

The Immeasurable Value of Family Involvement~

Nurturing High Potential in Culturally Diverse Learners

Howard County MD
Oct 15, 2013
Presented by: Dr. Joy Lawson Davis, Consultant & Scholar
Diversity & Gifted Education

Session Overview

- *Benefits of Advanced Learner Education Programs*
- *Unique challenges of high ability diverse learners in our schools today*
- *Parents as Advocates & Champions*
- *Establishing & maintaining achievement-oriented households and communities*
- *Teaching our children to survive & thrive against the Odds*

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'Genius Child'

This is a song for the genius child
Sing it softly for the song is wild
Sing is softly as ever you can-
Lest the song get out of hand
Nobody loves a genius child
Can you love an eagle, tame or wild?
Wild or tame,
Can you love a monster of frightening name?
Nobody loves a genius child.
Kill him and let his soul run wild.

-Langston Hughes, 1947

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~Nationwide Concerns~

- ✓ **Culturally & Linguistically Diverse students are under-represented in gifted programs everywhere**
 - ✓ *Majority of students identified and participating are Caucasian/White*
- ✓ **Increasing number of students living in poverty**
 - ✓ *Among this group are many high ability/gifted students*
- ✓ **The Achievement Gap between majority & minority culture students persists**
 - ✓ *high ability/gifted black, brown & poor students are underachieving in record numbers*

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Gifted Education National Data

source: <http://ocrdata.ed.gov>, 2012

Ethnicity/Race	% in General Population (of districts having gifted programs)	% in Gifted Population
Asian/Pacific Islander	5%	10%
Hispanic	25%	16%
African American/ Black	19%	10%
Anglo American/ White (non-Hispanic)	49%	62%

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Results of under-representation

- ❖ *Continuing Gap in academic achievement*
- ❖ *Limited or no access to Advanced Placement, Honors courses*
- ❖ *Limited access to more competitive colleges & universities and scholarships*
- ❖ *Limited opportunities to explore academic interests, intellectual pursuits*
- ❖ *Few opportunities to engage with social peers who are also on the same intellectual level*

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Advanced learner programs....

- Give opportunities for students to engage with intellectual peers
- Offer potential to increase student interest & focus in school
- Improve preparation for advanced coursework at middle & secondary level
- Increase access to competitive colleges and more professionals in careers of interest through mentorships, independent studies, etc.

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Advanced Learner Programs..

- Provide 'High-End' Coursework that is more stimulating and challenging, teaches students to use critical thinking skills, reasoning abilities and develop creative responses to real-world problems
- Provide more options for product/assignments in areas of interest while ensuring that students have mastered basic skills
- Offer increased experiential learning opportunities and field experiences connecting learning to relevant contemporary problems and issues of concern

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Unique challenges facing high ability culturally diverse students in schools today

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- ✓ *Low expectations; vestiges of discrimination*
- ✓ *Classroom teachers with limited cultural understandings/cultural mismatch*
- ✓ *Challenges accessing high end curriculum/special programs*

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- ✓ *Role of Counselors in Schools to Advise/Guide students into high level coursework*
- ✓ *Retention in Gifted Programs*
- ✓ *Fitting in; Denial of Cultural Legacy*
- ✓ *Celebrating the blessings and bearing the burdens of race*

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Parents and Families Becoming Advocates & Champions for Gifted Learners

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An advocate~

- Champion
- Spokesperson
- Fighter

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First, learn how to 'talk the talk'

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Words all Gifted Education Advocates should know

Service Options	Eligibility Process	Assessment	Instruction and Affective Development
In Class Differentiation	Referral or Nomination	Multiple Criteria	Critical Thinking Skills Instruction
Acceleration	Timelines	Achievement tests used	High End instruction
Cluster Grouping	Checklists Used	Ability tests	Problem Based Learning
Dual Enrollment	Appeals	IQ tests	Social Emotional Needs
Advanced Placement	Eligibility Committee	Cut-off scores	Perfectionism

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Next, learn how to 'walk the talk'

- Show up at school often
- Attend parent-teacher conferences & school board meetings
- Volunteer for local gifted education advisory councils OR other groups meeting to discuss high level courses/programming
- Share information with other parents
- Become a parent leader/training others in through opportunities in community organizations & church

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Being Proactive Is Important

- The **'squeaky wheel'** usually gets the most oil
 - Students in Meyerhoff Scholars program at University of Maryland reported that their **parents were well known** at school
 - School personnel are **more likely to respect and listen to parents who are proactive** and respectfully assertive
 - Proactive parents are **more likely to have access to information and less likely to be overlooked**
 - Proactive parents **report using leave time to be in attendance on first day of school OR to plan a day-long visit**

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Teach your child to be 'entitled'

Gladwell, M. (2008). Outliers: The Story of Success. New York, NY, Little, Brown & Co.

- That they deserve to be successful
- That they should take advantage of every opportunity
- That they should speak up for themselves
- That they should ask questions and get all of the information they can
- That they should expect to achieve !!

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A look *inside the homes* of high achieving youth from culturally diverse backgrounds

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'Social Capital' is VALUABLE

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Homes of high achieving youth from culturally diverse backgrounds ..

- Home environment characterized as **warm & supportive**
- **Stability of mother-child interactions** OR strong relationship with ONE particular caring adult (father, mentor, older sibling, aunt, etc)
- **Extended family are important** and assist in nurturing student's school achievement; often taking the place of parent who works long hours or who may have limited resources(my sister is my backbone)
- Emphasis on **family values & cultural legacy**

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Homes of high achieving youth from culturally diverse backgrounds ...

- Availability of **books, newspapers, young students read to often**
- High level of **spiritual development**; regular participation in church-related activities
- **Personal traits**/Emphasis placed on:
 - Resilience;
 - Strong work ethic;
 - Persistence;
 - Drive to 'show them';
 - Ability to ignore negative obstacles;
 - Family ability to teach self-efficacy and coping

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IN THEIR OWN WORDS (Davis, J.L.,2007)

Students:

- *'In my home hard work and success is expected and comes before any extracurricular activity'.*
- *'My mother plays the strongest role because she always tells me to push myself and not let anyone or anything keep me from succeeding'.*

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IN THEIR OWN WORDS (Davis, J.L.,2007)

MOTHER:

- *'I feel responsible to exalt my son... and to tell him that he is capable of doing well in school and in life'*

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IN THEIR OWN WORDS
(Davis, J.L.,2007)

Students – about the role of their fathers:

- *'My dad is the one who 'puts his foot down' to make sure we do what we're supposed to do'*
- *'My dad going out every day to provide for us is motivation for me to go out and try my hardest...that's just what he's instilled in us -he sets an example for us as far as working, it's not easy taking care of a big family'*

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Framework for increasing participation & retention of diverse students in advanced learner education programs

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Winner of 2013 Best Book Award in Parenting/Family Issues Category from Arizona Book Publishing Association.

Bright Talented & Black
A Guide for Families of African American Gifted Learners
by Joy Lawson Davis, Ed.D.

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Q & A

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