Recognizing Potential in the Early Grades: Supporting Opportunities for Access

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Thinking about Gifted Services in Your Experience…

- What are some of the key levers or resources that facilitate *access* to gifted programming for students?
- To what degree does *affirmation* of potential and effort influence student success?
- Who are some of the groups or individuals who serve as *advocates* for gifted learners?

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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

What are some of the barriers to gifted programming for children from underserved populations?

Key Point of Tension

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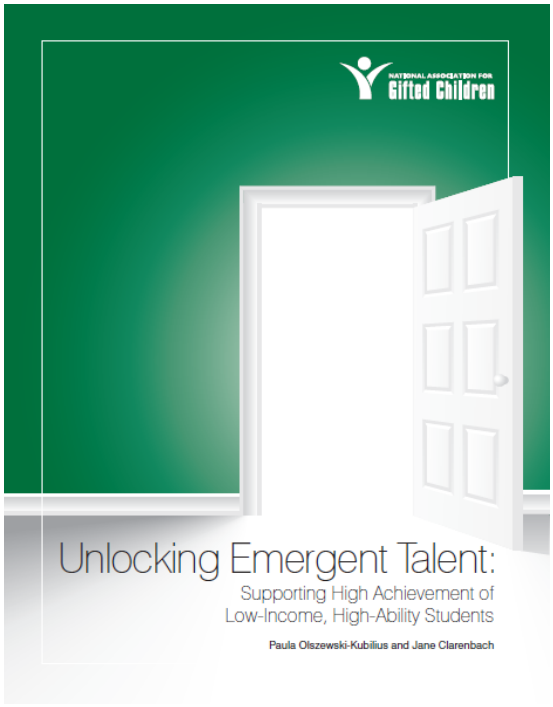


Barriers to Participation (Olszewski-Kubilius & Clarenbach, 2012)

- Conception of giftedness that emphasizes only already-developed ability
- Misconceptions about learners
- Pedagogy and curriculum that fail to support talent development
- School identification policies
- Gifted program policies that hinder participation and performance
- Lack of access to supplemental programs
- Gifted label

Who are the Young Scholars?

Students with gifted potential who may need:

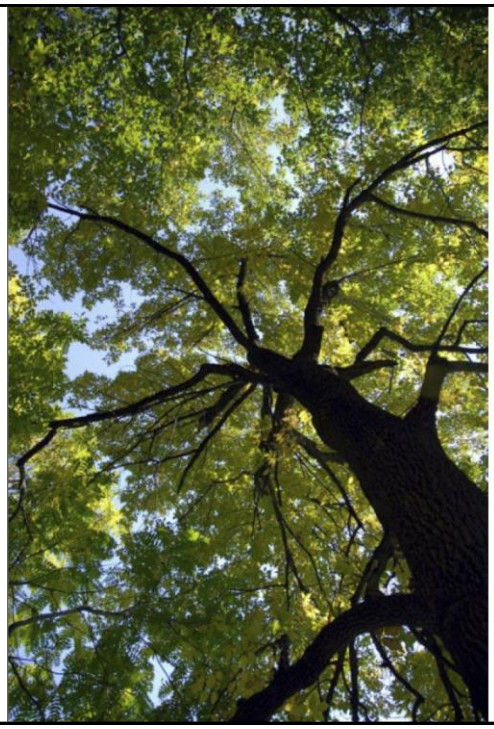
Advocates

Affirmation

Access

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.



L o n g 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.

Project SPARK: Supporting and Promoting Advanced Readiness in Kids

- Focus on **early awareness/identification/ intervention** to support high **potential**
- Emphasis at **grades K-2** in schools with high populations from **underserved** groups
- Application/scaling up of the Young Scholars Model in 4 Connecticut school districts
  - *Access* to advanced learning opportunities
  - *Affirmation* of high academic potential
  - *Advocates* for students

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Major Elements of SPARK

- Working with teachers to recognize advanced potential in diverse populations
  - Goal to support recognition and *increased response*
- Conducting assessments to follow students referred by their teachers to the project
- Providing summer program access in treatment schools
- Comparing treatment and comparison schools on achievement data and later identification for gifted programs

Guiding Principles

- Advanced potential exists across demographic groups.
- Early attention to high potential is critical for engaging student growth and academic success.
- Teacher support and opportunities for teacher learning in classroom settings are important to guide recognition of how high potential may manifest in students across diverse backgrounds.
- Curriculum and instruction designed to yield and develop high potential behaviors are valuable tools for identification and programming in response to advanced learner needs.

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Evidence of Effectiveness

- Research Evidence
  - Achievement data in math and reading
  - Identification for local gifted programs
  - Observation data
- External Evaluation
  - Teacher surveys and focus groups
  - Parent surveys
  - Administrator interviews

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GBRS

Contains 4 categories:

- Exceptional Ability to Learn
- Exceptional Application of Knowledge
- Exceptional Creative/Productive Thinking
- Exceptional Motivation to Succeed

GBRS Sample

Exceptional Ability to Learn:

- Exhibits exceptional memory
- Demonstrates in-depth knowledge
- Displays persistent, intense focus on one or more topics
- Is highly reflective and/or sensitive to his/her environment
- Learns and adapts readily to new cultures
- Learns quickly and easily
- Acquires language at a rapid pace
- Learns skills independently and makes connections without formal instruction

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Gifted Behaviors Continuum

Continuum of Intensity, Frequency, and Complexity of Demonstrated Behaviors

Behavioral Areas	Emergent (1) Exploratory and discovery behaviors demonstrated sporadically or rarely.	Novice (2) Application behaviors observed occasionally; acquires and integrates knowledge.	Maturing (3) Analysis behaviors observed frequently; extends and refines learning.	Independent (4) Synthesis and evaluative behaviors observed consistently; uses knowledge meaningfully.	GBRS Connections Student demonstrates exceptional:
Perceptive	Recognizes basic patterns in the environment	Applies understanding of similarities and differences	Seeks and examines novel patterns and relationships	Transfers patterns and relationships to new situations; looks beyond the obvious to notice verbal and nonverbal subtleties	**Ability to Learn** • Memory • In-depth knowledge • Persistent/intense focus • Sensitivity to environment • Ability to adapt to new cultures • Ability to learn quickly/easily • Acquisition of a new language • Ability to independently make connections
Strategic	Employs learned thinking strategies to solve problems	Investigates alternative solutions to problems	Analyzes situations, searches for additional information, and diligently works to find solutions to problems	Analyzes and researches potential solutions, tests theories, and verifies multiple conclusions to complex problems	
Communicative	Expresses ideas simply but clearly	Expands on ideas and provides additional information	Expands on ideas, compares and contrasts, and gives examples	Initiates and elaborates on complex ideas; providing examples, counter-examples, and inferred characteristics	**Application of Knowledge** • Reasoning skills • Problem solving strategies • Ability to interpret symbols • Understanding of abstract concepts • Technology skills • Ability to transfer learning to other situations • Communication through the arts
Resourceful	Recognizes and uses available resources to complete a task	Completes tasks using available resources in a traditional manner	Adapts resources to use in a new and different way	Draws from experiences and transfers understandings to new situations; inventive	
Creative	Explores ideas and materials freely	Expands on ideas and adds details	Uses fluency and flexibility to view ideas in new and unusual ways	Demonstrates innovative ideas to show new relationships and uses	**Creative/Productive Thinking** • See the familiar in unusual ways • Ability to think independently of peers • Inventive skills • Fluency and flexibility in thinking • Expression of ideas, feelings, and beliefs • Sense of humor • Generation of new ideas • Ability to perceive and manipulate patterns
Curious	Asks questions on topics of interest	Demonstrates curiosity and actively seeks new ideas	Asks deep questions to initiate investigation and meaningful dialogue	Asks complex questions to explore, test, and evaluate sustained investigations	
Leadership	Interacts effectively with others on assigned tasks	Initiates ideas and is sensitive to the contributions of others	Refines and extends the idea of others to build and foster the talents of a group	Organizes groups in various settings to implement plans of action, seeing complex tasks through to completion	**Motivation to Succeed** • Ability to lead groups • Ability to meet personal and academic challenges • Independent exploration/research skills • Adult conversation skills and poise • Sense of loyalty • Adaptation skills • High standards in areas of strength and interest • Initiative, self-direction, and confidence
Resilient	Remains on task when faced with a difficult task	Demonstrates ability to work through difficult times in and out of the school environment	Recovers quickly from environmental and personal challenges	Exudes strength in times of personal hardship and maintains integrity	

Ratings

Each category is assigned a rating based on how often behaviors are observed:

1. Rarely
2. Occasionally
3. Frequently
4. Consistently

Note that only whole numbers from 1-4 are used, no fractions or decimals.

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Sample Lesson: Colorful Categories

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What kinds of behaviors might we observe?

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Table 3. TOPS Domains with Examples of Specific Observable Behaviors.

Domain	Teacher-pleasing example	Non-teacher-pleasing example
Learns easily	Retains and retrieves information easily	Corrects the teacher and students in class
Shows advanced skills	Has a large vocabulary	Manipulates situations for specific purposes
Displays curiosity and creativity	Questions, explores, experiments	Refuses to follow rules unless he sees "why"
Has strong interests	Demonstrates unusual or advanced interests	Resists transitions and moving onto new topics of study
Shows advanced reasoning and problem solving	Is a keen observer (spots details others miss)	Is argumentative
Displays spatial abilities	Figures out why and how things work	Moves around often (keeps hands and body always busy)
Shows motivation	Is a self-starter (requires little direction)	Questions authority (is considered a "trouble maker" or instigator)
Shows social perceptiveness	Enjoys working in groups	Uses humor and sarcasm inappropriately
Displays leadership	Accepts and carries out responsibilities	Is seen as "bossy" (wants to be the center of attention)

Note. Adapted with permission from Coleman, M. R., Shah-Coltrane, S., & Harrison, A. (2010). *Teacher's observation of potential in students: Individual student form.* Arlington, VA: Council for Exceptional Children.

Research Questions

- How do the number of students treatment and comparison schools referred to the project differ?
- How does the diversity of the students referred in treatment and comparison schools differ?

Participants over the First Three Years

- 4 districts
- 22 schools
- 953 students

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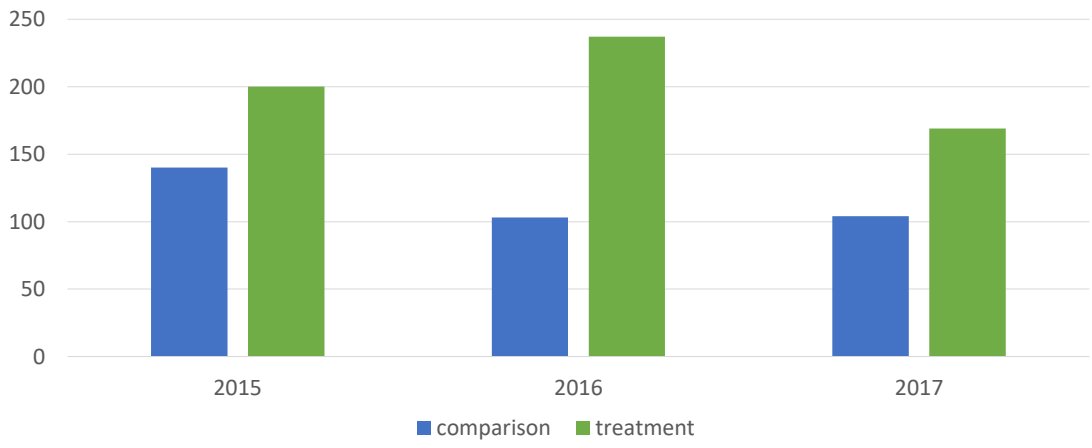
Number of Students Added to the Project by Year



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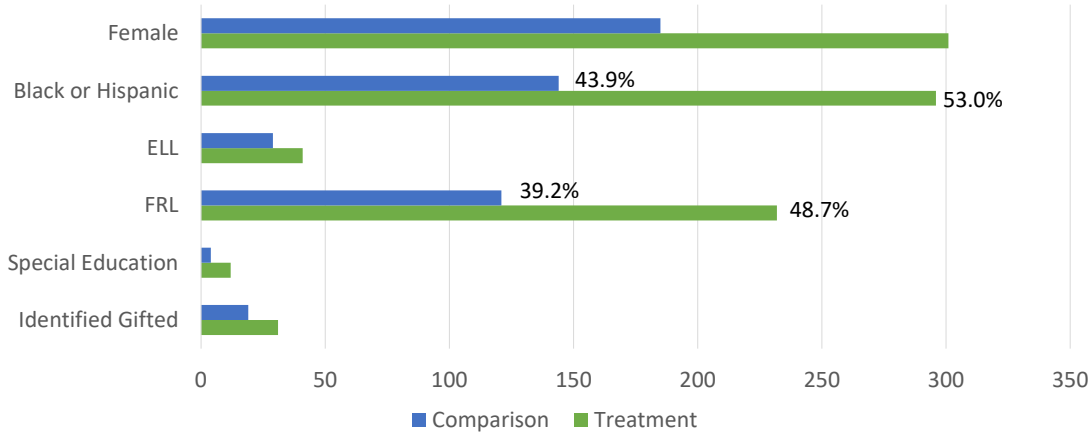
Demographics of Students in the Project



Nurture Guide Support

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SPARK Activities to Date

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SPARK Summer Program

- Project M2 units
  - 2015 and 2017: Geometry
  - 2016: Measurement (+ pilot of Number)
  - 2018: Number (+ Geometry at K)
- Professional development for teachers
- 3-4 weeks, 3 hours per day
- 4 districts, 5 schools, ~16 classrooms per year
- Cross-age grouping

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Summer Program Resources – Project M²

Key Project M² Characteristics (Gavin et al., 2013)	Alignment with Emphases in Culturally Responsive Teaching (Gay, 2010, 2015)
Important and advanced mathematics	High-quality, high-status knowledge made available to students from all backgrounds
Depth of understanding and complexity	Access to and support for engaging with complex instructional materials
Differentiated instruction	"Diversity among students demands plurality in instructional practices" (Gay, 2015, p. 135)
Mathematical communication	Specific modeling and practice around communication
Nurturing classroom environment	Emphasis on story; emphasis on positive beliefs and support

Summer Teachers Who Also Teach K-2 in Treatment Schools

District	Summer 2015	Summer 2016	Summer 2017	Summer 2018
1	3/3	3/4	3/5	4/5
2	2/3	3/4	4/4	5/5
3	2/6	3/6	5/6	5/6
4	NA	1/4	1/3	1/3

Priority for summer hiring given to K-2 teachers from treatment schools

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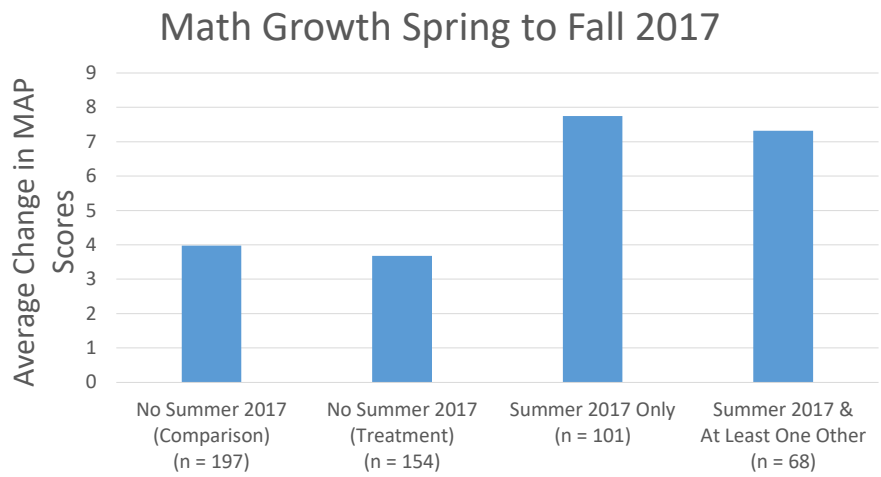
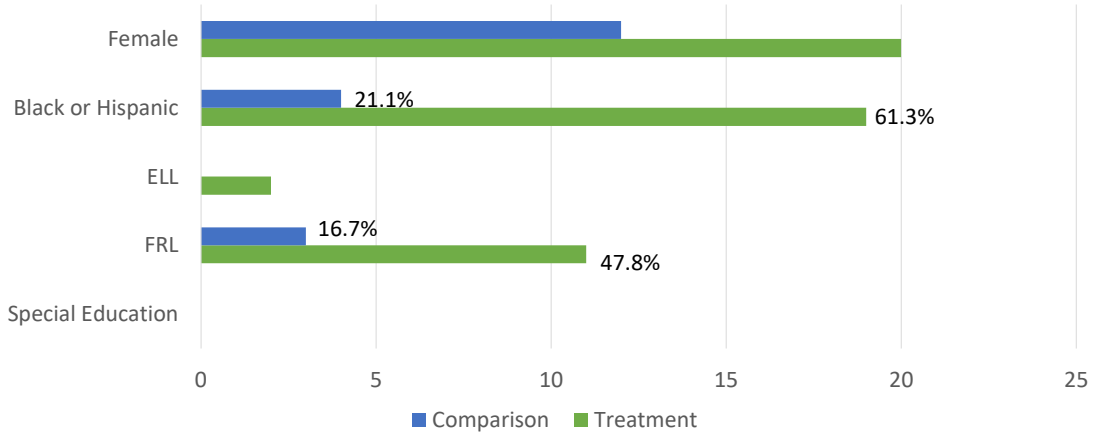
Achievement Test Growth for SPARK Students (NWEA Mathematics)



Demographics of SPARK Students Later Identified for Local Gifted Programs (32 as of Fall 2017)



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Results

- Larger pool
  - Served students
  - Students later identified gifted
- More diverse pool
  - Students served
  - Students later identified gifted

Key Take-Away Points

- Role of curriculum in supporting access for learners as well as teacher recognition of emerging potential
- Importance of specific supports for discourse moves among a diverse range of learners in the early grades
- Linkage to positive achievement outcomes for students following participation in high-level summer learning experiences
- Evidence of influence on later identification for advanced programs

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