

Supporting Diverse Advanced Learners

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD) gifted students

CLD students are students who are not part of the dominant culture and/or do not speak the dominant language in a certain area. For example, a student would be classified as CLD if English is not their first language. A student might also be classified as CLD if her culture and/or race are not closely related to the dominant culture. These students are typically underrepresented in gifted education.

To grasp why this is true, the history of intelligence testing must be understood. One of the most used methods for identifying gifted students is intelligence testing. However, intelligence testing has historically been based on a white, middle class population. The idea of intelligence testing has existed since the late 1800s. The first intelligence test was created in 1895; however, it took almost 100 years for an intelligence test to be normed to a population including people of color. Because of the way these tests have been written and normed in this way, there is a great chance that test items present cultural bias. In other words, the test items are based on the Caucasian, middle class experience. Students who do not have this experience are at a disadvantage.

CLD students are at great risk emotionally for many reasons. It is more likely that students will experience anxiety for a few reasons. One reason is the language of tests. Most tests are written in Standard English, which may not be spoken at home. This makes it more likely that a student will not understand the test instructions, or what a question is asking. Students are also likely to experience anxiety due to stereotype threat. This means that a student will be concerned that a negative score or other negative performance will confirm a stereotype about

the group of which they are a part. On the other hand, students may feel pressure from their peers to act in a certain way that “conforms to their culture.”

CLD students are also at great emotional risk because they show their giftedness in different ways than what the dominant culture expects. Some of these characteristics are viewed negatively, which can cause students to remain unidentified and reduce their self-esteem. For example, curiosity is shown in the dominant culture through asking questions and staying on task. However, gifted CLD students may feel that asking questions is rude, or may want to ask questions to elicit shock or disgust. A teacher may see these traits as undesirable when they are actually a display of a student’s giftedness. Students may be disciplined for such behaviors, causing them to feel badly about themselves.

Teachers have many options to alleviate some of these issues. Some options are explained below:

- Multiple, culturally sensitive identification criteria
 - Schools must use multiple criteria to identify gifted students. Student interviews, work samples, and other valid/reliable assessments will show students’ strengths. Many CLD-appropriate assessments can be used as part of gifted identification criteria. For example, the Hispanic Bilingual Screening Instrument can be used to identify gifted elementary students using characteristics that are focused on Hispanic culture.
- Continual access to advanced curriculum
 - CLD students need instruction that blends the best practices of gifted, multicultural, and bilingual education. This means that students should receive any necessary accommodations. For example, if a student does not understand

English well, they should receive language accommodations. Students should be taught mnemonic devices, and test-taking strategies to help them understand the language of tests.

- Provide support for CLD students

- o CLD students should have support programs available to them at their schools.

These programs will help students to develop healthy coping strategies, help them along their journey to acceptance of their gifted abilities, provide tools to deal with negative peer pressure and anxiety, and become more resilient people.

Effective programs include: gender-specific mentoring, culturally specific mentoring, and small group sessions run by counselors. Students may also need support in taking tests. Explicitly teaching testing language and test-taking strategies will improve students' understanding of the test instructions, which will improve test performance and therefore, reduce test anxiety. Explicitly teaching relaxation techniques will also help students combat their stress anxiety.

- Become more culturally competent

- o One of the most important things that a teacher can do is to become more aware of and fluent in the cultures in their classrooms. CLD students represent many different cultures and languages, each with its own set of characteristics. Teachers need to know these characteristics to understand how students are showing their giftedness.

Twice-Exceptional students

Twice exceptional students are gifted, but also have a learning disability. There are 3 subgroups of twice-exceptional students. One subgroup includes students who are identified as

gifted, but have trouble in school. They are working at grade-level (or slightly below), and adults attribute their mediocre/low grades to laziness and low motivation. The second group is students who have been identified as having a learning disability, and their gifted abilities have never been documented. Due to assessments not showing The third group is students who are in general education classes, and according to tests, do not qualify for gifted or special education services.

Students who exhibit twice-exceptionality are at great risk socially and emotionally. Because of their high intellect, students may assume that learning tasks will be easy. However, they may struggle with the task in the area(s) of their disability (Beckley, 1998). This can cause feelings of fear and frustration, and actions of carelessness and off-task behavior. They may see themselves as academically inferior, which may increase their task avoidance and decrease their motivation. Twice-exceptional students have been found to have a general unhappiness about school, and are very aware of their academic issues. They were very aware that they “could not make their brain, body, or both do what they wanted” (Bracamonte, 2010). They can also be very critical of themselves, which can lead to a destructive form of perfectionism. Students usually have more success in creative areas, which may not always be valued in core content classes. Over time, students may feel upset about school, and be successful in extra-curricular activities. Some strategies that teachers can use are:

- Appreciating a student’s strengths
 - Whenever possible, teachers should engage students by playing to their strengths. This will increase their motivation and reduce frustration. It will also increase the chance that a student will readily accept an academic challenge. Lastly, it allows for creativity, problem solving, and abstract thinking.

- Do not let a learning disability become an obstacle
 - While playing to the strengths of a student, it is important that they learn how to deal with the effects of their learning disability. This can be done through providing necessary accommodations, such as advance organizers, calculators, spell checkers, etc. This will help students compensate for their learning difficulties, so that they can grow in their areas of giftedness and weakness.
- Providing a nurturing environment
 - One of the most important things that a teacher can do is to create a safe, nurturing learning environment for students. This should be done in many ways. One way is to praise individual growth. Differentiating instruction by readiness, interest, process, and product will allow students to learn using their strengths. Allowing multiple avenues for assessment will give students the opportunity to show what they really know. Flexible grouping is also important to help students show their strengths, and learn from others about supporting their weaknesses.

References

Beckley, Dawn. "Gifted and Learning Disabled: Twice Exceptional Students." *NRC/GT Spring '98 Newsletter*. 1998. Web. 30 July 2015.

<<http://www.gifted.uconn.edu/nrcgt/newsletter/spring98/sprng984.html>>.

Bracamonte, Micaela. "Twice-exceptional Students: Who Are They and What Do They Need?" *2e Students: Who Are They and What Do They Need?* 1 Mar. 2010. Web. 30 July 2015.

<http://www.2enewsletter.com/article_2e_what_are_they.html>.

Harmon, Deborah. "Improving Test Performance Among Culturally Diverse Gifted Students." *Improving Test Performance Among Culturally Diverse Gifted Students*. 2004. Web. 30 July 2015.

"Identifying Talented and Gifted Students from Culturally, Linguistically, and Ethnically Diverse (CLED) Populations." Web. 30 July 2015. <[http://bvsd.org/tag/Documents/CLED Identification.pdf](http://bvsd.org/tag/Documents/CLED%20Identification.pdf)>.

"Identifying and Serving Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Gifted Students." 2 Nov. 2011. Web. 30 July 2015. <[https://www.nagc.org/sites/default/files/Position Statement/Identifying and Serving Culturally and Linguistically.pdf](https://www.nagc.org/sites/default/files/Position%20Statement/Identifying%20and%20Serving%20Culturally%20and%20Linguistically.pdf)>.