

Public Abstract

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Title:A Statewide Evaluation of Gifted Education in Missouri

Gifted education began in Missouri in 1974 with seven programs serving 1,465 students within the State of Missouri. By 2006-2007, 291 districts served 37,324 students throughout the state. Gifted education in Missouri has never before been evaluated at the level as an educational program. Educators, parents, policymakers, and students should understand the nature of gifted education in Missouri, as well as whether or not the programs offered currently are effective in terms of students achievement. The evaluation was designed to provide a baseline of knowledge regarding gifted education in Missouri and foster additional research and conversations regarding the future practices of gifted education in Missouri.

The program evaluation for gifted education in Missouri was a mixed research design using both statistical analysis and qualitative methods. The research found that over 50% of the school districts in the State of Missouri offer gifted programs. Of the participants in the research, about 45% had board approved curriculum, and almost 90% conducted annual program evaluations for school boards and local policymakers. Of the 85 participants who reported on their gifted education programs, none of the programs used the same screening and identification instruments. Therefore defining what a gifted child is or how to best serve that student is problematic within school districts. Resource Room Teachers are the most common program delivery model for grades K-8, with Gifted Resource Teachers as the most common program delivery model for grades 9-12. Boys are enrolled at a higher rate than girls in gifted programs, with minority enrollment at a similar rate to the minority population in public schools.

The current research also attempted to measure the effectiveness of gifted education program delivery models in regards to graduation rates, attendance rates, discipline referral rates, MAP scores, and dropout rates. The first part of this process measured the effectiveness of the different program delivery models and found that no single program delivery model was more effective in terms of graduation rates, attendance rates, discipline referral rates, MAP scores, and dropout rates. Meanwhile, the results did demonstrate that having at least two program delivery models was more effective than providing only one type of gifted service. The number of program delivery models offered by a school district was significant, and providing five program delivery models in a gifted program was the most effective gifted program design.

Participants in the study were also asked to share about the strengths, concerns and future plans for their gifted programs. Support from administrators, parents, students, and other teachers was considered a strength and a concern by many participants. Resources for gifted programs was considered a concern by many participants. Resources included people, finances, facilities and equipment. Meeting student needs was both a strength and a concern for many participants. Participants expressed the difficulty in meeting student needs while competing for resources with other programs. Finally, most participants stated that the plans for the future included little change and most programs would continue as they are.

This program evaluation was important at a state level, because this was the first attempt at a statewide evaluation of gifted education in Missouri. In terms of future research or practice, the study needs to be conducted again at the student level. This study focused on schools and was a starting point. Secondly, the program delivery models need to be studied further to determine which are more effective in terms meeting student needs. For future practice, some consistency in terms of screening and identification needs to be

addressed. The results regarding both screening and identification were inconsistent and difficult to measure in this research project.