

Doing More with Less: Tips for Innovative Elementary Gifted Programming in Limited-Resource Settings

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About Me

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M.A. Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages,
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Certified to teach all subjects PK-4 and grades 5-6, K-12
Spanish, 7-8 ELA, 7-12 Math, ESL

K-6 Gifted Support Teacher in southeastern PA for 4 years

Work in highly diverse, low-income school district



Session Goals

1

Understand how **diverse learners are disproportionately affected** by a lack of resources for gifted programming

2

Understand the value of **reaching out through collaboration and community** in supporting gifted learners

3

Understand how to **focus in to overcome financial barriers** and develop innovative, individualized gifted programming

4

Employ a growth mindset to **envision creative ways to support students** in their own teaching context despite financial constraints



Effects of Funding Disparities

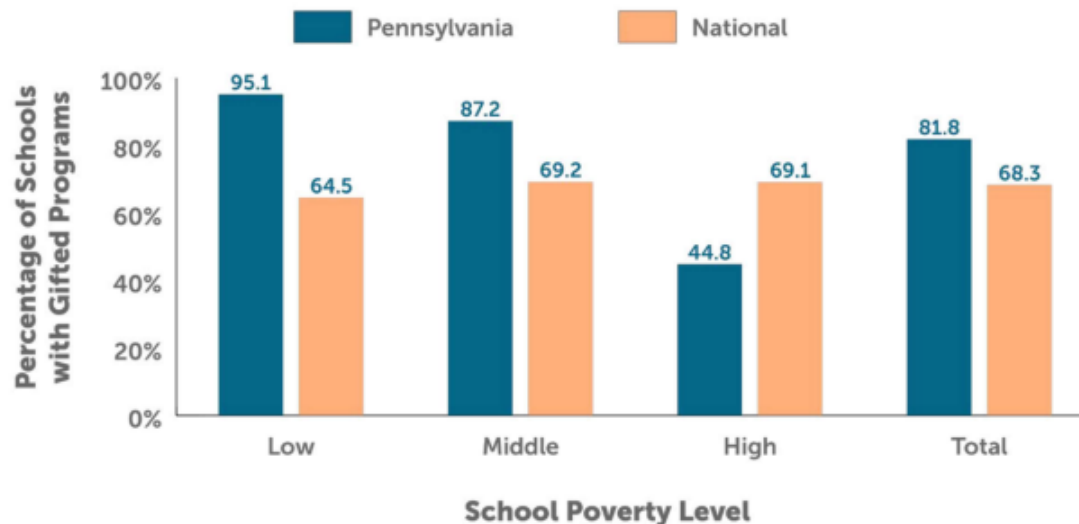
Challenges in Low-Resource Schools

- “Students, regardless of students’ family income, demonstrated lower achievement in schools characterized as low income. Higher values of school SES were associated with higher values of student achievement.” (Perry & McConney, 2010)
- “States are shortchanging their low-income and minority students by spending less money per student in high poverty schools, and less money in general for schools with higher percentages of minority students.” (VanTassel-Baska & Stambaugh, 2007)
- High poverty and high minority schools often have less experienced and lower paid teachers and an extensive focus on remediation.



Gifted Funding in Low-Resource Schools

**FIGURE 1:
AVAILABILITY OF GIFTED PROGRAMMING BY SCHOOL
POVERTY LEVEL**



- Unevenness in funding and resources, even in states that mandate gifted education services, means the availability of and range of services is largely dependent on the ability and desire of a school district to fund gifted and talented education programs with local school dollars.
- “The limited resources of impoverished schools can affect school programming emphasis as well as achievement... The proportion of economically disadvantaged students within a school was one of the primary determinants of gifted-related resource allocation; poor schools allocated fewer fiscal and human resources to gifted programming.” (Hamilton et al, 2018)
- PA ranks 38th out of 50 states in availability of gifted programming in high poverty schools (and 49th out of 50 for minority participation in these programs) (Yaluma & Tyner, 2018)

Low-Income Learners

The number of children living in poverty in the United States more than doubled in 2022. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023)

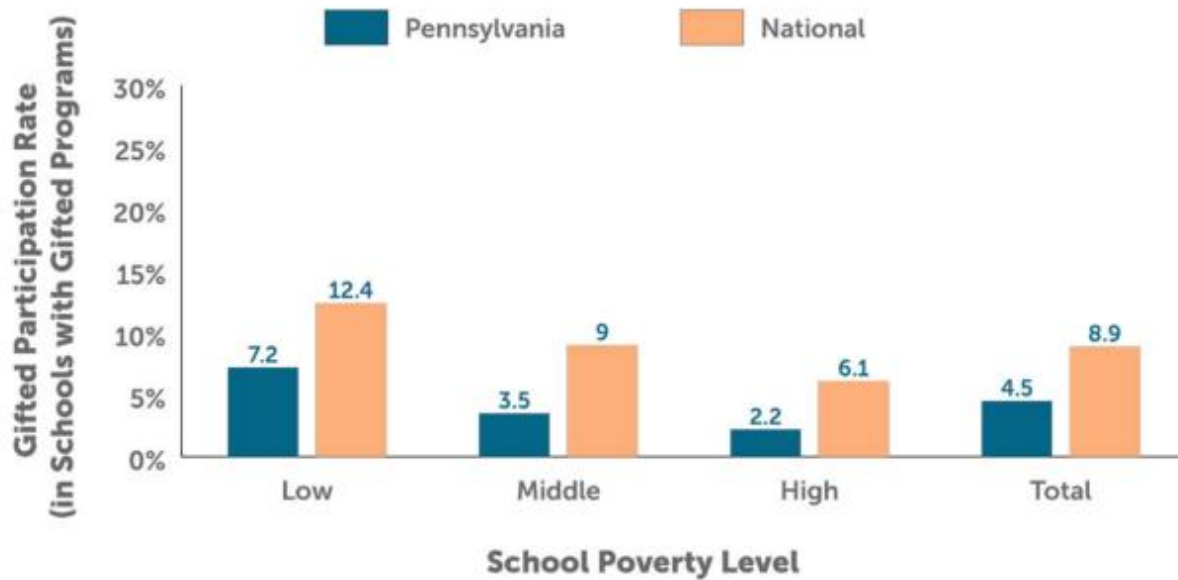
“Students eligible for free or reduced lunch programs are less likely to be identified for gifted education services even after controlling for prior math and reading achievement scores. In addition, the findings indicated that students in low-income schools have a further reduced possibility of being identified for gifted services.” (Hamilton et al, 2018)

“Too often these children, who typically depend solely on public schools to meet their educational needs, are overlooked by educators and administrators who see high performance on ability or achievement tests as the sole indication of high ability. The type and variety of obstacles are wide ranging, and include policies, perceptions, and pedagogy and curriculum.” (Olszewski-Kubilius & Clarenbach, 2012)

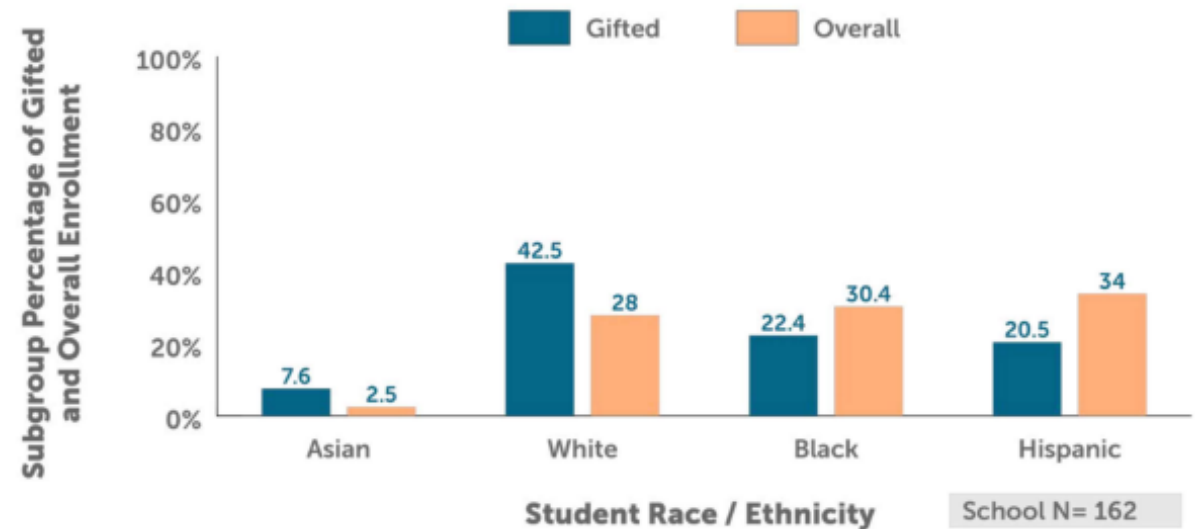


Gifted Participation (Yaluma & Tyner, 2018)

**FIGURE 2:
GIFTED PARTICIPATION BY SCHOOL POVERTY LEVEL**



**FIGURE 3:
SCHOOL COMPOSITION AND GIFTED PARTICIPATION BY RACE
IN HIGH-POVERTY SCHOOLS WITH GIFTED PROGRAMS**



“For the K–12 system to do its part in equalizing opportunities for poor and minority youngsters in the United States, clearly much is needed in addition to gifted education. But too often, reform efforts intended to boost the prospects of such children focus entirely on those who, for a hundred reasons, are struggling to achieve academically. As a result, we tend to neglect those kids who are academically able and doing well—yet whose schools do not challenge them to achieve all that they are capable of. For schools to offer gifted education is an important start. But it isn’t enough unless schools also encourage and assist students to participate in such programs—and unless those programs have both the capacity to serve them and the quality to serve them well.” (Yaluma & Tyner, 2018)

Encouragement for Educators



“Universal opportunities for consistent academic challenge and development throughout K-12 education would do a great deal to help talented but disadvantaged students develop to the fullest and help resolve the ongoing tension between equity and excellence in education... Surely such an effort is worth it.” (Wai & Worrell, 2020)

We can view students “from a perspective that emphasizes strengths instead of weaknesses, differences rather than deficits, possibilities as opposed to limitations, and solutions instead of obstacles.” We as educators have the power to “minimize a student’s zip code and socioeconomic status as the determining factors for receiving a rigorous, high-quality education.” (Olszewski-Kubilius & Clarenbach, 2012)

“While at-risk groups may have more negative factors in their profile, they tend to show great resilience and demonstrate as much hope for the future as more advantaged students. “ (VanTassel-Baska & Stambaugh, 2007)

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Reaching Out



Collaboration with General Education Teachers

In limited-resource settings, budget constraints often result in fewer gifted teachers being expected to service more students. While most of us as teachers prefer to work directly with students, collaboration with classroom teachers can help magnify and broaden our impact.



Intermediate Unit Resources

- Gifted Network
- Training and Consultation (TaC)
- STEM Lending Library

Alternative Funding

- PTO
- NEA Foundation Grants
- PA Smart Grants
- Other Grants
- Donors Choose
- Local Companies
- Foundations



Community Support

- Career Ready PA Coalition
- Mentors
- Guest Speakers
- Virtual Field Trips
- Parent or Alumni Volunteers
- Public Libraries
- Local Businesses
- Universities



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Focusing In

What If?

What if I told you that there is an option for gifted programming that is specifically endorsed by Pennsylvania school code and strongly backed by research? What if it provided challenge to gifted learners on a daily basis, required no additional staffing, and often had no additional cost?

Acceleration

“Acceleration is the best-researched, most effective, yet most under-utilized intervention for gifted students”. Yet, it can be accomplished for free or very low cost



More About Acceleration (A Nation Empowered, 2015)

“For bright students, acceleration results in both long-term and short-term beneficial effects, academically, psychologically, and socially.”

“Acceleration is a very low-cost intervention for addressing the needs of gifted students.”
In some cases, such as with whole grade acceleration or early entrance, there is a decrease in baseline costs.



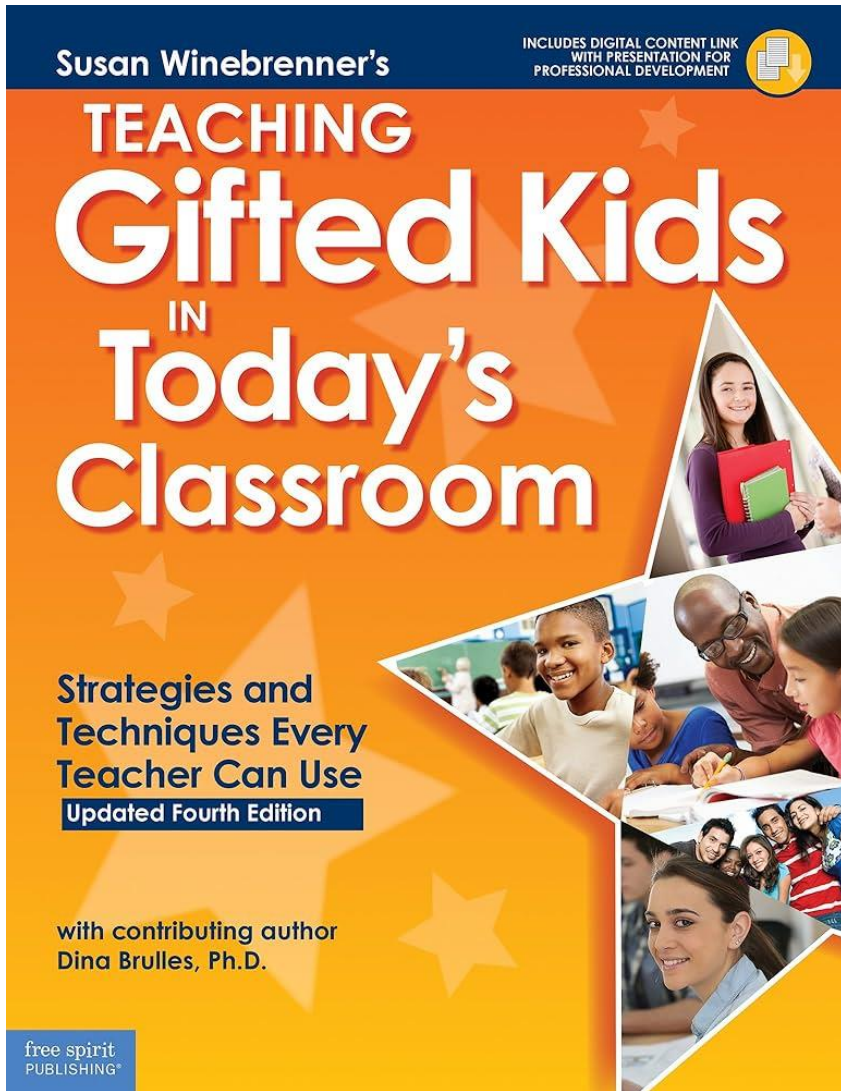
“High-ability students who are economically vulnerable achieve considerably less without support for their abilities than economically secure students.”

There are 20 types of acceleration which are appropriate for a wide range of needs (whole grade, single subject, early entrance, etc.)

Resource Room

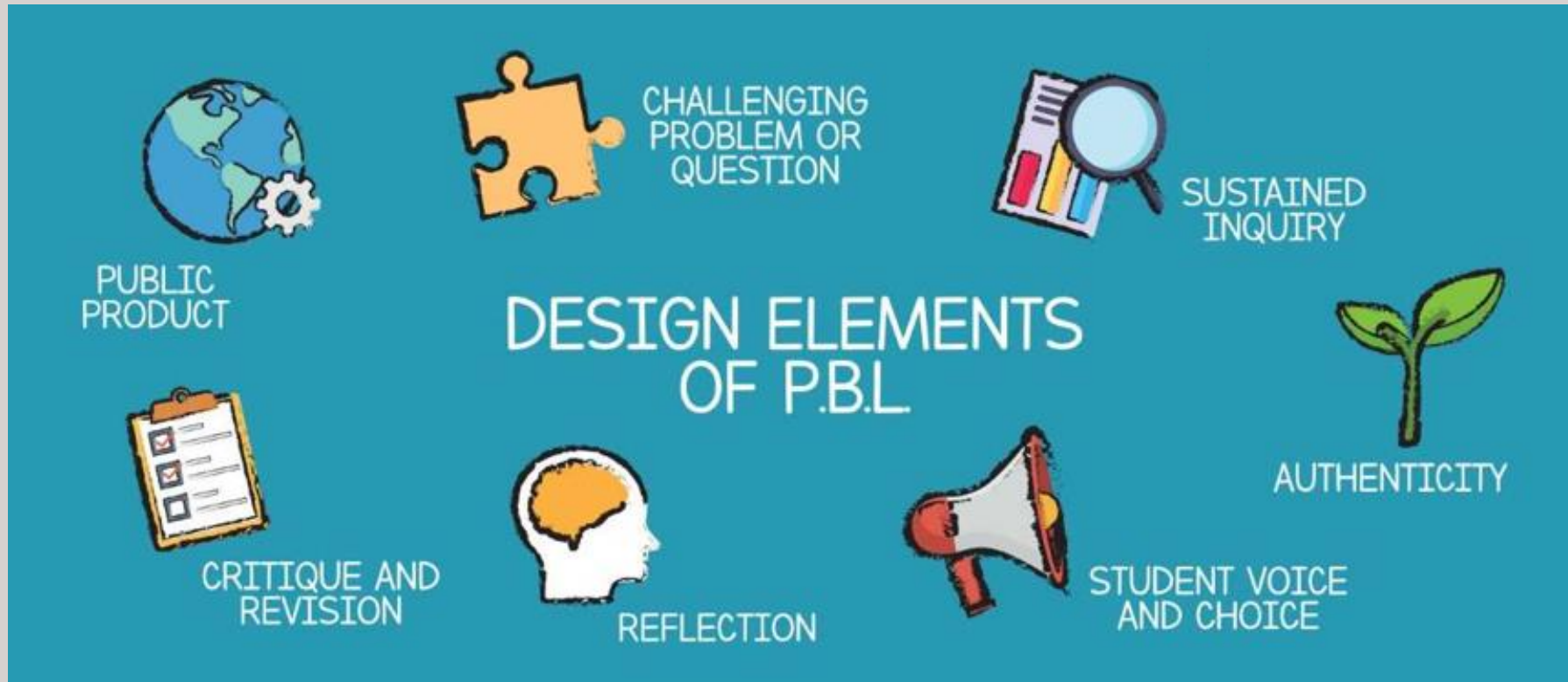
- Students work on different projects based on interests and needs
- Teacher acts as a facilitator/guide for student-centered projects, providing direct instruction when necessary
- Allows a teacher to maximize time by working with students from multiple grades, strength areas, interests, and goals at once
- Work can be continued in the general education classroom between pull-out sessions





Compacting and Extension Menus

- Offer students who have demonstrated mastery (via pretest or other assessment) opportunities to engage in extension projects in the general education classroom as well
- Use learning contracts and/or learning logs to create clear expectations and structure for independent work
- Use extension menus to provide students options for projects that extend what they are learning in the general education curriculum
- See [sample forms and menus](#) from *Teaching Gifted Kids in Today's Classroom* by Susan Winebrenner



Project Based Learning

Sample Project Ideas

- Develop and market a mutual fund
- ‘Ought to be a Law’ persuasive essay
- Ancient civilizations newspaper and debate
- STEM design challenge
- Educational board game design
- App development for sustainability
- Community concerns public service announcement
- Upcycling inventions
- Make your own museum research project



Online and Adaptive Learning

Free

- Everfi
- iCivics
- Read Theory
- Khan Academy
- Prodigy
- Common Lit
- Coursera

Not Free

- Renzulli Learning
- IXL
- ALEKS
- Discovery Education
- Study Ladder
- Study Island
- Lexia

Summary

- Reach out
 - Collaboration
 - IU resources
 - Alternative funding
 - Community support
- Focus in
 - Acceleration
 - Resource Room
 - Compacting and Extension Menus
 - Project-based Learning
 - Online and Adaptive Learning



Reflection

1. Which of these strategies does your district or school **already incorporate** effectively?
2. What are one or two strategies you could **prioritize as areas for improvement** that would have the **greatest positive impact** for gifted learners in your program?



Questions?

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Thank You

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