

# Identifying and Nurturing Exceptional Ability in Young Children: A Talent Development Approach

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# Optimal Match

It is necessary to ensure that educators are able to recognize the learning and developmental differences of students in their classrooms and promote cognitive and affective growth commensurate with their abilities.



Has it?

Doesn't  
have it?



# Essential Questions in Gifted Education

- Who/what are we identifying? (Students or students-for-services?)
- Why are we trying to do that?

# Talent Development

## Current Research Findings

(Subotnik, Olszewski-Kubilius, Worrell)

- Specific abilities are better predictors of adult achievement than general ability
- Intelligence is malleable and increases with intervention
- Gifted children are as variable in personality characteristics as non gifted children

- Unique psychology of gifted children is not inherent in being gifted but due to interaction of gifted individual and environment
- Psychosocial skills are important determiners of achievement and these are also malleable and coachable
- Giftedness develops over time with support, opportunity and motivation
- Giftedness is not static but changes over time and with development

# Talent Development Framework

- Emphasis on recognizing and nurturing talents
- A focus on domain-specific abilities (math, science, etc.)
- Ability as developmental
- Deliberate cultivation of noncognitive and psychosocial skills
- Learning and creative development occur inside and outside of school
- Goal of advanced education is to support creative productivity in adulthood

Early Childhood

Middle Childhood

Early  
Adolescence

Late Adolescence

Emergent  
Talent

Competency

Expertise

Early Childhood

Middle Childhood

**Emergent Talent**

Acquiring foundational knowledge and skills  
Self-regulation of emotions, behavior,  
attention  
Developing interpersonal skills

Exposure to different talent areas via  
enrichment: dabble and define interests

**Exploration**

Middle Childhood

Early  
Adolescence

## Competency

Build core academic skills and knowledge  
Strategic use of learning strategies and meta-cognitive skills  
Mindsets/self-beliefs that support achievement

Acceleration in areas of advanced competency  
Continued exposure to potential areas of interest  
via enrichment programs

## Building Foundations

Early  
Adolescence

Late Adolescence

## Expertise

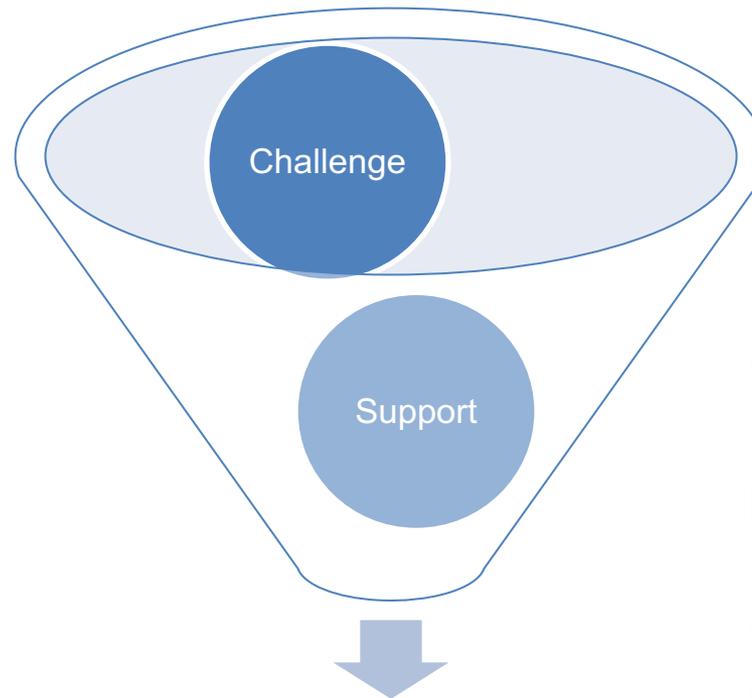
Deep knowledge and engagement in areas of talent/interest  
Formation of an identity that includes talent domain

Advanced study in talent areas  
Authentic work in talent domains guided by professionals  
Exposure to career fields

Entry Into Professional & Creative Domain

## Challenge:

- Advanced Enrichment
- Acceleration



Talent Development

## Support:

### Psychosocial Skill Development

- Self-confidence
- Mindsets
- Resilience
- Teachability

# Critical Issues in Identification

Excellence Gaps

Under-identification of Talent

# What is an excellence gap?

“Excellence gap” refers to the disparity in the percent of lower-income versus higher-income students who reach advanced levels of academic performance.

– Jack Kent Cooke Foundation website

# Why are there excellence gaps?

- Unequal opportunity to learn (OTL)
  - fewer students from traditionally underrepresented groups are ready for advanced opportunities (lost potential) (Peters & Engerrand, 2016, Grissom & Redding, 2016)
  - In the US, poverty is associated with achievement disparities; if you cannot afford an opportunity, you don't get it.
- When students are ready for the opportunities, they aren't identified (Grissom & Redding, 2016; Hamilton et al., 2018; Siegle et al., 2018)
  - School identification is often done sparingly and inconsistently
- When students do need the services, their schools don't offer them

# Identifying Talents Early

. . . the best way to identify gifted students . . . and to recognize and nurture the strengths of ALL students . . . is to provide them with very rich, challenging curriculum in their areas of strength and interest and see who responds like a gifted student.

# What can we do?

Frontloading: Provide young children with early, rigorous, enrichment experiences

- Help them demonstrate what they know, understand, and are able to do
- Make them ready to be identified for and take advantage of advanced opportunities
- Enrichment, compacting, access with scaffolding, noncognitive skill development

# What can we do?

- Identify a broad range of needs, interests, and levels of readiness.
  - Observation of learning
  - Universal screening, local norms
  - Open enrollment opportunities (after school, school breaks)
- Assess early, often, and with a range of tools

# What can we do?

- Provide more rigor for students. Teach more students above “grade level”
  - Cluster grouping, differentiation, inquiry-based approaches, problem-based units in early childhood and elementary classrooms
  - Acceleration when necessary
  - Supplemental services for high achievers

# Talent Development

- In early stages of talent development, gifted education programs should place greater emphasis on identifying potential, particularly with individuals who have had limited opportunities to develop the knowledge, skills, or other characteristics used to determine gifted program eligibility.
- As children mature, the services they receive should be adjusted to provide a real-time match to their current levels of demonstrated need, gradually placing more emphasis on achievement and productivity within domains.

*NAGC Talent Development Task Force  
Report to the Board of Directors (Besnoy, K.,  
Drapeau, P., Felder, M., Horn, C., Krisel, S.,  
Laing, P., McBee, M., Olszewski-Kubilius, P.,  
Roberts, J., Subotnik, R., 2015)*

# Programming for Talent Development (Pathways)



AP, IB, Independent research and projects, mentorships, apprenticeships, authentic work in domain



School-based and outside-of-school programs that develop foundational knowledge and skills at appropriate (accelerated) pace

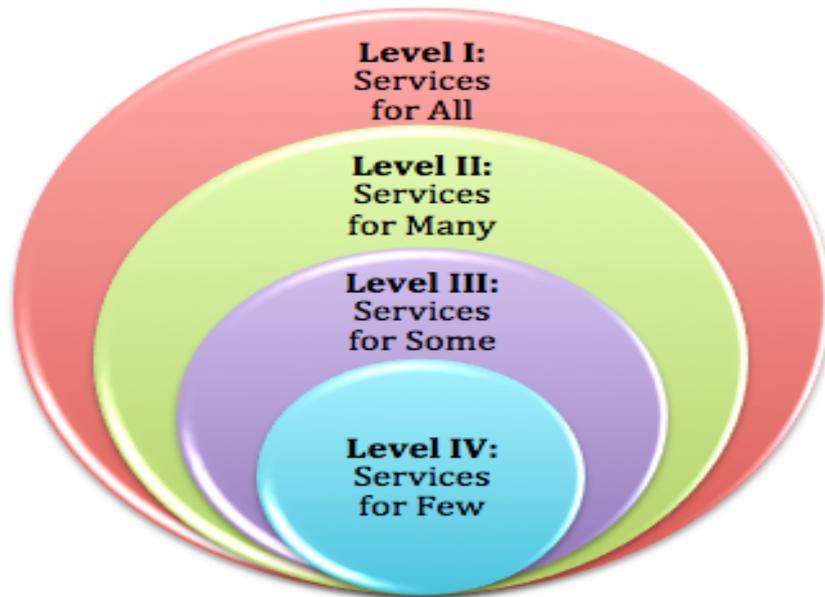


Early exposure and playful engagement through family activities, formal enrichment activities

# School-Based Programming

Enrichment, Exploration,  
Exposure – “Talent Mining”

# Levels of Service



**Level I Services for All (Early Childhood and Elementary):** Differentiation, cluster grouping; creative and critical thinking units; and inquiry-based learning to foster talent and discovery of student strengths.

**Level II Services for Many (Early Childhood and Elementary):** Co-teaching/push-in to address specific needs, flexible grouping, after school programs, summer school

# Early Childhood-Elementary

- “Gifted” Curriculum (e.g., Wm & Mary units) for all
- Enrichment
- Differentiated instruction
- Flexible and cluster grouping
- Universal screening (achievement, abilities)
- Accelerative options

# Supplemental Programming

Enrichment, Exploration,  
Exposure – “Talent Mining”



## Pathways Model in Enrichment Programs

A student's pathway is described not only by *what* they study, but also by *how* their learning experience varies and evolves over time and across settings.

# Talent Development Framework Details

| STAGE                  | CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION  | PSYCHOSOCIAL SKILL DEVELOPMENT   | PROGRAMMING FOCUS  | PARENT ROLE   |
|------------------------|---|--|--|---|
| <b>Emergent Talent</b> | <p>Foundational knowledge and skills in core subjects.</p> <p>Academic skill development.</p> | <p>Self-regulation of emotions and behavior.</p> <p>Development of attention and focus.</p> <p>Socializing with peers.</p> | <p>Enrichment that is interdisciplinary, inquiry-based, hands-on.</p> <p>Opportunities to explore a variety of subjects and define interests in core subjects. Early access to advanced content in areas of demonstrated strength.</p> | <p>Expose child to different talent areas via informal or formal enrichment opportunities to develop and ascertain child's area of interests and abilities. Promote curiosity, engagement, and motivation and growth mindset.</p> |

# CTD Supplemental Programming

|                                      | Learning Environment | Age or Grade   | Length of Course              | Length of Class  | Student Evaluation                     |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------|-------------------------------|------------------|--|
| Tadpole Academy (Parent-Child)       | In-Person            | Age 3          | 3 class meetings              | 1.5 hrs          | Feedback direct to parent within class |
| Online Family Program (Parent-Child) | Online               | K - Grade 3    | 4 consecutive weeks of access | 2-4 hrs per week | Feedback direct to parent in class     |
| Age 4 Classes                        | In-Person            | Age 4          | 8 or 6 consecutive Saturdays  | 2.5 or 3 hrs     | Enrichment format                      |
| Challenge Lab                        | In-Person            | Grades 1 - 5   | 5 consecutive weekdays        | 3 hrs            | No                                     |
| Leapfrog-Spark                       | In-Person            | PreK – Grade 5 | 5 consecutive weekdays        | 3 or 6 hrs       | Enrichment format                      |
| Weekend Enrichment                   | In-Person            | PreK – Grade 8 | 8 or 6 consecutive Saturdays  | 2.5 hrs          | Enrichment format                      |
| Accelerated Weekend                  | In-Person            | Grade 3-8      | 2 consecutive weekend days    | 4.75 hrs         | No                                     |



**Tadpole Academy facilitates emergent talent with direct involvement of parents**

# Online Family Program

- Direct involvement of parents
- Building community of like-minded peers
- Flexibility in parent participation
- High-level content
- Off-screen, hands-on activities

Northwestern | CTD COURSES GROUPS RESOURCES TOOLS

Fractions, Beyond Pizza (Gr. 3-3r) Fall 2018

Course Design and the Role of Parents/Caregivers

How This Course Works

Bloom's Taxonomy

Growth Mindset

Illinois Association for Gifted Children (IAGC) Presentation

The Joan Ganz Cooney Center

comment

Highlight User 16 Posts 13

slideshow into three parts.

Like · Reply

**Hadley Pace** Fri Oct 19, 2018 at 5:28 pm  
hi ole I like your slideshow maby next time you could youse multable types of questions

Like · Reply

**Parker Ettinger** Sat Oct 20, 2018 at 9:19 am  
Hil I made a test booklet for my Dad with plans to build me a playhouse. I learned that estimating is a quick to round with fractions. And, I learned that you can't "fraction" a window! ha!

Estimating\_Fractions\_-\_Parker\_Ettinger.pdf 10 MB | VIEW

Like 🍌 1 · Reply

Hide 1 reply 1

**Amy Schneider** Mon Oct 22, 2018 at 12:48 pm  
I really enjoyed your project, Parker! You have created a project based learning type of challenge he connected the learning to the real world. Super job! Your project connects to the final project of our

Like · Reply

31



Enrichment courses provide an independent classroom experience but do not require parent participation or testing to determine eligibility.

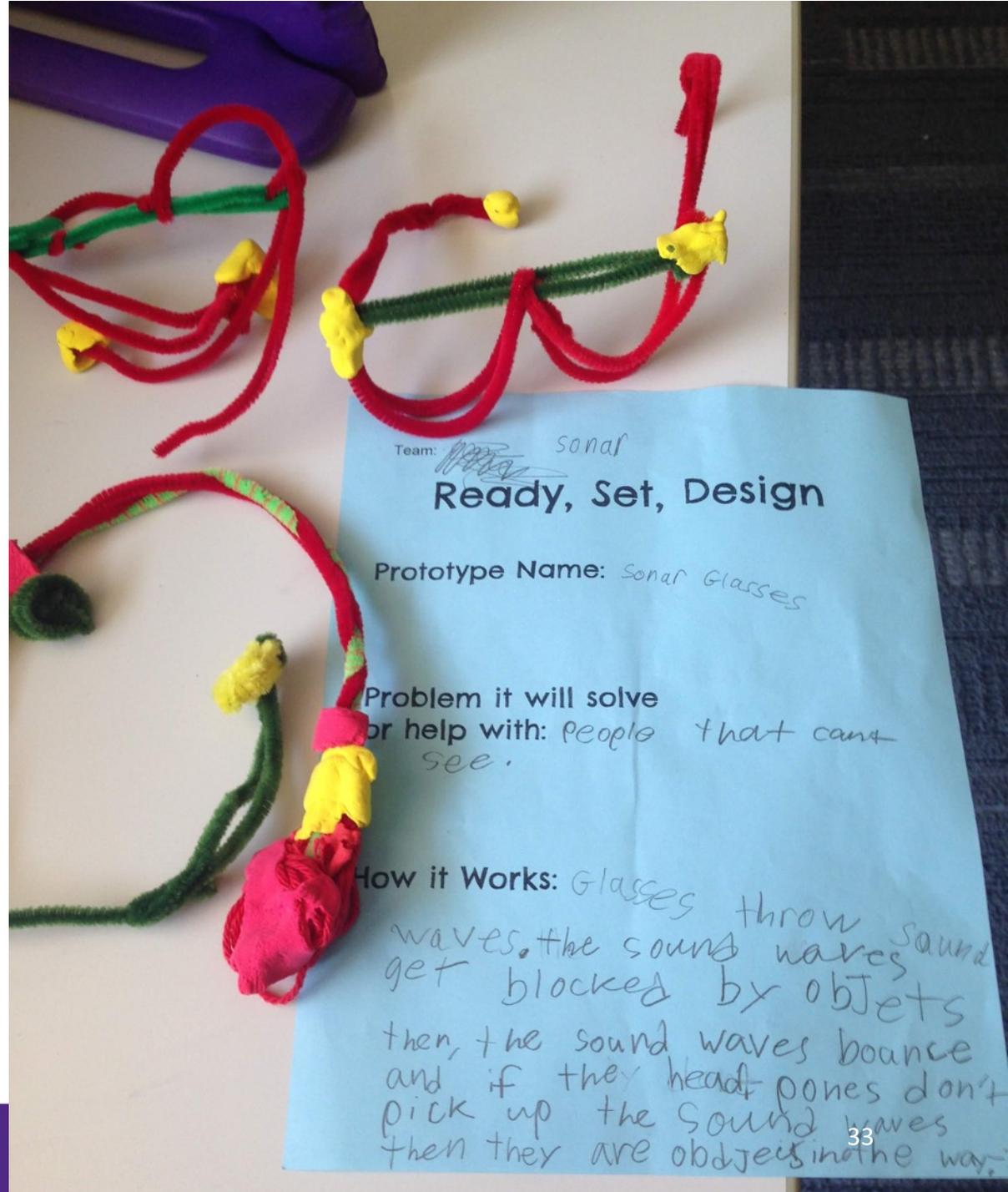
Through play, students explore and demonstrate interests, strengths, skills.

# Challenge Lab Makerspace & Accelerated Weekends

## Exposure & Application

Makerspace - Exposure and creativity are valued over progress toward predetermined learning goals

AWE - Focus is exposure to application of interest and skills in a professional context



# Conclusion

- Early identification of students' talents is appropriate and necessary, particularly for children who may have had limited opportunity to learn.
  - Minimize excellence gaps, develop talents fully
- Identify from a talent development approach by providing rigorous learning opportunities followed by more formal identification