

Gifted Education in the United States:

Laws, Access, Equity, and Missingness Across the Country
by Locale, Title I School Status, and Race

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SYSTEM FAILURE

ACCESS
DENIED

URGENT!
SYSTEMIC CHANGE REQUIRED

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This project investigated *laws, access, equity, and missingness* related to gifted education identification as reported biennially to the federal government Office of Civil Rights by all public schools in 2000, 2011–2012, 2013–14, and 2015–16. Specifically, we examined these areas nationally, and by state across schools for Non-Title I and Title I schools, by Locale (i.e., City, Suburb, Town, Rural), and by Race (i.e., American Indian/Alaska Native American Alaska Native [AIAN]; Asian; Black; Latinx; Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander [NHPI]; Two or More Races [TMR]; and White). Report cards were developed for each state and findings were synthesized. Representation indices were used to investigate equity. These analyses were compared to previous similar analyses.

Laws

Most states have laws concerning gifted education ($N=38$); however, laws vary widely with some only having language requiring identification ($N=7$) but not services, and some requiring identification and services ($N=30$). Of those 30 states, 6 have no funding and 4 are fully funded. Of the remaining 13 states with no laws, 11 have language, with 4 of those having partial funding. Only 2 states have no language, mandate, or funding. The top 25 states in terms of access to identification have mandates. Although access does not necessarily translate to equity, it is essential for equity. Additionally, access results in lower numbers of missing students. Those states with fully funded mandates for identification and services (FL, GA, IA, OK) lead in access to gifted education services, with Florida and Oklahoma showing promise in areas of equity.

Access

Access is defined as attending a school that identifies youth with gifts and talents. Nationally, in 2015–2016 67.38% of students had such access and these students attended 55.58% of schools in the country. This is a decrease from 2000 of 6% and 4%, respectively.

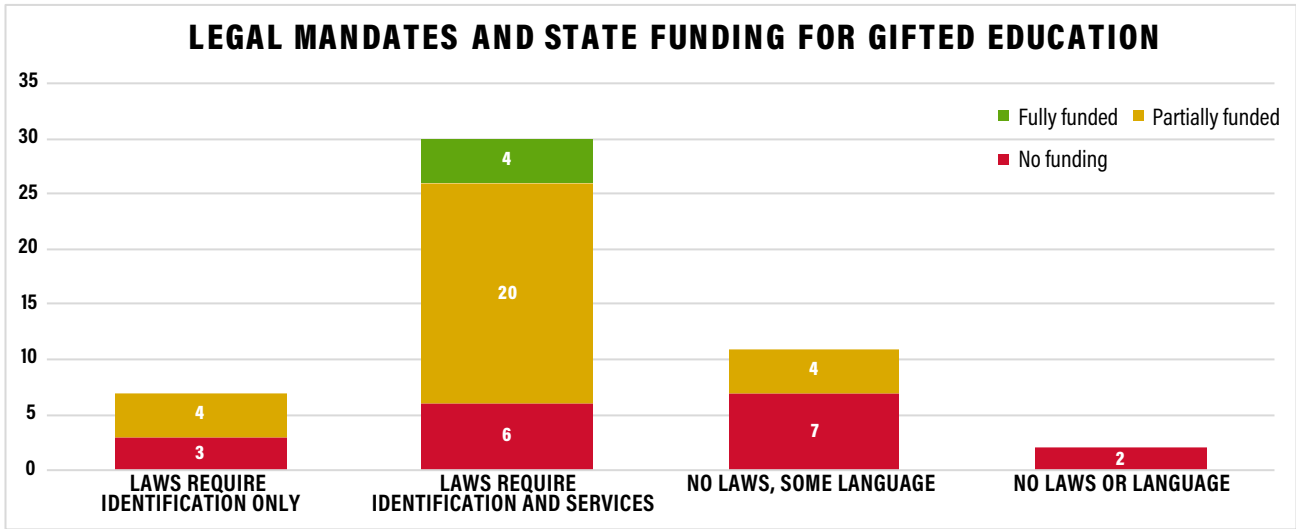


FIGURE 1. Count of State Mandates for Gifted Education, Identification, Services, and Level of Funding in 2015-16

TABLE 1

Percentage of Schools With Identification and Percentage of Students Identified in 2015-16

Access = Attending a school that identifies youth with gifts and talent	Percentage of Schools That Identify Students		Percentage of Students Identified
	Non-Title I Schools	55.65%	13.46%
Title I Schools	61.35%	7.86%	

In general, more Title I schools than Non-Title I schools identify students with gifts and talents, so access in Title I schools is not a cause of underrepresentation or of students missing from gifted education identification nationally. However, nationally and in most states (N=42; these data are not available for DC, MA, RI & VT), fewer students are identified in Title I than in Non-Title I schools. Nationally in 2015-2016, 9.57% of students who attend schools that identify youth with gifts and talents were identified. However, 13.46% of students in Non-Title I schools were identified; whereas only 7.86% of students in Title I schools were identified. Thus, nationally, students who attend Title I schools are identified at .58 the rate of those who attend, wealthier, Non-Title I schools.

Access does not guarantee equity. Nationally, all racial groups, except for AIAN youth (with access at 0.92 that of the general population) have equal access to identification. Although across the states, Black, Latinx, and NHPI have equal access, they remain underrepresented in gifted programs. AIAN youth have unequal access in several states (AK, AZ, MT, SD, WY) with large proportions of these youth, which exacerbates their missingness from gifted education identification.

Nationally, little differences exist across City, Suburb, Town, and Rural locales in access to identification. However, when examined by state, only eight states (FL, IA, ME, NC, OK, SC, TX, VA) have equal access across these locales. Unequal access exists for City and Town locales

in 17 states, for Suburb locales in 5 states, and for Rural locales in 25 states. So, in half of the country, rural youth have less access to identification than do students who attend schools in other locales.

Equity

Equity in gifted identification was examined using representation indices (RI), which are simply the percentage of a group identified as gifted divided by its percentage in the general population. Equity is defined as having an RI of at least 0.80. A RI of 1.00 indicates perfect proportional representation. We refer to RIs greater than 1.00 as “well-represented” rather than “over-represented.”

$$\text{Representation Indices} = \frac{\text{Percent of a group that is identified as gifted}}{\text{Percent of the that group in the general population}}$$

Equity is a longstanding, persistent, and continuing problem for students who are AIAN, Black, Latinx, or NHPI nationally, and across all states and in all Locales. Fewer than 5% of students in the District of Columbia, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Vermont had access to identification, thus these states were omitted from analyses on equity.

Although fewer students are identified in general in Title I schools as stated above, students in all racial groups—except for Black youth—are more equitably identified (albeit still underidentified in most cases) in Title I than in Non-Title I schools.

Racial equity is so bad across the states, here we report the only equitable RIs by underrepresented group.

- For AIAN youth, RIs above 0.95 exist in Delaware, Alabama, North Dakota, Wyoming, Oklahoma, Hawaii (overall); Wyoming, New York, Connecticut, Delaware, Oklahoma (Non-Title I); and Delaware, Alabama, North Dakota, Hawaii, Oklahoma (Title I). RIs from 0.80 to 0.949 exist in Georgia, New York (overall); Alabama, Arizona, Georgia, West Virginia (Non-Title I); and Virginia, Georgia, Tennessee, Florida (Title I).
- For Black youth, RIs above 0.95 exist in no states (overall); Illinois, Michigan (Non-Title I); and Utah, Wyoming, New York, Michigan (Title I). RIs from 0.80 to 0.949 exist in New York, Michigan, Utah, Arkansas (overall); no states (Non-Title I); and Arkansas, Maryland (Title I).
- For Latinx youth, RIs above 0.95 exist in no states (overall); no states (Non-Title I); and Utah (Title I). RIs from 0.80 to 0.949 exist in Florida, Texas (overall); Louisiana, Maryland (Non-Title I); and in Florida, Colorado, Texas, California, Nevada (Title I).

- For NHPI youth from the 20 states where they have sizeable populations, RIs above 0.95 exist in New Jersey, New York, Illinois, Virginia (overall); Illinois, New York, New Jersey, Utah (Non-Title I); and Virginia, New Jersey, Utah, Nevada, Georgia, Colorado (Title I). RIs from 0.80 to 0.949 exist in Utah, Georgia, California, Nevada (overall); Virginia, Georgia (Non-Title I); and in California, New York (Title I).

With regard to Locale, representation indices were used to investigate proportional equity overall and across Title I status. Although National equity across locales exceeded 0.80 except for non-Title I Town schools, analyses by state revealed that Town and Rural schools have less equity in identification than do City and Suburb schools. Specifically, with 141 RIs for each locale from among 47 states, 21 states had 34 RIs less than 0.80 for Rural locales and 31 states had 58 failing RIs for Town locales. Only 3 states, Arkansas, Mississippi, and New Hampshire, had equitable RIs across all locales and school types.

A breakdown by race, Title I status, and Locale further reveals the inequity across the country for underserved groups and for students who attend schools in Town or Rural locales.

Missingness

An area not found in previous reports that demonstrates gifted identification trends is *missingness*. We define missingness as students who could/should have been identified, based on the percentages identified in each state on average (lower boundary) and at the higher rate of identification in Non-Title I schools (upper boundary). Missing students come from two sources: Schools in which students have no access to identification (schools that do not identify students) and schools in which some groups of students are underidentified.

Nationally, in 2015–2016, 3,255,232 students were identified with gifts and talents, but between 2,092,850 and 3,635,533 were missing either because they attended a school that did not identify any children, or because they were a member of a group underidentified in schools that do identify students. This represents from 39% to 52% of students missing from gifted identification.

When broken down by race, these missing students come largely from underrepresented groups with the following ranges of percentages of each race missing from gifted education identification. For example, 63% to 74% of Black youth are missing from gifted identification.

- AIAN, 48% to 63%
- Asian, 20% to 26%
- Black, 63% to 74%
- Latinx, 53% to 66%

- NHPI, 59% to 72%
- TMR, 29% to 49%
- White, 29% to 42%

These data are described and provided in the full report and in the report cards for each state.

Bottom Line

The field of gifted education has much work to do to mitigate opportunity and equity within the field if all talents in the United States are to be developed. Multiple things affect whether a child is identified with gifts and talents. First is access: The child must attend a school that actually identifies students, and currently, more than one-third of children in the U.S. do not attend such schools. Second is attending a wealthier school: Children who attend Non-Title I schools are identified on average at a rate 50% greater than those who attend Title I schools. Third is race: Children who are Asian or White are 2 to more than 10 times more likely to be identified with gifts and talents than students who are AIAN, Black, Latinx, or NHPI. Finally, are other variables including, but not limited to:

1. using tests for identification that yield disparate results or were not normed on the populations to which they are being applied, and applying national normative cut-off scores to these measures as the most important (or only) pathway to identification;
2. requiring multiple measures rather than using multiple pathways for identification;
3. failing to account for and mitigate differences in opportunity to learn;
4. requiring teacher referral as the first step to identification;
5. failing to diversify the teaching force and to employ/graduate culturally competent teachers; and
6. continuing to allow gifted education to be used as a tool of economic and/or racial segregation.

Through awareness of the problem, educators (and legislators) can act to:

1. ensure that all schools identify students with gifts and talents;
2. examine and improve rates of programming and identification in Title I schools; and
3. put into place equitable identification procedures and programming designed to develop and reveal talents among all children, and especially those that have been underserved for generations.

For More Information

This report as well as each state report card with narrative of methods and findings can be downloaded at www.purdue.edu/geri and click *access denied*.

At this interactive website (URL) visitors can find visual summaries of the data contained in the full report.

GIFTED EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES: LAWS, ACCESS, EQUITY, AND MISSINGNESS ACROSS THE COUNTRY BY LOCALE, TITLE I SCHOOL STATUS, AND RACE

Much has been written about underrepresentation by income and race in gifted education during the past 40 years. Additional literature exists concerning gifted students in locales including city, suburban, town, and rural school settings. Sadly, little has changed. This report seeks to refine what is known about underrepresentation in gifted education by conducting more detailed analyses than have previously been done. Because of inequity in identification and services, many scholars and practitioners outside the field of gifted education raise concerns about racism, classism, and elitism within the field. Other scholars in the field of gifted education work to understand and solve inequity and some continue to defend inequity as it exists.

Past work, including our own, has looked at the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) data, which is the only data set that collects giftedness by race, and reported on proportionality nationally and by state. Basically, scholars have calculated the percentage of gifted students nationally and applied that percentage to different races to show underrepresentation, which persists and remains constant.

In this report, we show that underrepresentation is even worse than has previously been reported, and in doing so establish new baselines from which to work. And we will highlight the urgency of this crisis as *time is up* and systemic change must be a top priority to mitigate the vast and pervasive underrepresentation in gifted education of children who are Black, Latinx, and Native, children who live in poverty, and children who live in small town and rural locales. The field of gifted education has hidden behind test scores that yield disparate racial and economic results, as well as teachers as gatekeepers, for far too long in its practices to identify youth with gifts and talents. This must change, and it must change now for the field to move forward as a socially just field that is responsive to the talent development needs of children from all racial and economic groups. To do less would continue to perpetuate the racism, classism,

and elitism that currently plagues the field and prevent progress and growth in today's diverse educational institutions.

Areas of Research Focus

To understand where we have been and where we are with regard to racial and economic equity in gifted education identification, we use the OCR data from 2000 as a baseline. These data are the first recent census data in which data from [most] schools nationally are reported. This is followed by three census data sets from 2012, 2014, and 2016.

Rather than simply looking at racial numbers in gifted education nationally and by state, specifically we examine access, equity, and missingness in this report. We calculate:

1. *The number and percentage of student by race in schools that actually identify students as gifted, nationally and by state.* This is important because more than one-third of schools nationally did not identify any gifted students in each of these years (2000, 2012, 2014, and 2016).
2. *The number and percentage of students in schools that actually identify students as gifted in Non-Title I and Title I schools, nationally and by state.* This is important because Title I status is a measure of poverty concentration in a school, which is a more accurate [better] predictor of student academic failure than the poverty level of their families (Vanderhaar, Muñoz, & Rodosky, 2006). Additionally, it allows us to compare identification rates between these two types of schools and among races in each type of school.
3. *The percentage of students missing as gifted who attend schools that do not identify (or serve) students with gifts and talents and the percentage of those who are under-identified in schools that identify youth with gifts and talents.* This is important because past reports have underreported the numbers of students with gifts and talents by including schools that do not identify in the total, resulting in a smaller percentage of gifted students reported nationally and by state.
 - a. The lower boundary estimate was derived from the average percentage of students identified in schools that identify students with gifts and talents. We use this percentage and multiply it by the number of students from each race who attend schools that do not identify students with gifts and talents. This provides the number of students missing due to lack of access to identification because they attend schools that do not identify. Next, we calculate the number of students missing from schools that identify from each race using the average percent multiplied by the number of students in that race. We subtract the actual number of

students identified in that race from this number—the differences are the missing students from each race. This provides the number of students missing due to underidentification within schools that identify students with gifts and talents. Last, we subtotal the missing from each race from schools that do not and do identify students with gifts and talents and combine the subtotals for an estimate of missing students at the lower boundary.

- b. The upper boundary estimate is calculated in the same manner as the lower boundary estimate, but uses the average percentage of students identified with gifts and talents in Non-Title I schools, because they identify about one-third more students with gifts and talents than do their Title I counterparts. This is important because one could argue that this disparity in identification numbers represents missing children in schools that primarily serve students from lower income families.
 - c. By calculating lower and upper boundaries of missing students, we provide a range of how many students with gifts and talents go unrecognized in this county and by state. Unfortunately, most of these missing children in gifted education live in impoverished areas, with larger proportions attending town and rural schools, and coming from American Indian and Alaska Native, Black, and Latinx families, raising issues of continued racial and economic oppression within the field.
4. Next, we look at these same data by geographic region (e.g., City, Suburb, Town, and Rural) to examine how location affects identification of students with gifts and talents. We apply the same approach by considering schools that report and do not report gifted identification to determine if location affects students' opportunity for identification and, further, how equitable identification is by race in each of these four locales. We do this nationally and by state. In each of the above analyses we provide a representation index by race (Overall RI = $\frac{\% \text{ [each race in each community] Gifted}}{\% \text{ [each race in each community] Total}}$) to quantify the extent of underrepresentation or to highlight races that are well-represented. We also provide RIs by locale.
 5. Finally, we provide grades for each state using the most recent Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) data (2016) concerning:
 - a. *Access to gifted identification:* If the percentage was equal to or greater than 90%, the state received an A for general access to gifted identification. If the percentage was equal to 80% through 89.99% then the state received a B; from 70%–79.99% was a C; from 60% to 69.99% was a D; and finally, less than 60% resulted in a grade of F.

- b. Equity of identification between Title I/Non-Title I schools:* Ratios of .950 or greater were assigned an A; .900 to .949 a B .85 to .899 a C; .800 to .849 a D. Less than .800 was considered failing.
- c. Equity of access by race:* Ratios of .950 or greater were assigned an A; .900 to .949 a B .85 to .899 a C; .800 to .849 a D. Less than .800 was considered failing. (The ratio of race access to general access in schools that identify indicates whether students proportionally attend schools that identify. Ratios close to or greater than 1.00 means good access, so underrepresentation is not a function of lack of access.)
- d. Equity of identification in different locales:* We examined City, Suburb, Town, and Rural locales by race using RIs for Overall schools, Non-Title I and Title I schools.
- e. Missingness from gifted education:* Missingness from gifted education was graded pass/fail by state based on the percentage of missing students, with 20% of fewer missing receiving a passing grade.