

**A Collaborative Inquiry Model in Core Content Areas:
Moving Toward High Achievement for all Students
Results of Needs Assessment**

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I. Context within which the Needs Assessment was conducted:

As of 2009, all teacher licenses in the state of Wisconsin are described under a portion of the Wisconsin Administration Code known as Chapter PI 34: Teacher Education Program Approval and Licenses.

Within this document under Subchapter X – Supplementary Categories (PI 34.33) is the definition of Supplementary Category License:

Except as specified under sub. (1) ©, in order to receive a license issued under a supplementary category under this subchapter, an individual shall hold or be eligible to hold a teaching license issued by the department under subch. VII.

Specified further under that subchapter is a description of the 5g Gifted and Talented license.

(5g) Gifted and Talented. A license in gifted education may be issued to an applicant who holds a regular license under subch. VII and who has completed an approved program including a concentration in gifted, talented, and creative education.

Although this 5g License is provided for under state regulations, there has never been a licensure program within the state for this particular license. There have been IHE's within the UW-System that have offered individual courses related to giftedness or differentiation of curricula for gifted students, but there has never been a cohesive set of courses leading to this license.

Approximately five years ago, Dr. Pamela Clinkenbeard, Professor of Educational Foundations at the University of Wisconsin- Whitewater and Dr. J. Christine Gould, Associate Professor of Teacher Education at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point began a collaborative process to develop a joint licensure program that would be co-offered by UW-Stevens Point and UW-Whitewater – both comprehensive universities within the UW-System. Both universities award bachelors and masters degrees.

The numbers of individuals studying the education of gifted and talented children has historically been small. Universities typically do not require preparation specifically in this field, so individuals who choose to prepare in this field do so for personal reasons. Unless there is a dramatic shift in requirements for university preparation of teachers, it is anticipated this area will remain a niche market. It is expected that there will be a steady, but small group of teachers who are interested in further preparation in this area.

Because the area of gifted and talented education has always been a niche market, this program has been designed as a set of hybrid courses offered by both universities

which will allow interested teachers from across the state to participate. For those not familiar with a hybrid format, most of the coursework is conducted on-line with minimal requirements for face-to-face meetings.

At this point, all courses have been developed at the graduate level and are being offered at both IHE's in a specified rotation (see Document A for specific program information).

Prior to the full development of this 5g licensure program, a PK-16 System Grant was awarded to Dr. Clinkenbeard as the principal investigator with Dr. Gould as the co-principal investigator to determine the status of a need for this license within the state. Status determination was conducted through two avenues 1) a survey of school administrators and gifted and talented coordinators throughout Wisconsin and 2) a series of focus groups in varied parts of the state with differing constituencies.

The results of both status determination avenues are excerpted below.

II. Highlighted results of the Needs Assessment Survey

IMPORTANT NOTE: Just over one-third of Wisconsin's 426 school districts responded to the survey. While this is considered a good response rate for a large voluntary survey, we have no systematic information on what the other two-thirds of the districts are providing in order to meet the needs of their gifted and talented students.

A majority of responding districts (72%) said that they had a written gifted education philosophy and formal school-board-approved gifted education policies.

Personnel

Most districts responding (80%) had the equivalent of one full-time person or less designated for gifted education for their entire district (including all gifted teachers and coordinators).

Most responding districts did have a gifted coordinator named, but over half of those positions were 10% of that person's time or less. Most were also classroom teachers or coordinators or administrators in other areas.

The main forms of specialized training coordinators had received in gifted education were one or more workshops (91%) and attendance at the state gifted conference (52%).

With regard to hiring and licensure, 37% of responders indicated that their district would be "likely" or "very likely" to hire new staff with one of these licenses, 31% of responders said that their district would be likely or very likely to request current staff to obtain one of these licenses, and 68% of responders indicated that their districts would support current staff who wanted to pursue either license.

Fifty-four districts indicated that they had recently advertised for a position that included gifted education expertise; 41% of those said they found no applicants with any qualifications in the area, and another 35% said they found an applicant with only some qualifications in gifted education.

Identification

For districts that have formal identification procedures (N = 90 approximately), the average percent of district students identified was approximately 8%, with the most popular responses being 5% and 10%.

Only slightly more than 2% of formally identified gifted students are not Caucasian.

Almost all districts that responded conduct formal identification in the areas of intellectual and specific academic giftedness (96% each). Between 76% and 79% identify students in the other three areas (creativity, leadership, and visual and performing arts).

A wide variety of instruments and procedures is used for formal identification. A majority of the 94 responding districts use nominations from teachers (93%), the WKCE (88%), nominations from parents (79%), other standardized achievement tests (66%), individual IQ assessments (60%), course grades (56%), student work (55%), and specialized gifted screening assessments (52%).

Programming and Services

At the elementary level, the most frequent strategies or structures used to meet the needs of gifted/talented students are differentiation in the regular classroom (91%), an enrichment program (82%, though note that only 36% use pull-out classes), acceleration (74%), and state or national contests (57%). Almost half (47%) use cluster grouping.

Most districts reported "differentiation in the regular classroom" to be the single most common practice used at elementary level in their district.

At the secondary level, the most frequent strategies or structures used to meet the needs of gifted/talented students are Advanced Placement courses (85%), the Youth

Options program (82%), differentiation in regular classrooms (76%), acceleration (70%), and special classes or sections other than AP (52%).

Most districts reported Advanced Placement (AP) Program classes to be the single most common practice used at secondary level in their district.

Twenty-five percent of responders offer some counseling or social-emotional services targeted to gifted students. Services include support groups and individual counseling.

The most common source of funding for district gifted programs and services is the local general operational fund (81%); 52% of respondents reported a budget line item for gifted education. Only 15% of districts reported the state gifted grants (from DPI via CESAs) as a source of funding.

Twenty-six percent of districts reported having a parent group for gifted students (N = 34). *Note: how do we find them?*

Districts report varying types of parent involvement, including involvement in programming decisions for their children, involvement in the identification process, and involvement in the district's gifted and talented plan.

Needs and Importance of Goals

In order to achieve the statutory aim of gifted education (helping students fully develop their capabilities), districts reported the following goals as most important (percentages refer to goals deemed "very important" or "Important"):

1. All teachers know how to differentiate for gifted in regular classrooms, 98%;
2. Students appropriately challenged in all areas of talent, 90%;
3. Students appropriately challenged most of the school day, 88%.
4. The goal that was scored the lowest (still 55% important or very important) was "students identified at beginning of school career."

When asked how well these goals were achieved in their districts, the items most often selected as "not achieved" were:

1. All teachers receive staff development in gifted education;
2. Students received appropriate social-emotional services; and
3. Teachers know how to nominate underrepresented/diverse students for gifted services.

In each case, 38% of respondents said that these goals were “not achieved” in their district. Slightly more than half the respondents felt that these goals were “partially achieved.”

When asked about barriers to achieving these goals, the responses checked most often were: -

1. State school funding structure (79%);
2. Local funding priorities (68%); and
3. District initiatives too full with other topics and populations (63%).

Over half the respondents also selected lack of release time for teachers and coordinators to plan together (56%) and lack of knowledge about gifted education among staff in general (54%).

If you require a full set of responses, please contact Dr. Gould at cgould@uwsp.edu.

III. Excerpted results from Focus Groups

Focus groups were designed to elicit information related to the exemplary traits teachers of gifted and talented students should demonstrate within the classroom setting as well as the need for a specific license within this area.

a. Focus Group #1

10/3/08

Sheboygan, Wisconsin

Parents of Gifted Children (12 parents of students identified with gifts and talents participating)

Exemplary Traits Identified:

- I would like the teacher to have the ability to individualize work for my child. I do not want my child to be repeating things she already knows.
- I would like the teacher to have the ability to assess my child as an individual.
- I would like the teacher to have the ability to communicate with me about my child.

- I would like the teacher to have a definite level of knowledge about gifted children. There is nothing to ensure that now. You're just lucky if you get a teacher who understands your child.
- I would like the teacher to have knowledge about the social and emotional issues related to gifted children.
- I would like the teacher to have knowledge of grouping strategies and make the grouping within the classroom flexible.
- I would like the teacher to fully incorporate things that have been started. For example, my child's teacher pre-tested so that the children who already knew the material wouldn't have to repeat it. Nothing happened from that point. My child just read a book on his own. He does that anyway.
- I would like the teacher to have the ability to work with me as a parent and make me a partner in my child's education. It takes some level of skill to work with me, but I'm a parent, too. I deserve the teacher's input about my child.

Need for a specific teacher license within this area:

All participants concurring very strongly yes.

b. Focus Group #2

11/18/08

University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point

University undergraduate students with previous training in teaching gifted children (11 students participating)

Exemplary Traits Identified:

- I think the teacher shouldn't be threatened by the student's abilities.
- I think the teacher can't have a typical classroom. Things must be much more flexible.
- I think the teacher should know how to network with the community and potential mentors.
- I think the teacher needs to understand the levels of giftedness and can't think of it as one monolithic thing.
- I think the teacher should understand that in some cases giftedness can be a burden.
- I think the teacher must be patient and resourceful.
- I think the teacher must have a classroom that fosters intrinsic motivation.
- I think the teacher should be flexible enough to give extended time so that the student can work in depth on an assignment.

Need for a specific teacher license within this area:

Very strong concurrence of yes from all participants.

c. Focus Group #3

2/16/09

Stevens Point, Wisconsin

Parents, teachers, administrators, psychologists, community members at a school district advisory meeting (14 individuals participating).

Exemplary Traits Identified:

- Teachers need to know and understand my child.
- Teachers need to be knowledgeable about the subjects they are teaching.
- Teachers need to challenge students appropriately.
- Teachers need to be experts at guiding students.
- Teachers need to be effective with advanced students.

Need for a specific teacher license within this area:

Some consensus that there should be a specific teacher license. Some consensus that the classroom should differ from a typical classroom.

d. Focus Group #4

8/18/ 2008

Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin

Professionals, teachers, administrators at a state wide meeting (11 individuals participating).

Exemplary traits identified

- Teachers need to be flexible.
- Teachers need to let students explore on their own.
- Teachers need to be able to get out of the way of student learning.
- Teachers need to let students learn “in depth.”
- Teachers need to step back and let students discover on their own.
- Teachers need to move out of the role of “information giver.”

Need for a specific teacher license within this area:

Some consensus that there should be a specific license. Strong consensus that the classroom should differ from a typical classroom.

Conclusions:

At this point, the training of teachers who teach children with identified gifts and talents in Wisconsin varies tremendously. There is no standardization of at least a minimum level of skill.

Constituent groups vary in their assessment of a need for this license from strong to some consensus.