voltz, Brazil, & Scott, 2003)
- **Collaborative walkthroughs** (Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012)
- **Creating culturally responsive PD opportunities for teachers** (Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2000; Voltz et al., 2003)
- **Using school data to see cultural gaps in achievement, discipline, enrichment, and remedial services** (Skrla et al., 2004)
- **Creating a CRSL team that is charged with constantly finding new ways for teachers to be culturally responsive** (Gardiner & Enomoto, 2006)
- **Engaging/reforming the school curriculum to become more culturally responsive** (Sleeter, 2012; Villegas & Lucas, 2002)
- **Modeling culturally responsive teaching** (Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012)
- **Using culturally responsive assessment tools for students** (Hopson, 2001; Kea, Campbell- Whatley, & Bratton, 2003)

Promotes Culturally Responsive/Inclusive School Environment

- **Accepting indigenized, local identities** (Khalifa, 2010)
- **Building relationships; reducing anxiety among students** (Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012)
- **Modeling CRSL for staff in building interactions** (Khalifa, 2011; Tillman, 2005)
- **Promoting a vision for an inclusive instructional and behavioral practices** (Gardiner & Enomoto, 2006; Webb- Johnson, 2006; Webb-Johnson & Carter, 2007)
- **If need be, challenging exclusionary policies, teachers, and behaviors** (Khalifa, 2011; Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012)
- **Acknowledges, values, and uses Indigenous cultural and social capital of students** (Khalifa, 2010, 2012)
- **Uses student voice** (Antrop-González, 2011; Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012)
- **Using school data to discover and track disparities in academic and disciplinary trends** (Skiba et al., 2002; Skrla et al., 2004; Theoharis, 2007)

Engages Students, Parents, and Indigenous Contexts

- **Developing meaningful, positive relationships with community** (Gardiner & Enomoto, 2006; Johnson, 2006; Walker, 2001)
- **Is a servant leader, as public intellectual and other roles** (Alston, 2005; Gooden, 2005; Johnson, 2006)
- **Finding overlapping spaces for school and community** (Cooper, 2009; Ishimaru, 2013; Khalifa, 2012)
- **Serving as advocate and social activist for community- based causes in both the school and neighborhood community** (Capper, Hafner, & Keyes, 2002; Gooden, 2005; Johnson, 2006; Khalifa, 2012)
- (Gardiner & Enomoto, 2006)
- **Resists deficit images of students and families** (Davis, 2002; Flessa, 2009)
- **Uses the community as an informative space from which to develop positive understandings of students and families**
- **Nurturing/caring for others; sharing information** (Gooden, 2005; Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012)
- **Connecting directly with students** (Gooden, 2005; Khalifa, 2012; Lomotey, 1993)

Muhammad Khalifa, Ohio State University | Mark Anthony Gooden, Columbia University | James Earl Davis, Temple University

Appendix C: Handout – Equity Literacy

The Equity Literacy Institute is an EdChange initiative.
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Equity Literacy for Educators: Definition and Abilities

Equity literacy is a framework for cultivating the knowledge and skills that enable us to be **a threat to the existence of inequity** in our spheres of influence. More than cultural competence or diversity awareness, equity literacy prepares us to see even subtle ways in which access and opportunity are distributed unfairly across race, class, gender identity, sexual orientation, (dis)ability, language, and other factors. By recognizing and deeply understanding these conditions, we are prepared to respond to inequity in transformational ways in the immediate term. We also strengthen our ability to foster longer-term change by redressing the bigger institutional and societal conditions that produce the everyday manifestations of inequity.

We built the equity literacy framework after careful consideration of the strengths and limitations of existing frameworks for attending to diversity in schools and other organizations and systems. We were particularly concerned with popular approaches like "cultural competence" and their vague focus on "culture." These approaches mask the inequities that cause educational disparities. Equitable educators should be proficient not only with cultural knowledge, but also with the knowledge and skills to ensure and advocate for equity.

Abilities	Examples of Associated Knowledge and Skills
1. Ability to ***Recognize*** even the subtlest biases and inequities	**Equity literate educators**: • notice subtle bias in learning materials and classroom interactions; • show curiosity about ways school policy and practice might disadvantage some students in unintentional (or intentional) ways; and • reject deficit views that outcome inequalities (like test score disparities) are the result of the cultures or mindsets of students of color, students experiencing poverty, or other marginalized-identity students.
2. Ability to ***Respond to*** biases and inequities in the immediate term	**Equity literate educators**: • develop the facilitation skills and content knowledge necessary to intervene effectively when biases or inequities arise in a classroom or school; • cultivate in students the ability to analyze bias and inequity in classroom materials, classroom interactions, and school policies; and • foster conversations with colleagues about equity concerns in their schools.
3. Ability to ***Redress*** biases and inequities in the long term	**Equity literate educators**: • advocate against inequitable school practices like racially or economically biased tracking and advocate for equitable practices. • never confuse *celebrating diversity* with *equity*, such as by responding to racial conflict with cultural celebrations; and • teach about sexism, poverty, racism, ableism, transphobia, and heterosexism.
4. Ability to ***Create and Sustain*** bias-free and equitable classrooms, schools, and institutional cultures	**Equity literate educators**: • express high expectations for through higher-order pedagogies; • consider how they assign homework and communicate with families, understanding that students have different levels of access to resources like computers and the Internet; and • prioritize consideration of the needs, challenges, and barriers experienced by students who are from marginalized groups in each discussion and each decision about classroom, school, or district policy and practice.

by Paul Gorski for EdChange and the Equity Literacy Institute. Revised November 26, 2017.

Appendix D: 3-Day Professional Development Surveys

Day 1 - Implicit Bias Professional Development Survey

	Strongly Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Neutral 3	Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5
1.The materials made sense	○	○	○	○	○
2. I acquired the intended knowledge	○	○	○	○	○
3. Sufficient resources made available	○	○	○	○	○
4. I can apply the new skills in my workspace	○	○	○	○	○
5. This training will influence student performance	○	○	○	○	○

Day 2 – Culturally Responsive School Leadership Professional Development Survey

	Strongly Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Neutral 3	Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5
1.The materials made sense	○	○	○	○	○
2. I acquired the intended knowledge	○	○	○	○	○
3. Sufficient resources made available	○	○	○	○	○
4. I can apply the new skills in my workspace	○	○	○	○	○
5. This training will influence student performance	○	○	○	○	○

Day 3 – Cultural Diversity, Equity Audit & 90 Day Plan Development Survey

	Strongly Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Neutral 3	Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5
1.The materials made sense	○	○	○	○	○
2. I acquired the intended knowledge	○	○	○	○	○
3. Sufficient resources made available	○	○	○	○	○
4. I can apply the new skills in my workspace	○	○	○	○	○
5. This training will influence student performance	○	○	○	○	○

Appendix E: School Equity Audit

Equity & Excellence in Southwestern School District

OVERVIEW: School Equity Snapshot

Equity and excellence in education is defined as fair and just opportunity to learn through **access** to high quality programming, high quality teachers, distribution of **funding**, just **discipline** procedures, and measures of **achievement**. **Teacher** demographics should align with student demographics. These five components are captured in this template to provide a snapshot of a school or district in relation to representational distribution of populations. Schools strive to be equitable by having representative distribution of populations by gender, race, language, ability, and socio-economic status.

This template uses the theoretical framework of the equity audit by Linda Skrla and others along with publicly accessible data bases. Key among these is the national Office of Civil Rights 2020-21 District and School Reports and 2020-2021 data available on the Southwestern State Department of Education ESSA Dashboard. Like all data, it has its limitations, and we can argue the accuracy of reporting structures, however, the data and comparisons within a school or district and across districts create openings for examination of our practices and opportunities to question if we could improve our practice to better serve ALL STUDENTS.

School Equity Snapshot – USING THIS TEMPLATE

- Achievement and Funding Data are available from Southwestern School District https://ivisions.tylerhost.net/. In the school level overview % proficient may be disaggregated by subgroups for the last 3 years on the Fastbridge and DnA data. Funding data are available in the per pupil spending tab at the district level.

- Access and Discipline data are available Office of Civil Rights School/District Search. The data examine racial representation in GATE programs, honors programs, ELL and Spec ED and well as racial representation in discipline, suspensions, and expulsions. Follow the grey instructions: https://civilrightsdata.ed.gov/

Databases:
https://civilrightsdata.ed.gov/
Southwestern School District Data Warehouse

Equity & Excellence in Southwestern School District

INTERPRETING EQUITY AUDIT DATA

Paul Gorski's social justice framework for **Equity Literacy** calls on educators to

1. Recognize biases and inequities
2. Respond in immediate term
3. Redress biases in long term
4. Create and Sustain bias-free and equitable learning environment

The Equity Audit model helps us to Recognize Opportunity Gaps – discrepancies in funding, access, and discipline that lead to achievement gaps. Use the following questions to examine your school's equity audit data with a lens of responding to inequities and creating solutions for building an equitable learning environment.

1. Where do you see (recognize) balanced representation and where do you see racial, gender, or SES discrepancies in access (enrollment in programs – GATE, Spec Ed, AP), discipline procedures, funding, and achievement?
2. Give a deficit model explanation for these discrepancies.
3. Give a critical structural model explanation for these discrepancies.
4. Using the critical structural model explanation – brainstorm possible strategies to respond and redress the discrepancies.

Equity & Excellence in Southwestern School District

ACHIEVEMENT: [NAME] School Equity Snapshot

Use Southwestern School District Data Warehouse

ELA	%
All Students	
Native American/ Alaskan Native	
Asian	
Black/African American	
Hispanic	
White	
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	
Multiple Ethnicities	

Math	%
All Students	
Native American/ Alaskan Native	
Asian	
Black/African American	
Hispanic	
White	
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	
Multiple Ethnicities	

Equity & Excellence in Southwestern School District

ACCESS: [NAME] School Equity Snapshot
[https://civilrightsdata.ed.gov/ → ADD school & state and click search → Click School]
If looking for District info, make sure you are in District Search mode (click button in upper right corner).

SCHOOL ENROLLMENT	%	GATE ENROLLMENT	%	HONORS ENROLLMENT	%	PRESCHOOL ENROLLMENT	%
All Students		All Students		All Students		All Students	
Native American/ Alaskan Native		Native American/ Alaskan Native		Native American/ Alaskan Native		Native American/ Alaskan Native	
Asian		Asian		Asian		Asian	
Black/African American		Black/African American		Black/African American		Black/African American	
Hispanic		Hispanic		Hispanic		Hispanic	
White		White		White		White	
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	
Multiple Ethnicities		Multiple Ethnicities		Multiple Ethnicities		Multiple Ethnicities	

Equity & Excellence in Southwestern School District

FUNDING: [NAME] School Equity Snapshot
Funding Data are available from Southwestern School District https://ivisions.tylerhost.net.

FUNDING SOURCE	$	PERSONNEL SPENDING	NON-PERSONNEL SPENDING
TOTAL FUNDING			
MAINTENANCE & OPERATIONS FUNDS			
CAPITAL FUNDS			
EXTRA-CURRICULAR TAX CREDIT FUNDS			
DISCRETIONARY FUNDS			
TITLE I FUNDS			
OTHER			

Equity & Excellence in Southwestern School District

DISCIPLINE: [NAME] School Equity Snapshot
[https://civilrightsdata.ed.gov/ → ADD school & state and click search → Click School]
If looking for District info, make sure you are in District Search mode (click button in upper right corner).
Discipline - demographic representation in suspensions and expulsions from 2017 as reported to Office of Civil Rights

SCHOOL ENROLLMENT	%	IN-SCHOOL SUSPENSIONS	%	OUT-OF-SCHOOL SUSPENSIONS	%	PRESCHOOL ENROLLMENT	%
All Students		All Students		All Students		All Students	
Native American/ Alaskan Native		Native American/ Alaskan Native		Native American/ Alaskan Native		Native American/ Alaskan Native	
Asian		Asian		Asian		Asian	
Black/African American		Black/African American		Black/African American		Black/African American	
Hispanic		Hispanic		Hispanic		Hispanic	
White		White		White		White	
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	
Multiple Ethnicities		Multiple Ethnicities		Multiple Ethnicities		Multiple Ethnicities	

Equity & Excellence in Southwestern School District

TEACHING STAFF: [NAME] School Equity Snapshot

STUDENT ENROLLMENT	#	%	TEACHING STAFF	#	%
All Students			All Students		
Native American/ Alaskan Native			Native American/ Alaskan Native		
Asian			Asian		
Black/African American			Black/African American		
Hispanic			Hispanic		
White			White		
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander			Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		
Multiple Ethnicities			Multiple Ethnicities		

Appendix F: 90 Day Plan

Steps to Address the Inequity
Step 1: Create a committee of relevant stakeholders.
Step 2: Present the data to the committee and have everyone graph the data.
Step 3: Discuss the meaning of the data, possible use of experts, led by a facilitator.
Step 4: Discuss the potential solutions, possible use of experts, led by a facilitator.
Step 5: Create 90 Day Plan to address inequity
Step 6: Implement solution(s).
Step 7: Monitor and evaluate results
Step 8: Celebrate if successful: if not successful, return to step 3 and repeat the process.

[Name) School 90-Day Plan

Principal: _____ **Date**: _____

The 90-Day Plan serves as a road map that provides clarity to specific priorities and actions that are most important during the next 90 days. The plan will help ensure the focus of all stakeholders toward an aligned understanding of the implementation and progress of our school's TRANSFORMATION initiative.

Current Reality	Root Cause(s)	SMART Goal

Month:

Week	Date	Critical Action Step	Person(s) Responsible	Timeline/ Due Date	Resources / Support Needed	Progress Indicator(s)
1						
2						
3						
4						

Month:

Week	Date	Critical Action Step	Person(s) Responsible	Timeline/ Due Date	Resources / Support Needed	Progress Indicator(s)
1						
2						
3						
4						

Month:

Week	Date	Critical Action Step	Person(s) Responsible	Timeline/ Due Date	Resources / Support Needed	Progress Indicator(s)
1						
2						
3						
4						

Appendix G: Semistructured Interview Questions

These semistructured interview questions were created with the CRSL framework as a guiding principle.

1. Cultural Awareness and Sensitivity:

a. How do you define "minoritized students" within the context of our school district?

b. In what ways do you believe cultural factors influence the identification process for GATE programs?

2. Equity and Access:

a. What criteria are currently used for identifying students for the GATE program at SWSD?

b. How do you perceive the effectiveness of these criteria in identifying and supporting minoritized students?

c. What barriers, if any, do you think exist for minoritized students in accessing and participating in the GATE program?

3. Bias and Fairness:

a. In your opinion, are there any biases inherent in the current identification criteria for GATE programs?

b. What strategies do you think could be implemented to mitigate bias and increase the representation of minoritized students in GATE programs?

4. Community Engagement:

a. How do you involve parents and community members in the GATE

identification process?

b. Are there any community-specific factors that influence the identification of minoritized students for GATE programs?

c. How can partnerships with community organizations support the identification and inclusion of minoritized students in GATE?

5. Continuous Improvement:

a. How often are the identification criteria and processes for GATE programs reviewed and updated?

b. What efforts are made to gather feedback from stakeholders, including students, parents, and teachers, regarding the effectiveness of the identification criteria?

c. In what ways do you envision improving the identification process to better serve minoritized students?

6. Cultural Awareness and Sensitivity:

a. How would you describe the cultural diversity within our school district, particularly among students identified as minoritized?

b. In what ways do you believe cultural factors influence student participation in GATE programs?

c. How do you ensure that GATE program practices are culturally responsive and inclusive of diverse student populations?

7. Equity and Access:

a. What current practices are in place for identifying and selecting students for

participation in GATE programs?

b. How do you perceive the effectiveness of these practices in identifying and supporting minoritized students?

c. What barriers, if any, do you think exist for minoritized students in accessing and participating in GATE programs?

8. Bias and Fairness:

a. In your opinion, are there any biases present in the current practices for identifying students for GATE programs?

b. How do you address potential biases in GATE program practices to ensure fairness and equity?

c. What strategies do you think could be implemented to mitigate bias and increase the representation of minoritized students in GATE programs?

9. Community Engagement:

a. How do you involve parents and community members in the GATE program practices and decision-making processes?

b. Do any community-specific factors influence minoritized students' participation

in GATE programs?

c. How can partnerships with community organizations support efforts to address underrepresentation in GATE programs?

10. Continuous Improvement:

a. How often are the practices and procedures for GATE programs reviewed and

evaluated?

b. What efforts are made to gather feedback from stakeholders, including students, parents, and teachers, regarding the effectiveness of GATE program practices?

c. In what ways do you envision improving GATE program practices to serve minoritized students better?