Sparking High Potential: Illuminating Young Students’ Thinking

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The Challenge

• Rates of identification for gifted programs among students from traditionally underserved populations
• Need for approaches that support finding high potential across demographic groups
• Need for approaches that provide students with supports to prepare for the challenges of advanced programs
• Recommendations around early intervention, yet limited programming
**Underrepresentation of Economically Disadvantaged and Culturally Diverse Students: Issues and Recommendations**

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<th>Issue</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
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| Biased assessment measures                 | • Multidimensional assessments  
                                           | • Portfolios, case studies, anecdotal records                                 |
| Low expectations (self and others)         | • Raise expectations through more rigorous and challenging curriculum         |
| Few parent/guardian referrals              | • Increase communication  
                                           | • Teacher referrals  
                                           | • Parent advocacy training                                                     |

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Project SPARK: Supporting and Promoting Advanced Readiness in Kids

- Focus on **early identification of high potential**
- **Intervention to promote achievement**
- Emphasis on students in grades K-2, particularly those students from groups **traditionally underserved in gifted programs**.
  - students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
  - students from low-income backgrounds
- Application/scaling up of the Young Scholars Model (Advanced Academic Programs [AAP] Office, 2013; Horn, 2014)

Benefits for Schools and Students

- Increased identification of and services to students of high potential from all populations, and especially to those from underserved groups.
- Intended support for students:
  - **access** to support and advanced learning experiences
  - **affirmation** of their potential and effort
  - **advocates** who will help to ensure their potential is developed (AAP Office, 2013, p. 15).
- Professional development support for school staff
**Short Term**

To *identify* students who may not be considered for advanced academic programs using traditional methods of identification, and who, without that opportunity, are less likely to pursue advanced levels of learning on their own.

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**Long Term**

To *nurture* high academic potential at an early age so that students who have historically been underserved in advanced academic programs will be prepared to engage in challenging subject matter and rigorous courses in upper elementary school, middle school, and high school.
Identifying Potential

• Observe your students
• Give them opportunities for higher levels thinking and open-ended tasks including Response Lessons.
• Take notes of behaviors and keep work samples
• Use the Gifted Behavior Rating Scale as a tool to rate and record exceptional behaviors

GBRS

• Was developed by FCPS using current research on behaviors that demonstrate academic strengths
• Includes indicators that recognize and value cultural differences
• Aligns with National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) Standards
Identifying Potential

- Observe your students
- Give them opportunities for higher level thinking and open-ended tasks including Response Lessons.
- Take notes of behaviors and keep work samples
- Use the Gifted Behaviors Rating Scale as a tool to rate and record exceptional behaviors
Response Lessons

- Used to “draw out” gifted behaviors
- Allows for critical and creative thinking
- Aligns with GBRS

Thinking Strategies

[Diagram of thinking strategies]

Lesson Examples

A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte
Access Lessons:

http://spark.uconn.edu/

Resources > Treatment School Educators

Password: sparkle

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