

**THE IMPLICATIONS OF NCLB FOR GIFTED EDUCATION:
ONE DISTRICT'S STORY**

By

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation addresses the question of what implications, if any, has implementing NCLB as mandated had on gifted students in one district. The purpose of this study is to determine 1.) How has a district responded to gifted and high-achieving students within the boundaries of post-NCLB curriculum? 2.) How have teachers responded to gifted and high-achieving students within the boundaries of the post - NCLB curriculum? Data for this study comes from one large, Midwestern suburban school district.

Current literature evaluating the success of NCLB legislation has identified unintended consequences due to implementation: curriculum narrowing, high-stakes testing & accountability, and reallocation of limited resources. Within the current body of existing literature is the identification of an excellence gap for gifted and high-achieving students. Because NCLB mandates yearly assessments in reading and mathematics, there is pressure on districts to report scores to the public. This pressure inadvertently creates situations in which test preparation and extra instruction in reading and mathematics are a larger focus than non-tested subjects; this focus may potentially be narrowing curriculum for gifted students. Additionally, because assessments are expensive to implement, limited resources must be reallocated in order to support portions of NCLB requirements.

Using qualitative data from interviews along with quantitative data, this study sheds light on curriculum narrowing, high-stakes testing & accountability and reallocation of limited resources and the role of each in gifted education.

Key findings indicate there is no significant effect on gifted students in this district. Though there is some evidence of curriculum narrowing, high-stakes testing & accountability pressure and limited resource reallocation, stronger evidence is needed for significant results to surface.

Chapter One

Introduction

1.0 Purpose

The purpose of this study was to investigate the implications, if any, NCLB mandates have had for gifted education. This paper failed to find three significant effects for gifted students in one large, Midwestern suburban school district: 1.) curriculum narrowing, 2.) pressures of high-stakes testing, and 3.) reallocation of limited resources in order to meet NCLB mandated requirements.

The goal of this paper is to shed light on what current gifted education looks like for gifted students, when legislative focus, NCLB, was aimed to improve achievement of other student groups. Much attention has been focused on a gap between performances of minority—black—students on assessments. This achievement gap is one of the driving forces behind NCLB legislation. The hope was the gap would close and all students would perform at about the same level. Recently, there has been a growing acknowledgement of an excellence gap, a gap between where high achieving students are performing on state assessments in relation to where they should be performing on state assessments (Xiang, et. al., 2011; Loveless, Farkas & Duffet, 2008).

While it is necessary to implement quality assessments in order to measure student growth as required by NCLB mandates, it pressures districts to re-allocate resources in order to cover exorbitant costs of implementation (McCallister & Plourde, 2008). Additionally, pressure from assessments inadvertently results in curriculum narrowing due to preparation for such assessments (Peine & Coleman, 2010; Berliner, 2009; Jolly & Kettler, 2008). While one could

argue each unintended consequence affects all students, this dissertation seeks to illustrate gifted students are caught in the middle.

Currently, assumptions of reforming education through the demands of accountability are being made by politicians and the public, and such accountability is realized in emphases on assessment scores (McDonnell & Choisser, 1997). This supposition centralizes on beliefs one assessment score is sufficient to measure academic achievement of children. Supovitz (2009) and Jacob (2004) shed light on the dangers of this ideology in articles written about high-stakes testing.

Further magnifying other problems for gifted students, curriculum narrowing as a result of instructional practices is argued in research by Peine & Coleman (2010) and Jolly & Kettler (2008). Additionally, Berliner addressed how curricula is being narrowed in a speech delivered at the 3rd Redesigning Pedagogy International Conference in Singapore in 2009, while Topol and Roeber (2010) describe enormous costs associated with implementing high-quality statewide assessments. The following section briefly discusses the risks facing gifted education under NCLB which is followed by unintended consequences of NCLB.

There has been growing national concern gifted children are being left behind because of unintended consequences related to curriculum narrowing, the pressures of high-stakes testing, and reallocation of limited resources. NCLB may be short-changing gifted education by focusing *too* much on struggling students therefore creating aforementioned negative consequences.

1.1 Research Questions

This paper sought to answer these questions:

1. What implications, if any, has implementing NCLB as mandated had for gifted education?

2. How has a district responded to gifted and high-achieving students within the boundaries of post-NCLB curriculum?
3. How have teachers responded to gifted and high-achieving students within the boundaries of the post - NCLB curriculum?

1.2 Data

Data for this study came from one large, Midwestern suburban school district situated in the northeast part of Kansas. District demographics closely mirror state demographics. This district differs slightly from state percentages in the following ways: a higher graduation percentage rate, a lower percentage of free and reduced students, and nearly double the state percentage of students in the “other classification” category of race. Overall, achievement and academic scores of the district are above state averages at all grade levels in state administered mathematics, reading, science, history and writing assessments.

This study relied mostly on data from interviews with teachers and district administrators, a teacher survey, and archival data of staff development catalogs and budgets.

1.3 Findings

Findings from data indicate there are no significant implications for gifted students in a post-NCLB curriculum in this district. Though there is evidence of curriculum narrowing, high-stakes testing & accountability pressure, and limited resource reallocation, no significant effects can be determined from the data.

Chapter Two

Review of Literature

2.1 Possible Effects on Gifted Education

The purpose of this study was to examine what has happened to gifted education in an educational world dominated by NCLB legislation. What were the implications, if any, of NCLB mandates for gifted education in one large, Midwestern suburban school district. Specifically, this study sought to answer questions about how a district and its teachers responded to gifted and high-achieving students within the boundaries of a post-NCLB curriculum.

This study was framed by tensions between excellence and equity. Strike (1985) posed the question, “Can we have excellence and equity simultaneously?” Of the possible unintended consequences related to NCLB implementation, three were especially concerning: curriculum narrowing, high-stakes tests, and re-allocation of limited resources in order to support unfunded mandates.

Insert Figure 1 here

2.1.1 Curriculum Narrowing

Narrow curriculum is often used in describing the act of placing more focus on tested material found on high-stakes assessments. As pressure for schools and districts to show Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) mounts, curriculum narrowing has been closely associated with NCLB. However, this author acknowledges curriculum narrowing may possibly be a result

of more concentrated focus in choosing priorities in education; curriculum narrowing may even be the result of a decline in academic rigor. In this paper, curriculum narrowing will be defined to mean “the core academic subjects of reading, mathematics, and science are given priority at the expense of the time and resources dedicated to the instruction of other subjects in the curriculum including social studies, physical education, foreign languages and the arts” (King & Zucker, 2005).

Regardless of the reason, a curriculum narrowing is harmful to all students, but gifted students are going to be affected the most. (Peine & Coleman, 2010; Jolly & Kettler, 2008; Benbow & Stanley, 1996). Gifted students need depth and challenge (Scot, Callahan & Urquhart, 2009; McCallister & Plourde, 2008), and yet curriculum narrowing does not allow for consistent depth and exploration of learning. Teachers are placed in positions of trying to meet needs of many different students, especially those with many learning difficulties; it is often difficult to create learning experiences gifted students need (Scot, Callahan & Urquhart, 2009). Meaning well, some teachers buy into the oft believed myth gifted students are able to learn on their own by allowing gifted students to explore learning on their own (Beisser, 2008). Although offering independent explorations are good ways to challenge a gifted student, they cannot be the only way (Scot, Callahan & Urquhart, 2009).

Tackling difficult material requires scaffolding for success and mastery (McCallister & Plourde, 2008). When presented with challenging material, students make choices to work hard and experience success as a result of hard work. Assumptions are made concerning gifted students—gifted students will be successful because of inherent intelligence (Berman, Schultz & Weber, 2012). However, if gifted students have fewer opportunities to learn in incremental steps, a greater possibility of increased frustration exists when challenges do present in learning

(McAllister & Plourde, 2008). Children at and below grade level often have the benefit of a teacher's help when trying to tackle newer, difficult material. Teachers are much more apt to scaffold instruction for low to middle performing students rather than gifted students (McAllister & Plourde, 2008). Gifted students might be unable to access difficult material because they lack necessary adaptation skills, thus narrowing what curriculum can be accessed. Over time, frustration can lead to increased self-esteem issues and an increase of at-risk behaviors for these high level learners (McAllister & Plourde, 2008).

2.1.2 High-Stakes Testing & Accountability

In "High Stakes Testing and Curricular Control: A Qualitative Metasynthesis" (Au, 2007), Wayne Au conducted a study analyzing 49 qualitative studies to determine how high-stakes testing affected curriculum. For his purposes, Au defined curriculum to include "content, pedagogy and knowledge form" (Au, 2007). His principal finding determined "curricular content is narrowed to tested subjects, subject area knowledge is fragmented into test-related pieces..." (Au, 2007). With a similar message, Siegel (2004), found high stakes testing and the pressures associated with testing can lead to a skewed view of what is important for students to learn.

Broadly, curricula addresses various objectives and standards per subject, yet current assessments used for measuring Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) are quite narrow in scope. (Madaus & Russell, 2011; King & Zucker, 2005; Popham, 1999). For some teachers, it becomes a "best guess" teaching situation based on what items have been released to educators. For others, what is going to be assessed and how it will be assessed is known (Harrington-Lueker, 2000). In trying to prepare students to perform their best on these state tests, well-intentioned teachers can use poor judgment. Instead of using released test items as a guide, it becomes curricula in the classroom (Berliner, 2009; Siegel, 2004; Sloane & Kelly, 2003). Thus, this focus

of testing curricula limits time in class for creativity and problem solving, two experiences gifted students need (Scot, Callahan & Urquhart, 2009; McCallister & Plourde, 2008; Sahlberg, 2008). Pressure from high-stakes testing can push an educator to blur lines of testing ethics as well. The well-known case of the school district in Atlanta caught cheating on state assessments only served to magnify the situation (Koebler, 2011). Any changes made as a result of high-stakes testing pressure might not be a sustained, positive change. Instead, it might be a change in defense and response to pressure.

2.1.3 Limited Resources

Though budget cuts are not a direct result of implementing NCLB, this author argues there is an indirect relationship. Since NCLB is an unfunded mandate, resources such as time and money must be re-allocated in order to support the requirements of NCLB (McCallister & Plourde, 2008). Reallocation might include cutting funds for gifted programs because those programs are not directly tied to the tenets of NCLB.

As Ferguson (1991) wrote in “New Evidence on How and Why Money Matters,” educational programs and spending in areas which, at first glance (i.e. transportation or maintenance), did not directly support higher achievement. He found those areas were indeed important when combined with expenditures with a direct relationship to achievement such as teachers and curriculum materials (Ferguson, 1991). When budgets are erratic, reductions are needed and determining which programs to cut becomes a prioritizing nightmare. Programs serving fewer students or programs seen as less needed were usually first in line for cuts (Ferguson, 1991; Schacter, 2011). More often than not, gifted programs seem to fall into a “first cuts” category because gifted students are not typically viewed as students in need (Benbow & Stanley, 1996). A paradigm shift is required to include those at the higher ends of the learning

spectrum as well. Gifted students need just as much help with learning, though help looks much different for them than help needed for struggling learners (McCallister & Plourde, 2008).

Gifted programs have been taking hits due to changes in state budgets (Johnson, Oliff & Williams, 2011). Some people object to funding programs for gifted students because: 1.) investing in those programs might not result in a good return on the investment and 2.) it is hard to justify spending extra money on a group of learners not appearing to suffer from any social disadvantages (Merry, 2008) as NCLB focuses on using monies in programs populated with at-risk students. At last estimates there were a little over 3 million identified gifted children in American schools (DES, 2008) and close to 7 million served under IDEA. Truly, though both groups of students may fall under special education budgets in some states, spending is not equal.

According to the National Association for Gifted Children website, fifteen states do not offer any funds for gifted education; states funding gifted education vary widely in amount funded per pupil (nagc.org, 2013). Michigan is the lowest funded state with average spending per gifted student of \$5.40 (Plucker, Burroughs, & Song, 2010). On the other end of the scale, North Carolina funds gifted education at \$3530.00 per student. Additionally, Texas districts spent about one-third of total budgets on students served under IDEA, but only about 1% of the budget was dedicated to needs of gifted students (Stanley & Baines, 2002). This example illustrates how funding programs required by the government such as IDEA and NCLB are expensive for districts to fund and often in conflict with each other.

Regardless of funding difficulties, it is imperative to continue serving gifted students well. In the article, *Me Behind the Mask*, Elizabeth, an 18 year old senior in college, describes what her life might have been like had she remained in the general education classroom with

limited interaction with gifted peers. “I can’t imagine that I would still be me if I had to sit through that many years of school and still have so many left to go... I think I could have kept my mind intact, but only with a very small, narrow channel through which my thoughts could be communicated to the outside world. I was building a veritable fortress around myself and I think it would have continued growing and growing, setting me further and further apart from the rest of the world, making the world more and more of a stage for me to watch and try and make my life alone in the castle...” (Gross, 1998).

2.2 What Is Known About Gifted Education?

Literature about gifted education and characteristics of gifted children started emerging in the 1920s. Terman and Hollingsworth began focusing the research lens on children with above-average intelligence. Building upon Galton’s and Binet’s research on heredity and intelligence, the duo promoted the potential influence of science in education as a way to ensure rigor (Jolly & Kettler, 2008). Political involvement in curriculum policy reflects current events and concerns of a nation. It took the launching of Sputnik, however, to generate interest in gifted education. Because Russia’s launch of Sputnik created a perception of threat, support for developing programs cultivating academic achievement intensified. Thus began an ebb and flow related to funding and support for gifted education (Jolly & Kettler, 2008).

After the initial resurgence of interest in educating gifted children in the late 1950s, interest waned again until the Marland Report was presented to Congress in the early 1970s. Though originally about 40 years old, his definition of what it means to be a gifted student has remained mostly intact. Former U.S. Commissioner of Education, Sidney Marland’s 1972 report to Congress defined gifted children as, “Students, children, or youth who give evidence of high achievement capability in areas such as intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership capacity, or in

specific academic fields, and who need services and activities not ordinarily provided by the school in order to fully develop those capabilities” (Marland, 1972).

Kansas’ definition of a gifted student is one who is “performing or demonstrating the potential for performing at significantly higher levels of accomplishment in one or more academic fields due to intellectual ability, when compared to others of similar age, experience or environment” (KSDE, 20??) For the purposes of this paper, the Kansas definition of gifted will be employed.

In the 1980s *A Nation At Risk* called attention to American students scoring lower on assessments than international counterparts, so once again, consideration in how the nation was educating the brightest children began to materialize. It broadened the debate on the federal role in education policy. Using ominous and sometimes provocative language, the National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983) stated U.S. public schools were failing. With the US becoming a more pluralistic society, pressures of providing a diverse, enriching, and culturally responsible education weighed heavily. Consequently, the “Age of Standards” was ushered in to help (Supovitz, 2009)

Gifted and academic high achievers possess many unique qualities—positive and negative—which can affect learning. Most commonly associated with giftedness is intellectual ability and academic aptitude well above average IQ ranges, allowing difficult and abstract concepts to be grasped with less difficulty (ERIC, 1990). Since characteristically, higher level learners can acquire and retain knowledge rather easily, it can be challenging for gifted students working with non-gifted peers. French, Walker, & Shore (2011) conducted a study to determine if gifted students prefer to work alone. There are indeed times in which gifted students prefer to work alone. Students typically choose to work alone when feeling unsupported in the classroom

or working with learners who might slow the learning pace. When inquiry-based learning activities occurred, gifted students chose working with a group, especially if a task was perceived as relevant to their individual learning (French, Walker & Shore, 2011). Moreover, gifted students are apt to question teachers in search of satisfying intellectual curiosity (Gottfried, Cook, Gottfried, & Morris, 2005). Gifted students usually have high expectations of themselves and others and lean toward impatience with the slowness of others (Gottfried, Cook, Gottfried, & Morris, 2005); these high expectations can cause anxiety and stress in a gifted student, who is most likely hypercritical of their own skills.

In an ideal world, all students, regardless of learning level, would receive assignments and tasks in the zone of proximal development (Benbow & Stanley, 1996). The zone of proximal development is defined by Lev Vygotsky as the level of challenge just beyond the intellectual reach of students but not too difficult. Pacing is also important for optimal learning; a pace too slow causes boredom, while too fast of a pace can hinder learning and lead to frustration (Benbow & Stanley, 1996). It is arguably harder to provide differentiated environments for students who perform at higher levels. Benbow & Stanley (1996) reported nearly 84% of gifted students' instructional activities are identical to those students performing at lower levels.

2. 3 How Does NCLB Work Toward The Original Goal Of Closing The Achievement Gap?

The presence of the achievement gap is not a new phenomenon in education. The quest to close the gap is presently the driving force behind current waves of educational reform. Equality in education has been a long sought after goal since before the landmark case of *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* in 1954. Educational reform has been implemented in various forms

throughout the years with the goal of achieving equity. The early 1980s began with *A Nation at Risk* (1983) pointing out the level of mediocrity in American education, prompting calls for change and a push for excellence.

Recommendations made as a result of *A Nation At Risk* included more stringent graduation requirements, more time in school, more competitive salaries, and more funding help from the federal government. However, it brought to light issues in education needing to be addressed. In the latter half of the 1980s, terms like *teacher empowerment*, *site-based management* and *decentralization* were floating around on the reform battlefield. John Gardner wrote *Excellence: Can We Be Equal and Excellent Too?* (1984) and described two aspirations driving American society: “individual achievement (or excellence) and equality.” Thus most past educational reform has focused on correcting either a social inequity or an economical inequity and was implemented to help further American society. NCLB is the first type of educational reform trying to correct both social and economic inequities by attempting to raise achievement levels of low performing students in areas of poverty.

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) signed into law by President George Bush in 2001 was actually a reauthorization of a previous law. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 was passed during President Lyndon B. Johnson’s term amid a national war on poverty. ESEA perpetuated thoughts of education as a way out of poverty, a pathway to better economic situations for poor people. In The Great Society scenario, receiving a quality education meant less chance of remaining in a poverty-riddled situation. ESEA was originally authorized to last until 1970; in actuality, it has been reauthorized every five years by the federal government. Funds have been allocated to districts based on numbers of students living in poverty, and the goal was to improve the quality of education for students in underprivileged

schools (Heller, 1968). As a whole, there were six provisions, or titles, outlining guidelines for improving instruction while accessing monies. Though the ESEA was the predecessor, it is not nearly as well known as the current version.

NCLB legislation can be divided into four separate and distinct sections, or pillars (Bush, 2001). The first requirement under NCLB mandates is for districts to publicly report test results for accountability. The act authorizes each state to determine definitions for meeting standards and proficiency.

Sections two and three of the NCLB act are closely entwined. These pillars affirm the ability of school districts to spend federal funds where they need it most, allowing for flexibility never before seen in education. Tied in to receiving those funds, school districts are allowed to spend federal monies to facilitate implementation of research-based teaching practices and curriculum in the classroom (Bush, 2001).

Finally, NCLB provides options and choices for clients of failing schools, providing students with opportunities to attend better performing schools; transportation to schools of choice must be funded by the district, however (Bush, 2001). The original intent for this pillar permitted parents to make choices based on academics and assessment scores. Presenting parents with school choice information in an easy-to-understand format allows parents to understand the realities and options of school choice opportunities (Petrilli, 2007), and is mandated by NCLB.

2.4 Unintended Negative Consequences of NCLB for Gifted Students

Though NCLB and school achievement are consistently in the spotlight, there is an absence of a rich literature regarding the implications of implementing NCLB for gifted education. Research regarding the effects of curriculum narrowing on gifted education, how re-

allocation of limited resources has shifted from gifted education programs to programs focused on lower achieving students, or identification of the potential effects of high-stakes testing on gifted students are necessary for full evaluation of NCLB's success.

2.4.1 Curriculum Narrowing and Gifted Students

One shortcoming of curriculum narrowing for gifted kids is just how much effort is directed at preparing for state tests. Since the stakes are so high for each assessment, gifted students may therefore receive less exposure to challenging curriculum than they may normally receive as a result of the opportunity cost with high-stakes testing (Payne-Tsoupros, 2010; Scot, Callahan, & Urquhart, 2009). This opportunity cost for gifted students may be seen in assessment results. Even if gifted students do well on tests, they may not do as well as they could have were it not for the NCLB (Xiang, Dahlin, Cronin, Theaker & Durant, 2011; Loveless, Farkas & Duffet, 2008).

One result of *A Nation at Risk* publication in 1983 was the drive toward standards-based education. These standards served as a prioritized list of what was deemed important knowledge for students. Some argued implementing standards-based reforms were necessary in order to hold schools and educators accountable, because schools and educators were not holding each other accountable enough through professional accountability (Cox & Witko, 2011). It can be argued standardized testing is an attempt to exert top-down control over classrooms. With the passage of NCLB in 2001, standards-based reform became a federal policy (King & Zucker, 2008). In order to accurately measure a student's mastery of specific standards, it is a logical conclusion assessments be aligned to state standards. However, where state curricula are generally very broad in scope, assessments are narrow (Madaus & Russell, 2011; King & Zucker, 2005; Popham, 1999). In a 1999 *Educational Leadership* article, "Using Standards and

Assessments: Why Standardized Tests Don't Measure Educational Quality" by W. James Popham, an analogy of measuring temperature with a tablespoon is described to point out how using the wrong tool to measure achievement does not portray an accurate picture of growth. "... There's an enormous amount of knowledge and/or skills that children at any grade level are likely to know. The substantial size of the content domain that a standardized achievement test is supposed to represent poses genuine difficulties for the developers of such tests. If a test actually covered all the knowledge and skills in the domain, it would be far too long... frequently such tests try to do their assessment job with only 40 to 50 items in a subject field—sometimes fewer." The fundamental nature of standardized testing forces a focus on specific indicators not necessarily spanning whole curricular areas (Madaus & Russell, 2011; Cox & Witco, 2011; Popham, 1999).

Formidable pressure from high-stakes testing is a driving force for schools (Goertz & Duffy, 2003). When undesired accountability results earn harsh penalties, schools respond (Cox & Witco, 2011). Well-intentioned attempts to capitalize on every learning opportunity have compelled schools and teachers to make hard decisions about what to teach. In a presentation at the 3rd Redesigning Pedagogy International Conference in Singapore, Berliner (2009) summarized data from the National Clearinghouse of Educational Statistics. According to the NCES, the average amount of time spent on teaching reading and mathematics has increased nearly 50% since the 2001-2002 school year. Nonetheless, increased time for teaching mathematics and reading comes at a price—less instruction time for other subjects (Madaus & Russell, 2011).

On average, instructional time for social studies, science, music, art, and physical education has decreased about 30%. In the report from the Center on Educational Policy (CEP)

titled, “Instructional Time in Elementary Schools A Closer Look at Changes for Specific Subjects” (2008), Jennifer McMurrer found 58% of districts surveyed increased instructional time in English language arts (ELA) by an average of 141 minutes per week. Regarding mathematics instruction, 45% of districts surveyed increased instructional time an average of 89 minutes per week. In order to support these increases in ELA and mathematics, instructional time in other subjects decreased. The following table details the decreases.

Insert Table 1 here

One could argue increased time in the tested subject areas is paying off in higher assessment scores. Previous research indicates when students spend more instruction and practice time in a specific subject, assessment results are higher (Cox & Witko, 2011). Because each state is allowed to create and implement a state assessment, trying to compare states is nearly impossible. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is a nationwide achievement test administered to students in grades 4, 8 and 12. First administered in 1969, it represents a sample of students from all 50 states (Plucker, Burroughs, and Song, 2010). Current NAEP data suggest scores for students in the 90th percentile or above have remained steady, without much growth since enacting NCLB requirements. Additionally, the Educational Testing Service also has data regarding the decreases in reading scores (Berliner, 2009). Data indicates there are less “proficient” students since implementing NCLB legislation.

In 2008, Loveless, Farkas and Duffet published findings related to stagnant growth of high-achieving students titled “High-Achieving Students in the Era of NCLB.” Findings indicated a distinct difference in annual point gains between students in the 10th percentile and students in the 90th percentile since the enactment of NCLB. Trends before NCLB indicated growth for students in both percentiles. One exception was in reading for 4th graders in the 10th percentile. That group of students experienced a rather steep drop of 9 points.

Results of post-NCLB scores showed gains for students in the 10th percentile in every area except 8th grade reading. Scores for students in the 90th percentile remained relatively steady, with one exception at the 8th grade level in mathematics. While those authors point to NCLB as a major contributing factor in this distinct difference, this author acknowledges the decline may be purely coincidental with NCLB legislation enactment.

Insert Table 2 here

In another study entitled, “Do High Fliers Maintain Their Altitude?” (Xiang et al., 2011) the authors examined academic progress for groups of students and built upon initial findings in “High Achieving Students in the Era of NCLB” (Loveless, Duffet, Farkas, 2008). Cohorts of students were chosen for the Elementary/Middle School Cohort (grades 3-8) and the Middle/High School Cohort (grades 6-10). The study focused on how many students initially considered to be high achievers in mathematics or reading maintained high-achiever status. For this study, students classified as high-achievers if they were in the top 10 percent of their grade

and their school in mathematics or reading. This allowed observation of possible school-level factors on student academic achievement (Xiang et. al., 2011).

According to the findings, high-achieving students grew at comparable rates in mathematics to students in low and middle achieving categories. Yet, reading growth rates tell a different story. While the academic progress made by high achievers increased, it was at a slower rate of progress when compared to low achievers' rate of progress (Xiang et al., 2011).

Additionally, when examining the outcomes of students who started in the high-achieving category, the authors found the following results (Xiang et al., 2011):

- 42.7% of initial high flyers in the Elementary/Middle School Math cohort were no longer high flyers at the end of 8th grade.
- 44.1% of initial high flyers in the Elementary/Middle School Reading cohort were no longer high flyers at the end of 8th grade.
- 30.1% of initial high flyers in the Middle/High School Math cohort were no longer high flyers at the end of 10th grade.
- 47. % of initial high flyers in the Middle/High School Reading cohort were no longer high flyers at the end of 10th grade.

Though hesitant to fully blame NCLB legislation and implementation for these decreases in high achievers, the authors acknowledge NCLB may indeed play a contributing role.

Insert Table 3 here

2.4.2. High Stakes Testing & Accountability and Gifted Students

A downside of NCLB's drive toward high stakes testing is seen in extensive test preparation for academically lower students (Xiang, Dahlin, Cronin, Theaker & Durant, 2011). Therefore, gifted students may receive less attention than they may normally get in the classroom. If this happens and even if gifted students do well on state assessments, they may not do as well as they could have were it not for NCLB. *In Do High Flyers Maintain Their Altitude? Performance Trends of Top Students* (Xiang, et. al., 2011), one finding suggested even if students were initially "high-flyers" at the onset of the study, a considerable number of students were unable to maintain original achievement status over the period of five academic school years. A more in-depth analysis of this study can be found at the end of this section. The authors reason it is because of the intensity of focus on lower performing students in this accountability era (Xiang, et. al., 2011).

The push for holding schools accountable for student achievement has been gathering momentum year after year since *A Nation at Risk* was published in 1983. In the article, "Can High Stakes Testing Leverage Educational Improvement? Prospects and Implications from the Last Decade of Testing and Accountability Reform," Supovitz (2009) addressed major trends in the testing and accountability movement: the drive toward more authentic forms of assessment, the "ratcheting up" of testing frequency, consequences attached to testing, and using testing as a vehicle for systemic educational reform.

Both policy makers and the public made various assumptions regarding test-based accountability (McDonnell & Choisser, 1997). One such belief was high-stakes testing will improve education. Another widely held line of thinking involved attaching incentives and penalties to specific state assessment scores; these incentives and penalties were thought to be the "missing link" needed for those scores to improve and motivation for teachers to teach

differently, thus creating change (McDonnell & Choisser, 1997). The basis for such assumptions was a belief teachers lack desire to change, when in fact, most likely, teachers lacked capacity, or ability, to make necessary changes to ultimately affect instruction. Supovitz argued (2009) the danger of those deductions: the assessment and accountability system itself was not substantial enough to sustain improvement for long term change. If the purpose of high-stakes assessments was to transform pedagogy, then the purpose and result were mismatched (Supovitz, 2009). In the research article, “No Child Left Behind: Disincentives to Focus Instruction on Students Above the Passing Threshold” (Payne-Tsoupros, 2010) there was a warning against such strong focus on standardized testing, “When the test carries such high-stakes, there is a risk of the test becoming the end in itself, instead of a measure or indicator. Passing the test becomes the definition of quality teaching and learning.” It may be possible chosen proficiency levels have created a “ceiling effect” on the capabilities of student growth and not allowing all students to reach their fullest potential (Payne-Tsoupros, 2010; Scot, Callahan, & Urquhart, 2009).

State assessments do not provide the necessary framework for guiding teachers in changing teaching behaviors; only when strong structures for support accompany assessments, will results produce an altering of instruction (McDonnell & Choisser, 1997). Changing the teaching behavior of educators requires building pedagogical knowledge of teachers, and is transformational change that would take years to realize.

Previous literature regarding high-stakes testing suggests mixed results when trying to determine positive correlations between high-stakes testing and achievement results. Upon closer examination, for every study showing positive correlations, there is a study to echo opposite findings, especially when the controls are tight (Jacob, 2004).

Building upon the works of Holmstrom and Milgrom, centered on compensation programs simultaneously allocating rewards and consequences, Jacob (2004), suggested economic theory cannot be applied to high stakes testing. He contended high-powered incentives may actually result in unwanted goal distortion. Additionally, his study of high-stakes testing in Chicago schools revealed the emergence of three strategic responses as a result of high-pressure emphasis on testing: increased identification and classification into special education, higher retention rates, and less instructional time for non-tested subjects such as science and social studies (Jacob, 2004). In many instances, teachers are faced with maneuvering a tenuous line between best practices and test preparation, feeling forced to funnel time away from one subject in order to gain more time for tested subjects. This “funneling” is an example of a strategic response to a scarce and limited resource—time. Essentially, “funneling” creates opportunity cost—tested subjects receive more instructional time at the expense of non-tested subjects, critical problem-solving skills and creativity (Madaus & Russell, 2011; Sahlberg, 2008; Holmstrom & Milgrom, 1991). Furthermore, in “High Stakes Testing, Educational Aims and Ideals, and Responsible Assessment,” Siegel (2004) claimed when the aims of education are purely driven by economic reasons, critical skills such as higher-level thinking, reasoning and creativity are lost.

Herzberg’s conceptual framework of Two-Factor Theory addressing intrinsic and extrinsic motivation suggests attaching higher stakes to assessments will indeed motivate improvement in education. The higher stakes parallel the idea of “action levers” being used to change a worker’s motivation (Supovitz, 2009). And, though some studies indicate a positive correlation between higher stakes and improvement, studies also indicate instances in which higher stakes can actually undermine motivation for improvement (Supovitz, 2009). In fact,

when harsh penalties or incentives are attached to the results of high-stakes testing, a potential for an increase in unethical behavior exists (Nichols & Berliner, 2008). Additionally, Skinner's instrumental conditioning in the context of Behaviorism explains why some schools are "gaming the system," and how people instinctively respond to punishment and rewards; a person will modify his or her own behavior based on perceived positive or negative results (Nichols & Berliner, 2008). The current high-stakes accountability system in education amplifies this awareness in classrooms across the country. Schools attempt to avoid punishment by: increasing time of instruction in tested subject areas, "pre-prepping" students in younger grades for future assessments at the expense of important social developmental skills (Madaus & Russell, 2011), and excluding certain students from the testing pool (Madaus & Russell, 2011; Jacob, 2004; Taylor, 2001).

2.4.3 Limited Resources and Gifted Students

Because states bear a majority of the burden related to the costs of administering large scale assessments, there may be less available resources for sustaining programs in school districts. Combining decreases in federal funds with increases in costs of yearly testing students, states find themselves scrambling to cut non-essential programs out of budgets (Ferguson, 1991).

Given the economic crisis in recent years, school districts all over the country have been forced to pare budgets down to the barest of bones. If NCLB focuses on struggling students, it stands to reason gifted education programs are more likely to be affected than programs created for struggling students. Though the federal government's role in contributing to district monies is smaller than local contributions, it is still an important piece to providing programs and services for students.

Insert figure 2 here

No programs are safe from cuts, even education which comprises nearly 60% of a state's budget. In his article, *New Evidence on How and Why Money Matters* (1991), Robert Ferguson stressed how important money is to student achievement: competitive salaries will attract good teachers, smaller class sizes contribute to higher student achievement, and districts need to have flexibility in utilizing resources to meet the needs of their district; it does not help student achievement if money spent does not match the districts' needs. In light of these findings, it is necessary to ask if current processes of testing students yields return on the investment,

Assessing students is an expensive endeavor (Topol & Roeber, 2010); the NCLB requirement of yearly testing in grades 3-8 for mathematics and reading places hardships on school districts across the country. Implementing the earliest versions of state assessments cost states a few million dollars. Recently, in the push for higher-quality assessments, cost is rapidly increasing. Current costs for implementing newer, higher quality assessments can cost up to \$100 million per year in a larger state (Topol & Roeber, 2010). Because of this increase, states' roles in providing funding have also increased, yet many states are not in financial positions to provide adequate funding.

Insert Table 3 here

Chapter Three

Methodology and Data

3.0 Research Questions

This dissertation sought to answer questions about what effects, if any, has NCLB had on gifted education in one large, Midwestern suburban school district. Specifically, it sought to answer questions about how a district and teachers responded to gifted and high-achievers within the boundaries of a post-NCLB curriculum.

3.1 Empirical Context

Data for this study came from a large, Midwestern suburban district situated within 72 square miles in northeast Kansas. There are 35 K-6 elementary schools, 5 middle schools for grades 7-8, and 5 high schools for grades 9-12. The average enrollment for the district in the 2011-2012 school year was 27, 876, approximately 5% of the state's enrollment. The average attendance rate is 96% which is nearly identical to the state's average attendance rate. Table 4 displays basic demographics for this district and comparable state demographics.

Insert Table 4 here

This district has responded to NCLB mandates by allocating resources to students who came to school below proficiency levels in reading and/or mathematics. Following Kansas' model of Multi-Tier Systems of Support, MTSS, struggling students are given extra time through research-based instructional interventions structured to close gaps in achievement levels, extra help with classroom instruction, additional materials and learning opportunities in order to help make academic progress.

3.2 Data Collection Process

Section 1: Curriculum Narrowing, High Stakes Testing, and Reallocation Of Limited Resources

This dissertation collected information about potential curriculum narrowing, high stakes testing and re-allocating resources through interviews with general education teachers and gifted education teachers. It relied on interviews to explore the current state of gifted education and changes related to curriculum narrowing over time, and to explore impact high-stakes testing has had on changes in classroom practices related to curriculum narrowing. This information is relevant because it provides a potential connection between the pressures of high-stakes testing and subsequent curriculum narrowing as perceived by teachers.

Interviews were conducted with twenty teachers; from this pool of twenty, half are certified in general education while half hold a certification in gifted education and are teaching as gifted educators. Each group of teachers was further divided into elementary or secondary. Furthermore, five of the general education teachers were “new” teachers as defined by a hiring

date after enactment of NCLB, while the remaining five general education teachers were “veteran” teachers as defined by a hiring date before enactment of NCLB.

It was important to interview new and veteran teachers because NCLB, while unintentional, has potentially impacted curriculum and instruction in schools through a curriculum narrowing, high-stakes testing, and limited resource reallocation. Because new teachers only have teaching experience since the enactment of NCLB, it is possible viewpoints and insights have a different frame of reference than the insights of veteran teachers. Where possible, veteran teachers interviewed have taught for at least 15 years, allowing for comparison of resources, curriculum and testing before NCLB as well as after enacting NCLB. (See Appendix 2 for interview protocols.)

Insert Table 5 here

Using data yielded from teacher interviews, emerging themes were used to create a survey. The purpose of the survey was to ask general education teachers and gifted education teachers to rate how aspects of limited resource reallocation, curriculum narrowing, and high-stakes testing affected gifted students in their classrooms. (See Appendix 3 for a copy of the survey.) Interview data did produce the foundation for which the surveys were created, and survey results provided quantifiable data to support the qualitative data for this dissertation.

Section 2: Reallocation of Limited Resources

This dissertation collected information about the reallocation of limited resources through conversations with the Director of Special Education, an interview with the Director of Staff Development, as well as examination of archival data related to district special education budgets, and staff development catalogs. Additionally, the Director of Business and Finance provided separate funding information related to gifted education, as gifted education does not have a separate line item in this district's budget.

This information is relevant because it contributes to teacher interview data related to choices a district must make in reallocating resources through various ways including finances and staff training in order to uphold NCLB mandates.

3.3 Measures

The data collection measure involved several phases. Phase one included interviews conducted over a period of several months. The teacher interviews were divided into three sections: gathering background data about the teacher and experience, describing a "typical" struggling, low-performing student as well as a "typical" gifted student, and how their personal teaching has evolved as the pressure of the 2014 NCLB deadline dawns near. The questions most important to this were ones in which teachers described typical students. From this description, teachers were prompted with questions about how each student's needs could be addressed in an ideal world with no limits.

The questions elicited responses from teachers echoing the findings in the literature regarding curriculum narrowing and increased pressure from high-stakes testing along with the reallocation of limited resources. The teachers' responses supported the aforementioned

disconnect between research and practice addressed in the literature review regarding gifted education.

Interview questions for the directors provided a general background picture of where the district's focus has been in the past as well as the current focus. These interviews yielded information supporting teachers' arguments regarding resources re-allocated from programs, including those supporting gifted education, in order to meet the requirements mandated by NCLB. Though teachers did not explicitly tie answers to NCLB mandates per se, there was mention of 2014. This date aligns with the federal deadline in which all students are to be proficient in mathematics and reading. Knowing this, one may possibly make a logical inference teachers were indirectly referring to NCLB when discussing the 2014 deadline.

The survey data was examined in order to determine most concerning issues affecting gifted students in the teachers' classrooms.

3.4 Analysis Strategies

Steps were taken to ensure the validity of responses. Using audio recordings, notes and emails from the interviews, the conversations were categorized into emerging themes: resources, curriculum, testing and changes. See Appendix 3 for questioning matrix. Specific quotes were utilized to support research from the literature review as well as data from the teacher surveys.

Staff development catalogs and on-line documents were examined in much the same way. The staff development offerings for the district were coded according to title and/or session description. The courses offered and coded as SPED were related to all aspects of special education. For example, sessions offered on working with children with autism or changes regarding identifying students for special education would be coded as SPED. Similarly,

anything offered toward the goal of making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) was coded as NCLB. Some examples of content include: testing, data collection and analysis, school improvement, and/or Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS). Finally, courses coded as gifted had titles and/or descriptions related to: diverse student needs, gifted education, differentiation, universal design, and backward design. In this district, principles of differentiation, universal design and backward design are utilized to meet the needs of all students in a classroom, however, are mostly associated with meeting needs of gifted students in general education classroom settings. (See Appendix 4 for archival data).

It was the intention of this study to be as transparent as possible in order to avoid potential bias. To do so, every effort was taken to ensure the validity of the interview protocol by conducting pilot interviews with teachers. These pilot interviews allowed determination of question usefulness, as well as appropriateness of question order. Additionally, pilot interviews allowed elimination of redundant questions.

Chapter 4

Findings

The purpose of this study was to determine what implications, if any, No Child Left Behind legislation has had for gifted education in one district. The following subsections give an overview of findings—both expected and unexpected—from interviews, archival data, and survey data. In order to keep interviews as unbiased as possible, the purpose of this study was never fully revealed until after interviews were completed. Additionally, in order to paint a clear picture of characteristics of gifted students, all interviewees were asked to describe general characteristics of both struggling students and gifted students. This particular question created the framework for remaining interview questions.

Below is an excerpt from an interview with a general education teacher with over 20 years of experience:

Q: Would you describe those general characteristics of a struggling student?

A: I would say the struggling student can have obviously some behavior issues sometimes to try to mask the inability to do the work. I think they are overwhelmed and they don't know what to do. So their behaviors, if you are looking for behaviors, I would say different kinds, but one student probably acts out, blurts out, draws attention to himself in a class-clown type of way. Where underneath, when you sit with him one on one you realize he doesn't know how to get started. So, that's probably that one type of kid, that struggling kid. You also have the hiders, I think that try to duck down and avoid eye contact...I really know a kid is struggling when I see those two extremes.

Q: Now, what about those who are gifted or high-achievers? Would you describe those general characteristics?

A: I feel bad for those kids sometimes because, I mean, this sounds terrible to say, but I mean there are days when I even wonder if I said "hi" to them on that day, because I'm worried about that kid who was acting out....the one that can do it on their own. I think we don't pay enough attention to those kids, because as a teacher we only have so much time in a 45 minute period to make sure everybody's doing what they're supposed to be doing; if the kid is doing what he's supposed to do, I don't need to

worry about him. Which I hate to admit that...because I try to say hi, I try to say hey...but you have to force yourself as a teacher to make sure you do acknowledge the positive behavior. It's hard.

From each interview, answers were categorized according to broad themes. Those themes were chunked together to create a foundation for the teacher survey. Additionally, specific survey questions were created from sub-themes that emerged during the interviews. This process allowed for easier organization of data in order to attain a more comprehensive picture of possible implications of NCLB mandates for gifted education.

4.1 Overview of Current State of Gifted Education in the District

There are 18.5 teachers of gifted students in the district; 8.5 at the elementary level, 5.5 at the middle level and 4.5 at the high school level. The process of identifying students to receive gifted services is consistent across grade levels. The district begins formally identifying students eligible for gifted services in first grade, although exceptions are made in certain cases for students who are younger. An average caseload is about 70 students per grade level.

When teachers have concerns about meeting a higher achieving student's needs in the classroom, a process called a General Education Intervention (GEI) is started. This process documents various academic interventions provided for students in order to determine the needs of sustained interventions above what general curriculum has to offer. Once students demonstrate the need for sustained interventions, the process moves to a Level II evaluation. At this stage, parents are requested to fill out a survey, test scores are evaluated, teachers (past and present) are asked to add input to the discussion, students are interviewed by teachers of gifted education, and student-generated products are evaluated according to a district-created rubric.

At each stage in the process, various team meetings to evaluate and discuss data. If the data continues showing sustained need, a Level III meeting is held in which the school psychologist facilitates a discussion based on collected evidence. Test scores alone are not enough to identify students to receive gifted services. The team must be able to answer “Yes” to the following questions:

1. Does the student’s response to general education interventions indicate the need for intense or sustained resources?
2. Are the resources needed to support the student to participate and progress in the general education curriculum beyond those available through general education and other resources?
3. Is there evidence of a pattern of strengths and weaknesses in performance, or (b) insufficient progress when compared to (i) ability, (ii) peers, or (iii) state-approved grade-level standards in the area(s) of concern?
4. Is the presence of exceptionality substantiated by data from multiple sources?

At the conclusion of the meeting, the team determines eligibility based on data and begins services if need is determined. Though the process for determining eligibility is consistent across all levels in the district, how gifted students are served varies; students in elementary school are served in vastly different capacities than students at secondary level.

Elementary gifted students are served via a center-based model. One day a week, gifted students leave their general education classroom and spend the day learning with gifted peers. In most cases, students are transported to schools in which Enhanced Learning classrooms (EL) are located.

At the middle and secondary levels, the gifted program becomes a credit hour, usually in place of an English and/or language arts credit. An average caseload is 14 students per hour, but students have the option of not enrolling in the credit hour, referred to as SEEK (Students

Exploring and Seeking Knowledge). Because there are more options for challenging curriculum via honors, advanced, IB and AP classes, students may opt out of SEEK enrollment in order to pursue challenging curricula in areas of personal interest.

The funding for gifted education in the district is included in the special education budget. Over the last few years, the district has had to make drastic cuts to their budget. Not many programs were able to escape the hit, and gifted programs were no exception. In 2009-2020, the middle school SEEK program was cut by 5 teachers (FTE) in order to save \$208,353.00; likewise, all paraprofessionals serving the entire gifted program (elementary, middle and high school) were eliminated, saving the district \$134,872.00. Of the 3.1 billion dollars spent on in the district for the last 11 years, roughly 3.7 million, or less than 1/10th of 1% has been earmarked for gifted services compared to 440 million, or 14%, for special education services.

Insert Figure 3 here

One way a district strengthens teaching and instruction of teachers is to offer professional development in order to further develop the skills of all teachers. Professional development catalog course offerings typically reflect a district’s focus. For the last seven years, the district has offered nearly 3,300 professional development courses, or an average of 464 classes per

year. Of those offerings, 110 (average of 16 per year) were specifically related to special education; 41 (average of 6 per year) were specifically related to gifted education; and 306 (average of 44 per year) were specifically related to testing and assessment. So, though one way to develop stronger instruction to meet the needs of gifted students is through professional development, it is worth considering what type of professional development is offered.

Insert Figure 4 here

4.2 Curriculum Narrowing In The District

As mentioned in the literature, a narrower curriculum is thought to be a by-product of pressure from high-stakes testing as required by NCLB mandates (Berliner, 2009; Siegel, 2004 ; Sloane & Kelly,2003). As instructional time is a limited resource, choices are made regarding curriculum taught versus curriculum not taught. Since pressure to have districts show 100% student proficiency in mathematics and reading, teaching curriculum in those subjects is not sacrificed when time is scarce. As McMurrer (2008) found when comparing instructional time in elementary classrooms, the amount of time spent teaching English/Language Arts curriculum increased on average 141 minutes per week during the 2001-02 school year. Mathematics instructional time increased on average 81 minutes per week during the 2001-02 school year.

Surveyed teachers indicated nearly 85% felt gifted students are affected by less instructional time in different subjects, while 15% felt gifted students were not at all affected by

less instructional time in different subjects. This survey question potentially impacts only elementary teachers, as elementary teachers teach all subjects and have more flexibility as to when to teach various subjects; secondary teachers teach specific content during a specific set of minutes in a day.

From interview data, two questions related to the broader theme of the curriculum in which respondents think gifted students would be negatively affected surfaced: offering a “one size fits all” curriculum and fewer opportunities for creative learning experiences in a curriculum. When asked to rank how much gifted students were affected in the classroom with a “one size fits all” curriculum, 90% of teachers responding indicated gifted students were indeed affected—40% indicating “very” affected and 50% indicating “somewhat” affected. The remaining 10% thought a “one-size-fits-all” curriculum had little to no effect on gifted students in the classroom. During an interview with an elementary teacher having 23 years of experience in general and gifted education lamented:

“The way we teach now is not geared toward children developmentally. I feel sorry for them. Drill and practice is necessary, but testing has taken the soul out of learning. Students are not allowed to learn at their own paces, but must go to a ‘one-size-fits-all’ model.”

This one-size-fits-all model interpretation may be attributed to findings echoed in literature: a narrower curriculum for gifted students due to less instructional time in subjects and pressure from high-stakes testing.

When teachers were asked to determine how much gifted students in the classroom were affected by fewer opportunities to be creative, similar percentages appeared. 89% of respondents thought gifted students would be affected by having fewer creative opportunities, 56% indicating very affected and 33% indicating somewhat affected. Results for those two questions might be

similar because “one-size-fits-all” curriculum and fewer creative opportunities are intricately connected. After 18 years in the general education classroom and making the transition to teaching gifted students in the elementary setting five years ago, one teacher observed,

“I’ve been a teacher for 23 years. I’ve taught 6th grade for 18 years and this is my 5th year as a gifted ed facilitator. What has changed is the degree of creativity I see in some teachers. Twenty-three years ago we were very aware of what we were teaching and what our students were learning, but it seems as though we were trusted as professionals to carry out the teaching of the objectives required for our grade and expected to do so in ways that addressed the needs of many ability levels, held children’s interest and piqued their curiosity. It was a very exciting thing to sort your objectives and find new connections between them. It was exhilarating to confer with peers and thrash out the most focused and stimulating ways to present content and help students learn the process. We were encouraged to forge new ways to teach our objectives. Teaching is an art that employs scientific methods and theory on actual human beings, but I think it is being treated as a science that must be replicable at all cost. The cost is the creativity of teachers and children.”

One unanticipated topic surfacing during teacher interviews was the support of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) recently adopted by 45 states. Fewer standards of the CCSS will allow freedom for delving deeper in learning once fully implemented. Many contend since there are fewer standards, school districts can develop curriculum beyond just surface learning; students will have opportunities for more inquiry and creative explorations, which align perfectly with the gifted students' needs in general education classrooms (McCallister & Plourde, 2008).

The Common Core State Standards have been gathering steam since the first draft was released to the public in the fall of 2009. Since the final publication of the CCSS in the summer of 2010, 45 states have now adopted these standards. Each state is allowed to include up to 15%

of their own standards in addition to the CCSS, and these standards will be used to measure a student's growth in the curriculum. In Kansas, these new standards are referred to as the Kansas College and Career Ready Standards (KSDE, 2013). The premise movement toward common standards across the United States is to better prepare students for life beyond high school, regardless of where they reside or where their path may lead: college or a career. What remains unclear at this point is how student growth in the curriculum will be measured.

When ranking the effect of transitioning to CCSS, nearly 90% answered gifted students would be affected by this transition, while nearly 12% signified gifted students would not be affected. Even though teachers showed positive reaction in relation to CCSS during the interviews, survey results are not conclusive. The survey question did not specify if the transition to CCSS would have a positive or negative effect on gifted students.

4.3 High Stakes Testing & Accountability In The District

As pressure from district administrators to have high scores is constant, sacrificing curriculum not tested for specifically aligned, assessed indicators is a popular response by teachers interviewed. The pressure, though, on district administrators is ceaseless, too. In a letter from the Kansas State NAEP coordinator to elementary principals, these statements appear:

"I am enlisting your assistance in an attempt to raise the 4th grade NAEP reading scores in Kansas on the NAEP 2013 assessment."

"NAEP is a different type of test from our state assessment, but politically scores have been compared. The percent of 4th grade students meeting standard in reading in Kansas in 2012 was 88%, but on the NAEP 2011 assessment the percent of proficient 4th grade students in reading was only 36%."

“I ask that as you meet with the 4th grade students before the NAEP assessment this year you explain a ‘complete’ response on a constructed response and short answer questions....a few students moving from partial credit to complete might be enough to increase our state scores.”

“As always, I want to reassure you, your staff and students that NAEP is not a high stakes assessment...”

Her plea for prepping students before taking the NAEP reflects a result of pressure from high-stakes testing as found in the literature (Payne-Tsourpos, 2010; Supovitz, 2009; Nichols & Berliner, 2008; McDonnel & Choisser, 1997).

During the interviews, teachers were initially to describe the criteria used to make curriculum choices when facing time constraints. The question, “What are some things that cause you stress in your teaching?” generated answers related to testing including pressures surrounding testing. From the interview answers, the following survey questions were created:

1. How affected are gifted students by changes in the schedule due to testing practices?
2. How affected are gifted students by too much test prep (focusing heavily on tested indicators)?
3. How affected are gifted students by tests written at a low level (not a lot of higher level thinking skills)?
4. How affected are gifted students by pressure to have all students meet standards?
5. How affected are gifted students by too much focus on all types of test scores?

Survey results show 65% of responding teachers felt gifted students were very affected by too much test preparation for state assessments, and 37% felt gifted students were somewhat

affected by too much test preparation for state assessments. 8% of teachers felt gifted students were not at all affected by too much test preparation for state assessments. Similarly, 67% of teachers felt gifted students were very affected by pressures related to all students meeting standards of proficiency, while 25% felt gifted students were only somewhat affected by high-stakes testing pressure.

When responding to the survey question, “How affected are gifted students by too much focus on all types of test scores?” 65% of teachers indicated gifted students are very affected and 25% indicated gifted students are somewhat affected; when combined, 90% of teachers stated there is an effect on gifted students. This corroborates teacher interview data.

As one secondary general education teacher put it so succinctly, “...*testing drives everything.*” And, one veteran gifted facilitator at the secondary level described it like this:

“I’ve been teaching for 40 years; the changes are nearly innumerable. The past ten years has seen the ever-increasing influence that high-stake testing has had on everything we do...high-stakes testing has focused on the bottom, leaving gifted to achieve only for the benefit of the school—resources are diverted to the bottom at the expense of gifted students.”

Teachers feel a lot of pressure to get those scores to the highest possible levels. One secondary general education teacher with over 20 years of both general education and special education experience said,

“I feel like I will be in trouble if my scores are the lowest of my colleagues.”

Again, describing the amount of testing and its effect in the classrooms, this same teacher said,

“We’ve kind of lost the art of creativity...because of the test. I think it’s the standardized

test. I think it's the, um, data driven society now that's gotten out of control. Maybe I'm wrong... We are too focused on numbers, you know, on scores on the paper."

As the NAEP coordinator pointed out in the letter to principals, one can argue Kansas state tests are not written at the same levels as the NAEP, the MAP, or other standardized tests. For example, a proficiency cut score on the NAEP test for 4th grade readers is a score of 240. In comparison, Kansas' proficiency score on the 4th grade Kansas State Assessment (KSA) in reading is a score equivalent to NAEP's score of 185. NAEP considers 185 to be below the basic level in scoring. Differences in defining proficiency in reading for 4th grades only serves to exacerbate the "proficiency illusion," a phrase coined in the report, "The Proficiency Illusion" (Adkins, Kingsbury, Dahlin & Cronin, 2007). While Kansas state assessment scores may indicate students are proficient in reading and mathematics, this report brings to light glaring differences in the way standardized tests are written. If the goal is to be proficient by Kansas' standards, the mark may be missed. And, if teachers continue to feel pressure to meet these proficiency levels for state tests and tailoring instruction to the specific, tested Kansas indicators, curriculum will continue to narrow quite considerably, as previously mentioned.

4.4 Limited Resources In The District

The district has been facing increasing financial difficulties over the past several years. This monetary crisis is attributed to several things: decreasing federal funding, decreasing state funding to school districts, a state financial formula taking money away from this district and distributing it to other districts across the state, and a declining enrollment. Combined with these elements create a "perfect storm" of financial hardships. In trying to ascertain the effect, if any, a lack of resources has on gifted students, interviews were used to create a foundation from which

multiple ideas were generated. From these ideas, a survey was sent out to random teachers across the district.

This particular district has faced many budget reductions over the last six years, and teachers are fully aware of how those reductions have impacted students in classrooms. Over the last 18 years, the district has spent nearly 14% of the total budget each year for special education services, and less than 1/10th of 1% for gifted education. However, the district has been consistent in the percentages. The differences in spending could mean it costs much more to serve a special education student than it costs to serve a gifted student.

Generally speaking, having more money translates into having more materials and supplies for instruction. During initial interviews, it was no surprise money was mentioned as a “roadblock” to meeting the needs of gifted students in the classroom.

Only one question on the teacher survey asked about direct correlations between material or supplies and gifted students in the classroom. When asked to rank how much gifted students are affected by lack of money for materials or supplies, nearly 1/3 of respondents agreed gifted students are very affected by this lack of money and supplies; however, nearly 1/4 of the respondents indicated gifted students are not affected at all by the lack of materials or supplies.

The remaining four questions on the teacher survey were related to limited resources, however, do not translate directly into material or supplies. Instead, these questions were related to human capital and time—things not appearing to directly affect gifted students on the surface.

Having money for providing opportunities for teachers’ staff development was mentioned as being scarce in the interviews. Teachers voiced needs for staff development tailored to their own personal growth. One fifth year teacher described how staff development helps her grow as a teacher in this way:

“I don’t want to say more staff development...but, better staff development. Staff development that actually helps me as a teacher. Right? Because nobody gets into teaching to just...to not teach. It’s because we care about students.”

When the survey asked teachers to rank how affected are gifted students by not having enough staff development on how to meet gifted students’ needs in the classroom, 82% of respondents determined this lack as having a definite effect on gifted students, with 40% indicating gifted students are very affected by lack of staff development. This lack correlates with the amount of staff development offerings by the district as well.

Time was another scarce resource mentioned in the interviews, and was divided into the categories of *instructional time* and *planning time*. From the interviews, teachers felt there was not nearly enough time in a school day to individualize instruction as they preferred, nor was there enough time in a school year to delve deeper into topics sustaining intellectually gifted students. Instructional time was a precious resource taken over by preparation for high stakes testing associated with NCLB legislation.

While decreases in instructional time have been reported by McMurrer (2008), only elementary teachers spoke to this topic, because elementary classroom teachers are responsible for teaching all subjects. Additionally, elementary teachers have greater flexibility in classroom schedules to teach subjects at various times throughout the school day. Secondary level teachers are responsible for teaching specific content and within a specific time frame each day. Survey results indicated 87% of teachers believe less instructional time to teach has an effect on gifted students in their classroom.

The survey question asking how affected gifted students were by lack of planning time was answered “very” by 52% of respondents and “somewhat” by 40% of respondents. Over 80% of teachers surveyed feel lack of planning times has a definite effect on gifted students.

Interview questions regarding limited resources yielded a surprising answer—lack of adult help in a classroom. Teachers described benefits of having classroom aides, paraprofessional or other adults in classrooms. Teachers were very creative in how they would utilize another adult in the classroom. Instructing small groups, monitoring independent projects, or helping develop inquiry projects were just a few ways extra personnel could be utilized. According to survey results, over $\frac{3}{4}$ of teachers responding indicated lack of paraprofessionals or aides in the classroom had an effect on gifted students, while nearly $\frac{1}{4}$ believed there is no effect on gifted students in the classroom. Again, in 2009, this district cut all paraprofessional services to gifted programs at all levels. The following quote from a gifted education teacher sums up his feelings about reallocation of limited resources,

“I’ve been teaching for 40 years; the changes are nearly innumerable. The past ten years has seen the ever-increasing influence that high-stake testing has had on everything we do....high-stakes testing has focused on the bottom, leaving gifted to achieve only for the benefit of the school—resources are diverted to the bottom at the expense of gifted students.”

Because available resources are a direct result of funding, it becomes easier to equate lack of federal funding of NCLB to the financial woes of a district. While this author feels lack of federal funding plays a role, she is not able to determine with complete certainty direct correlations between the two as literature and Jacob Javits’ appropriations data indicate.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Overview

Literature in recent years has suggested reallocation of resources from some academic programs into those with more focus on increasing academic achievement for those performing at levels well below proficiency thresholds in mathematics and literacy. While the idea of increasing the academic performance of those groups is not to be dismissed, it may be at the expense of other student groups. The combination of a sluggish economy, the unfunded mandate of NCLB, and the pressure from various political groups for increased test scores has created a dismal outcome for students who are high academic achievers. Since states are largely responsible the staggering costs of administering such tests, programs not directly related to increasing achievement scores on state assessments may be first on the chopping blocks. As Ferguson (1991) stated in “New Evidence on How and Why Money Matters,” published in the *Harvard Journal on Legislation*, states must contend with the decrease in federal funds along with an increase in the cost of yearly testing students. It’s a mad scramble to cut non-essential programs out of the budget.

On the surface, it appears as though students who achieve at higher levels are more self-sufficient and do not require as many resources as those who are low academically. While the needs of different academic groups may be poles apart in terms of resources needed, each group *still* requires resources. There is no literature supporting steady academic growth of any student when resources are *inadequate*, in spite of high academic ability. Across the country, states requiring funding for gifted programs have been whittling away at those funds (Johnson, Oliff &

Williams, 2011). Again, these cuts are made with incorrect assumptions gifted students are capable of making academic gains without resources (Merry, 2008).

Related to a decrease in resources, albeit indirectly, is how narrow curriculum has become for students coupled with increased pressure for schools to score well on state assessments. The two are so closely intertwined, it becomes nearly impossible to disentangle them into separate issues. The relationships between curriculum narrowing and high stakes testing are directly proportional; the more time spent teaching the assessed state standards, the higher the state assessment scores. The higher the state scores, there is an appearance of closing the achievement gap. Conversely, the more time spent teaching the assessed state standards, the less time there is for curriculum not assessed on those tests. In reality, what occurs is narrowing what all students are learning in our schools. Both Jonathan Supovitz (2009) and Brian Jacob (2004) have addressed the consequences of high-stakes testing in their research. Supovitz addressed the high stakes debate and argued the creation of an accountability system does not necessarily result in a change in teacher pedagogy, while Jacob focused on results related to high-stakes testing pressure in Chicago schools. He found three distinct actions related to the pressure: more special education identification, more student retentions, and less classroom instruction of non-tested subjects.

5.2 Implications for K-12 Education

The goal of this study was to determine what implications, if any, implementing NCLB as mandated has had on gifted education in one school district. Previous research indicates curriculum narrowing, pressure from high-stakes testing and reallocation of limited resources have emerged as unintended consequences related to the implementation of NCLB mandates (). Overall, this study discovered no significant effects on gifted students as a result of

implementing NCLB. This might mean the district is maximizing resources well in order to prevent the consequences. It also might mean teachers are working hard to protect the students in their classrooms from each of these unintended consequences. It could also mean interview data and survey data were not the correct tools to measure these potential effects on gifted students.

5.2.1 Curriculum Narrowing

While there is evidence to some degree regarding curriculum narrowing, there is no clear-cut evidence showing curriculum narrowing is happening across multiple grade levels and multiple schools. What might be more realistic are more opportunities for curriculum narrowing at the elementary level versus the secondary level. This might be because elementary teachers are responsible for delivering curriculum in multiple subjects. Even though gifted elementary students are taught by gifted education teachers one day a week, there are still four days in which they may be sitting in a general education classroom with a teacher lacking gifted education certification. However, this district adopted the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) model in order to respond to the needs of all students. This model of systematic intervention does address serving students already performing at very high levels. MTSS may potentially help protect gifted students from feeling the effects of curriculum narrowing in the elementary classroom.

As students move to secondary levels of middle school and high school, more courses are available for consumption by gifted students. High schools offer various levels of advanced and college preparatory classes; it is reasonable to assume these advanced classes are more rigorous. Because gifted students have more voice in selecting courses, one would think self-selection

would be driven by intellectual needs of gifted students. Therefore, it stands to reason gifted students do not experience as much curriculum narrowing at secondary levels.

As this district transitions to fully implementing the Kansas College and Career Ready Standards, there is not enough evidence to accurately determine the effect these new standards will have on gifted students in the classroom. Even though interview data suggest the effect will be positive, this author is uncomfortable making assumptions in either direction.

5.2.2 High Stakes Testing & Accountability

There is greater evidence to support teachers' attitudes toward high stakes testing rather than actual effects on gifted students in their classrooms. According to the interviewees' answers and survey data, this author could find no correlations between the focus of testing and success of high achieving students. Lack of significant findings related to high-stakes testing and accountability would indicate a different measurement tool may potentially make a difference in determining how high-stakes testing has affected gifted students. While teachers were able to express frustration with high-stakes testing in interviews, the frustrations were results of pressure applied to them and not necessarily students.

5.2.3 Limited Resources

The lack of significance regarding limited resources of time, staff development, money and adult help may also indicate different measurement tools could yield more measurable results as to the effects on gifted students in the classroom. Because interview data and survey data both reflect a strong desire for more adult help in the classroom, it stands to reason teachers feel this is the most limited resource. Another adult in the classroom would potentially allow

teachers to utilize more one-on-one interactions with students and teach small groups more effectively, as the MTSS model of intervention suggests.

Staff development sessions offered often reflects a focus of a district as well as offering new learning and/or re-learning for teachers. If there is a lack of staff development in this area, it is reasonable to think the district may feel other training priorities take precedence. It may even indicate teachers have received enough training and are expected to continue professional growth on their own.

5.3 Implications for Policy: Correcting Educational Reform Policy Mistakes

In light of recent studies focusing on excellence gaps, it is likely lessons have been learned. Education reform history shows attempts to “self-correct.” For just one example, Race to the Top focused on recruiting and rewarding teachers and administrators for working in the “hard” schools and districts (Crowe, 2011). This focus of Race to the Top addressed vaguest tenet of NCLB—highly qualified teachers. Since each state was able to create a definition of highly qualified, there was not much continuity. According to the legislation of NCLB, a “Highly Qualified Teacher” is defined as one whom: holds a Bachelor’s Degree, obtains full state certification and licensure, and proves knowledgeable in the chosen subject area (Blank, 2003). However, meeting the guidelines of a state does not necessarily ensure knowledge of core content. For example, teachers in Alaska can earn points toward becoming Highly Qualified if they are fluent in a foreign language (McGrath, 2005). Teachers in Maine can count sponsoring an academic club toward their Highly Qualified status (McGrath, 2005). For some, it is just another loophole through which to dive. Race to the Top was a partial attempt to “correct” the loophole.

The “self-correcting” continues. As the year 2014 loomed ahead, the fear of districts being caught in a losing race toward 100% student proficiency became palpable. Perhaps in an indirect acknowledgment of shortcomings related to the implementation of NCLB, the federal government allowed states to apply for a waiver which eases NCLB sanctions related to accountability. However, in order for a waiver to be issued, a state had to agree to the following conditions (McNeill, 2011):

1. Adoption of higher standards preparing students for college and/or career readiness after leaving high school.
2. Principal and teacher evaluation systems overhauled so some student achievement results are considered in an evaluation.
3. Implement an accountability system differentiated for different populations.

As a result of more states scrambling to be a part of the waiver, the popularity of the Common Core State Standards Initiative skyrocketed. Some might even argue the creation and adoption of these more rigorous standards is one of the most promising unintended consequences of the NCLB legislation. “The Common Core State Standards focus on core conceptual understandings and procedures starting in the early grades, thus enabling teachers to take the time needed to teach core concepts and procedures well—and to give students the opportunity to master them” (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010).

In a recent report conducted by The Brown Center on Education Policy and published by the Brookings Institute, Tom Loveless (2012) summarized the three main arguments for and against adoption of Common Core State Standards. First, he cited “Quality Theory” as an asset to the

CCSS; students will achieve at a higher rate because the curriculum is better. The English Language Arts (ELA) standards are more rigorous than 37 of the states' current ELA standards and the mathematics standards are more rigorous than 39 of the states' current mathematics standards. Second, his "Rigorous Performance Standards Theory" states higher expectations in the newly adopted standards will be higher than the current expectations, and thus students will rise to the expected level. Thirdly, "Standardization Theory" describes the expectation of increased efficiency by streamlining resources. With so many states on board with the adoption of CCSS, there is no need to reinvent the wheel, so to speak (Loveless, 2012).

Those criticizing the CCSS offer counterarguments as well. To rebuke the "Quality Theory" statement, if the CCSS are superior to 37 of the adopting states' standards, then it stands to reason there are states having higher standards than CCSS. Does this mean those states must lower standards in order to comply? Closely related to this counterargument is the belief one size in state standards does not fit all. These critics make no mention, however, of the states' abilities to include up to 15% of current standards along with the CCSS. And, finally, those against the adoption of CCSS are quick to negate the intrastate mobility claims of these standards because each state already has standards, so it is not a large problem within a state (Loveless, 2012).

It remains to be seen if the federal waiver along with the adoption and implementation of the CCSS will be the last form of "correctional" action ever needed.

5.5 Limitations

As with any study, there are limitations. The first limitation, and perhaps the largest, is the small sample. The district is one of the largest in the state, yet, it is not feasible to assume every other district would have the same results if the study were replicated in each one.

Another limitation was the inability to follow a cohort of students through grades K-12. Being able to follow a student through each of these grades through achievement scores would allow for assessment of academic growth. Adding to this study's limitations is the change in assessments over the years. No one consistent test or assessment has been administered for a long enough time to demonstrate effects, if any, NCLB might have on the academic growth of gifted students.

Several secondary limitations also affected this study. The first was related to district budget documents. The actual documents do not reflect the amount spent on gifted education; rather, gifted education is included in the total special education budget and is not displayed in a separate line item. The Director of Finance for the district was able to extract line item information for this study; however, the ability to further delineate funding details would have provided a much clearer picture as to where re-allocating funds from gifted education budget cuts were spent.

Another secondary limitation was related to lack of specific numbers of gifted students enrolled in the district from 1995-2002. The Director of Special Education communicated those numbers were not kept by the district until 2002. Additionally, there was not budget allocation for gifted education before 2002.

The third secondary limitation was the lack of consistent coding of staff development courses. Each presenter created a description of the course offering as well as key words associated with the course. Determining the number of courses related to gifted education, special education and high-stakes testing relied upon the subject descriptions submitted by presenters.

5.6 Future Research

The purpose of this study was to determine the implications, if any, implementing NCLB as mandated has had for gifted education in one school district. This study focused on a very small sample. Additionally, it mainly relied on interviews, survey data and archival data to substantiate the research.

Should there be studies related to this topic in the future, one other suggestion would be to find achievement data in order to add an extra layer of substantive proof regarding specific amounts of academic achievement of each student. Assessment and/or achievement data would need to be consistent for a long enough period of time, preferably grades 3-12, in order to show a pattern in academic growth or decline for gifted students.

Interviews conducted with gifted students and parents of gifted students would yield data for which to compare to teacher and administrator interview data. This might potentially provide an unexplored perspective on the effects of NCLB on gifted education.

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Appendix 1

District Approval

Appendix 2

Interview Protocol

Interview Questions for Teachers

1. What is your teaching background? Would you please describe your teaching experiences? Currently, what level are you teaching?
2. Imagine if you will two students—one of those students struggles in every element of classwork, and one of those students seems to have no trouble in any class work. Please describe each of those students to me.
 - a. How do you know about the struggles and ease for each of those students?
 - b. What’s the ideal (no limitations) way to respond to the needs of both students effectively?
 - c. What kind of challenges do you think would arise if you were to implement this/these approach(es)?
 - d. What choices do you see yourself having to make in teaching? Why? Does that cause you to feel any sort of stress?
3. You’ve been a teacher for (5, 10, 15, 20) years. What has changed for you in the profession since you started teaching? Do you view these changes as positive or negative? Why? Would you please give specific examples?

Interview Questions for Staff Development Director

1. What is the process for determining what professional development courses are offered each year? District driven? Staff driven? State driven?
2. In a given year, about how many professional development sessions are offered? How many of those have a gifted education focus?
3. What are the ways the district is able to provide professional development?
4. Are there “trends” or “waves” of staff development offerings? Are there any specific examples? Based on your experience and the current focuses of the district, are you able to make predictions about certain topics that will be popular staff development offerings?

5. May I have a copy of the records/catalogs of staff development offerings for the district for the last 20 years?

Interview for Gifted Education Teachers

1. What do Enhanced Learning (EL) and SEEK provide for gifted students?
2. Are there ways in which you collaborate with general education teachers? What are some specific examples of this?
3. Imagine if you will two a typical gifted student. Please describe that student to me.
 - a. What's the ideal (no limitations) way to respond to the needs of that student effectively?
 - b. What kind of challenges do you think would arise if you were to implement this/these approach(es)?
 - c. What choices do you see yourself having to make in teaching? Why? Does that cause you to feel any sort of stress?
4. You've been a gifted teacher for (5, 10, 15, 20) years. What has changed for you in the profession since you started teaching? Do you view these changes as positive or negative? Why? Would you please give specific examples?

Appendix 3

Interview Matrices

Interviewees	Questions	What will be Addressed
<p>General Education Teachers</p>	<p>Imagine if you will two students—one of those students struggles in every element of classwork, and one of those students seems to have no trouble in any class work. Please describe each of those students to me.</p> <p>How do you know about the struggles and ease for each of those students?</p> <p>What’s the ideal (no limitations) way to respond to the needs of both students effectively?</p> <p>What kind of challenges do you think would arise if you were to implement this/these approach(es)?</p> <p>What choices do you see yourself having to make in teaching? Why? Does that cause you to feel any sort of stress?</p> <p>You’ve been a teacher for (5, 10, 15, 20) years. What has changed for you in the profession since you started teaching? Do you view these changes as positive or negative? Why? Would you please give specific examples?</p>	<p>Curriculum narrowing</p> <p>High-stakes testing</p> <p>Reallocation of limited resources</p>
<p>Gifted Education Teachers</p>	<p>What does Enhanced Learning (EL), SEEK provide for gifted students?</p> <p>Are there ways in which you collaborate with general education teachers? What are some specific examples of this?</p> <p>Imagine if you will two a typical gifted student. Please describe that student to me.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What’s the ideal (no limitations) way to respond to the needs of that student effectively? -What kind of challenges do you think would arise if you were to implement this/these approach(es)? -What choices do you see yourself having to make in teaching? 	<p>Curriculum narrowing</p> <p>High-stakes testing</p> <p>Reallocation of resources</p>

	<p>Why? Does that cause you to feel any sort of stress?</p> <p>You've been a gifted teacher for (5, 10, 15, 20) years. What has changed for you in the profession since you started teaching? Do you view these changes as positive or negative? Why? Would you please give specific examples?</p>	
<p>Director of Staff Development</p>	<p>What is the process for determining what professional development courses are offered each year? District driven? Staff driven? State driven?</p> <p>In a given year, about how many professional development sessions are offered? How many of those have a gifted education focus?</p> <p>What are the ways the district is able to provide professional development?</p> <p>Are there "trends" or "waves" of staff development offerings? Are there any specific examples? Based on your experience and the current focuses of the district, are you able to make predictions about certain topics that will be popular staff development offerings?</p>	<p>High-stakes testing</p> <p>Reallocation of resources</p>

Appendix 4

Archival Data Matrix

Archival Data	Questions Addressed
Current and past budgets for the district	Has the funding for programs related to gifted education been cut over time? If so, what programs have been cut? Is there a simultaneous increase in programs aimed toward under-performing students?
Staff development catalogs	Has the district provided training for working with gifted students in a general education setting? If so, how many courses have been offered? How does that compare to staff development offered to address under-performing students?

Figure 1: Relationships between Gifted Students and Effects of NCLB

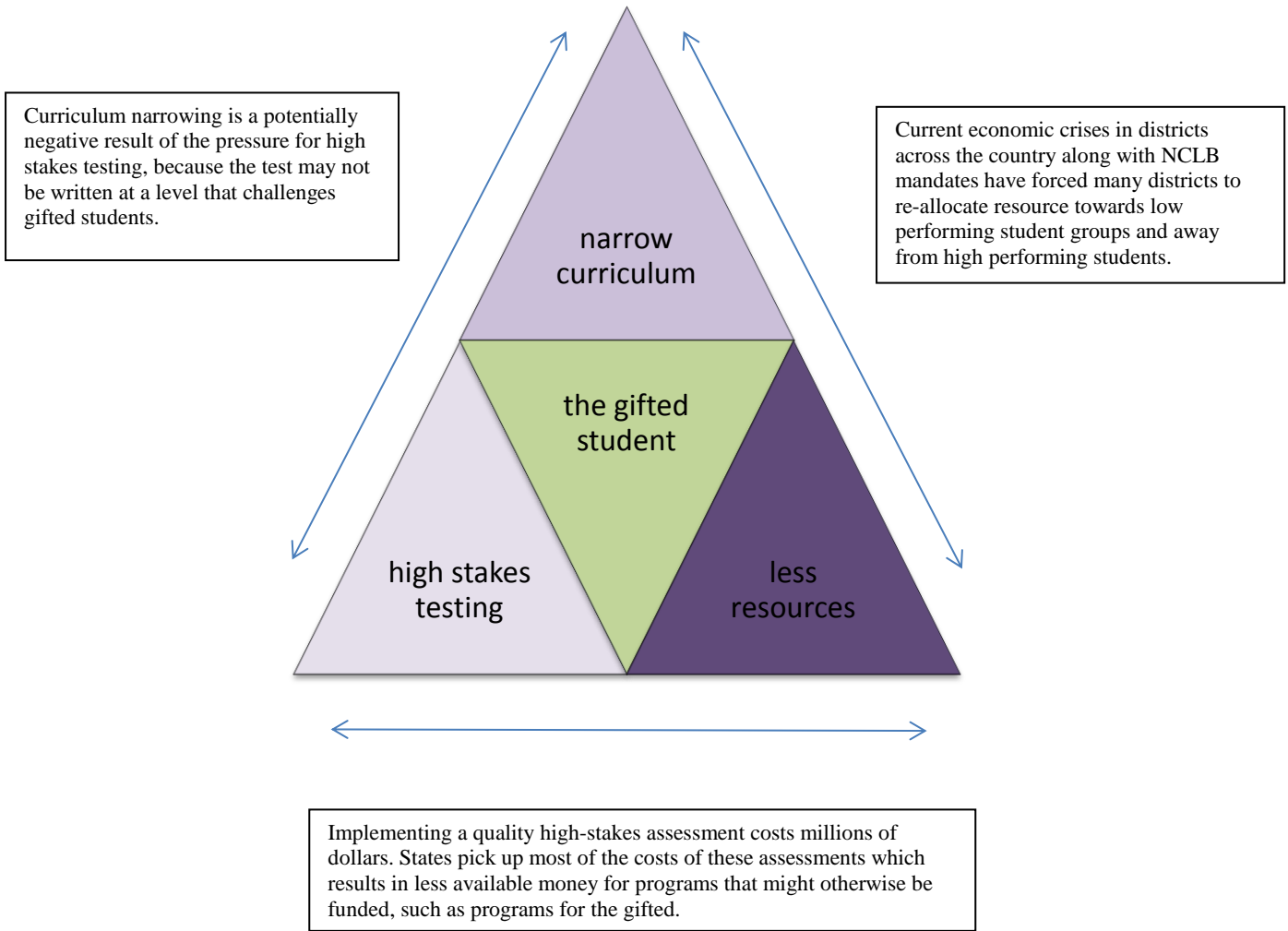
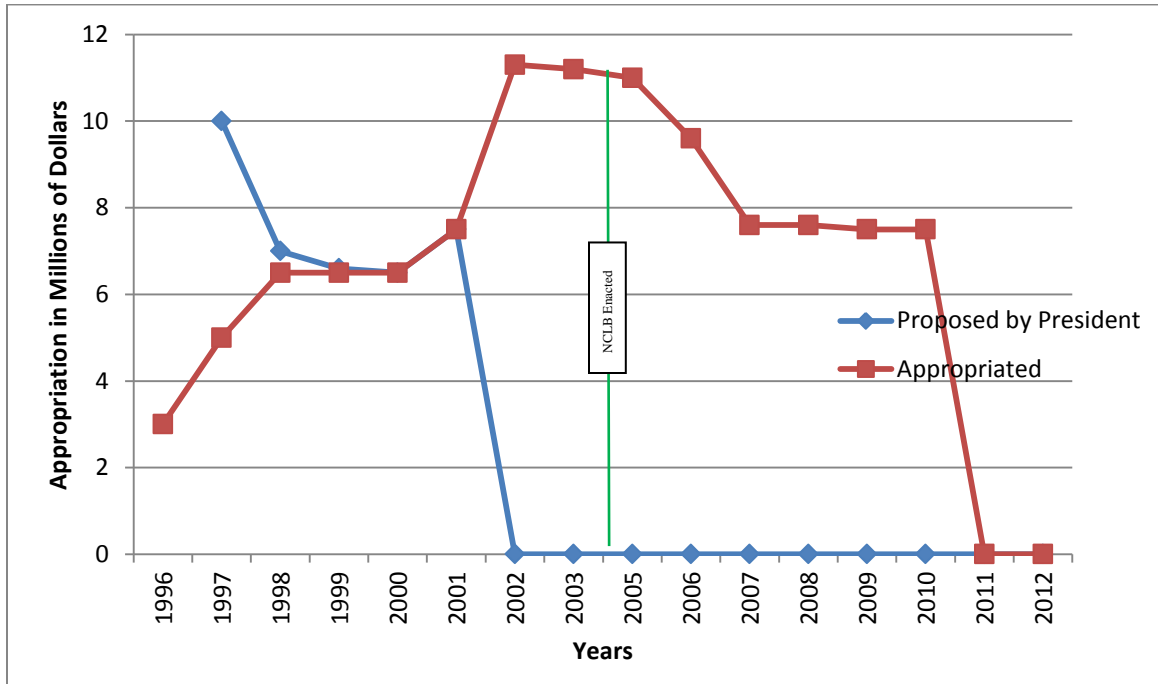


Figure 2: Federal Funding for Gifted Education 1996-2012

Federal Appropriation for Javits Gifted and Talented Education



* Sources: Mind the Other Gap! and ed.gov

Figure 3: District Funding for Special Education 1995-2012

FY	Total Enrollment	Total Expend.	Per Pupil Expend.	Total SPED Enrollment	% SPED	SPED Expend.	% of Total Expend.	SPED Per Pupil
1995	31,999	\$ 186,498,847	\$ 5,828	3,504	10.9	\$ 23,265,123	12.4	\$ 6,640
1996	31,844	\$ 189,043,345	\$ 5,937	3,350	10.5	\$ 24,300,014	12.8	\$ 7,254
1997	31,634	\$ 189,261,407	\$ 5,953	3,267	10.3	\$ 24,981,312	13.1	\$ 7,647
1998	31,795	\$ 200,224,440	\$ 6,297	3,442	10.8	\$ 25,727,399	12.8	\$ 7,475
1999	31,562	\$ 208,705,259	\$ 6,613	3,241	10.2	\$ 27,179,974	13.0	\$ 8,386
2000	30,337	\$ 216,523,699	\$ 7,137	3,204	10.5	\$ 29,399,009	13.5	\$ 9,176
2001	30,110	\$ 220,775,118	\$ 7,322	3,274	10.8	\$ 30,562,527	13.8	\$ 9,335
2002	29,257	\$ 229,770,965	\$ 7,853	3313	11.3	\$ 31,651,675	13.7	\$ 9,553
2003	28,734	\$ 229,154,970	\$ 7,975	3394	11.8	\$ 34,502,969	15.0	\$ 10,166
2004	28,219	\$ 230,721,223	\$ 8,176	3379	11.9	\$ 35,339,153	15.3	\$ 10,458
2005	27,875	\$ 249,132,116	\$ 8,938	3443	12.3	\$ 35,463,391	14.2	\$ 13,300
2006	27,421	\$ 266,011,553	\$ 9,701	3397	12.3	\$ 38,480,967	14.4	\$ 11,328
2007	27,353	\$ 296,187,436	\$ 10,828	3311	12	\$ 42,195,174	14.2	\$ 12,744
2008	27,013	\$ 320,436,629	\$ 11,862	3120	11.5	\$ 45,278,698	14.1	\$ 14,512
2009	26,579	\$ 323,574,001	\$ 12,174	3086	11.6	\$ 46,148,281	14.2	\$ 14,954
2010	26,548	\$ 334,861,743	\$ 12,613	3021	11.3	\$ 45,629,389	13.6	\$ 15,104
2011	26,653	\$ 314,962,366	\$ 11,817	3003	11.2	\$ 44,025,981	13.9	\$ 14,661
2012	26,545	\$ 328,335,730	\$ 12,374	3700	13.9	\$ 41,937,588	12.7	\$ 11,334

Figure 4: District Funding for Gifted Education 1995-2012

FY	Total Enrollment	Total Expend.	Per Pupil Expend.	Total Gifted Enrollment	% Gifted	Gifted Expend.	% of Total Expend.	Gifted Per Pupil
1995	31,999	\$ 186,498,847	\$ 5,828					
1996	31,844	\$ 189,043,345	\$ 5,937					
1997	31,634	\$ 189,261,407	\$ 5,953					
1998	31,795	\$ 200,224,440	\$ 6,297					
1999	31,562	\$ 208,705,259	\$ 6,613					
2000	30,337	\$ 216,523,699	\$ 7,137					
2001	30,110	\$ 220,775,118	\$ 7,322					
2002	29,257	\$ 229,770,965	\$ 7,853	1639	0.056	\$ 1,853,470	0.008	\$1,131
2003	28,734	\$ 229,154,970	\$ 7,975	1595	0.055	\$ 1,787,957	0.008	\$ 1,121
2004	28,219	\$ 230,721,223	\$ 8,176	1592	0.056	\$ 2,026,915	0.009	\$ 1,273
2005	27,875	\$ 249,132,116	\$ 8,938	1575	0.056	\$ 2,038,986	0.008	\$ 1,295
2006	27,421	\$ 266,011,553	\$ 9,701	1505	0.054	\$ 2,461,394	0.009	\$ 1,635
2007	27,353	\$ 296,187,436	\$ 10,828	1498	0.054	\$ 2,329,715	0.008	\$ 1,555
2008	27,013	\$ 320,436,629	\$ 11,862	1512	0.055	\$ 2,465,620	0.008	\$ 1,631
2009	26,579	\$ 323,574,001	\$ 12,174	1527	0.057	\$ 2,616,000	0.008	\$ 1,713
2010	26,548	\$ 334,861,743	\$ 12,613	1549	0.058	\$ 2,178,000	0.007	\$ 1,406
2011	26,653	\$ 314,962,366	\$ 11,817	1557	0.058	\$ 2,109,000	0.007	\$ 1,355
2012	26,545	\$ 328,335,730	\$ 12,374	1600	0.06	\$ 1,623,000	0.005	\$ 1,014

* shaded area means district did not keep records of data

Figure 5: District Professional Development Offerings 2005-2013

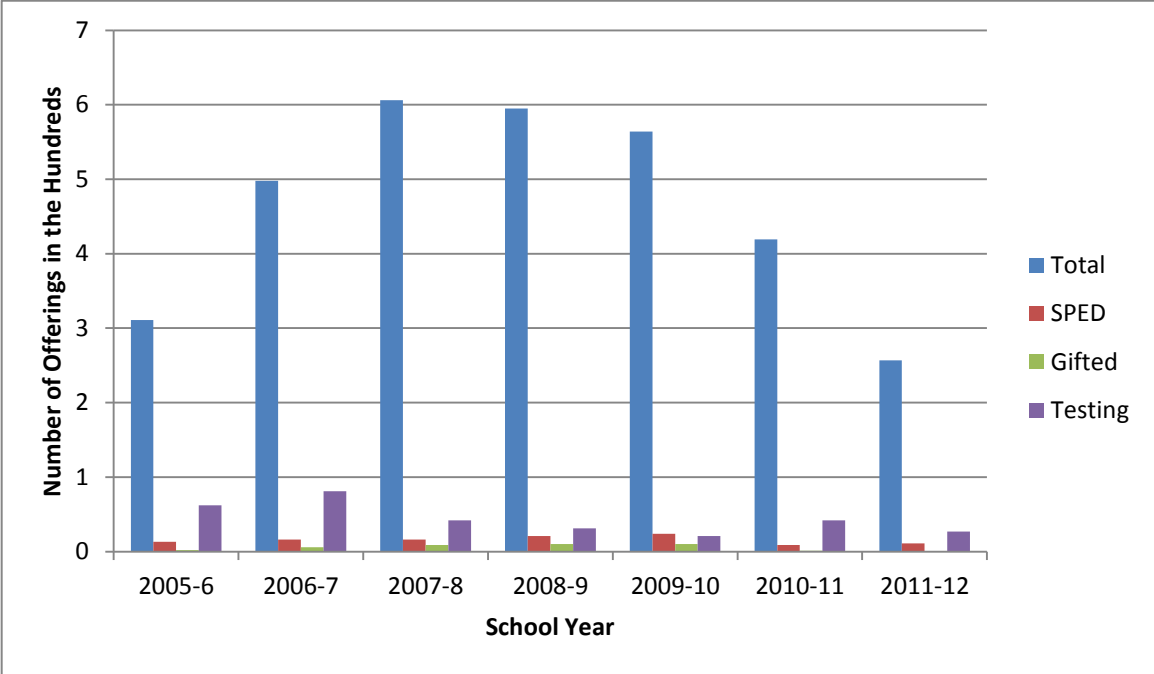


Table 1: Changes in Instructional Time in Elementary Schools Since 2001-02

Subject or Period	Percentage of All Districts that Increased Time	Percentage of All Districts that Decreased Time	Average Increase (Minutes per Week)	Average Decrease (Minutes per Week)
English Language Arts	58%		141	
Mathematics	45%		89	
Social Studies		36%		76
Science		28%		75
Art and Music		16%		57
Recess		20%		50
Physical Education		9%		40
Lunch		5%		*

*sample size too small

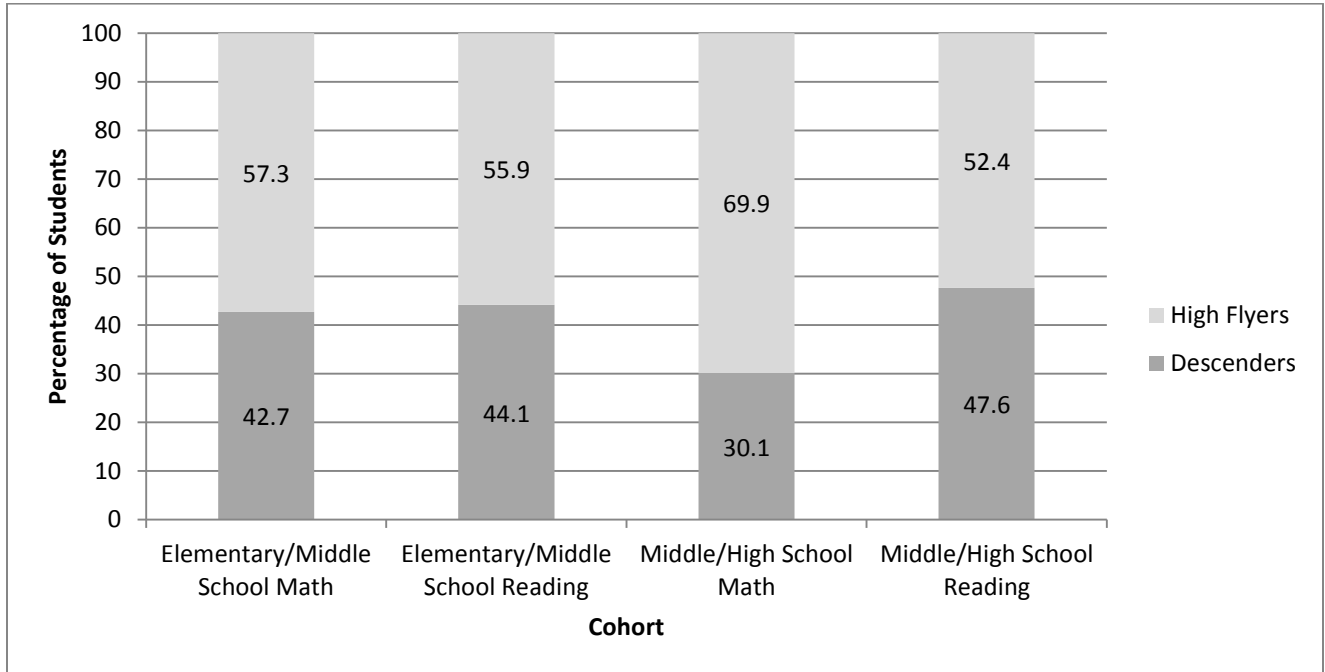
Table adapted from Instructional Time in Elementary Schools A Closer Look at Changes for Specific Subjects (McMurrer, 2008)

Table 2: Academic Gains in NAEP Pre/Post NCLB, 10th and 90th Percentiles

Annual Point Gains by the 10 th percentile			Annual Point Gains by the 90 th percentile		
Grade/Subject	Pre-NCLB	Post-NCLB	Grade/Subject	Pre-NCLB	Post-NCLB
Math- 4 th grade	1.3	2.6	Math- 4 th grade	1.2	1.4
Reading- 4 th grade	-1.4	2.3	Reading- 4 th grade	0.1	0.4
Math- 8 th grade	0.7	1.9	Math- 8 th grade	1.3	0.7
Reading- 8 th grade	0.8	-0.6	Reading- 8 th grade	0.1	0.0
Average of grade/subjects combined	0.35	1.55	Average of grade/subjects combined	0.675	0.625

*source: High Achieving Students in the Era of NCLB (Loveless, Farkas & Duffet, 2008)

Table 3: Do High Flyers Maintain Their Altitude?



*Source: Do High Flyers Maintain Their Altitude? (Xiang et al, 2011)

Table 4: Projected Costs of Administering High Quality Assessments

Assessment Type	Year 0	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total	Cost per pupil
						Cost per State
Single-state cost (standard assessment)	\$3,936,258	\$16,633,386	\$15,566,449	\$16,189,107	\$52,325,199	\$19.93
Single-state cost (high-quality assessment)	\$7,813,641	\$45,562,943	\$45,473,513	\$47,292,454	146,142,551	\$55.67
10-state assessment	\$7,255,524	\$220,534,504	\$127,580,504	\$236,68,724	\$692,054,256	\$42.41
						\$69,205,426
20-state	\$10,865,234	\$422,821,426	\$438,008,219	\$455,528,548	\$1,327,223,427	\$40.;66
						\$66,361,171
30-state	\$14,109,627	\$605,517,274	\$628,080,944	\$653,204,182	\$1,900,912,027	\$38.33
						\$63,363,734

* Table adapted from *The Cost of New Higher Quality Assessments* (Topol & Roeber, 2010)

Table 5: Demographics of District Studied

	District	State
Enrollment	27,876	511,258
Average Attendance Rate	96%	95%
Demographics	District	State
White Students	67%	69%
Hispanic Students	15%	16%
African-American Students	8%	7%
Other Classification	9%	4%
Free/Reduced Status	33%	47%
Students with Disabilities	10%	14%
Graduation Rate	88%	81%
Drop Out Rate	1%	1%

Table 6: Teacher Demographics

Shaded areas represent a “new” teacher with a hiring date after NCLB enactment

Teachers	Years of Experience
Teacher A- Elementary General Education	23
Teacher B- Elementary General Education	10
Teacher C- Elementary General Education	11
Teacher D- Elementary General Education	12
Teacher E- Elementary General Education	29
Teacher F- Secondary General Education	10
Teacher G- Secondary General Education	5
Teacher H- Secondary General Education	30
Teacher I- Secondary General Education	21
Teacher J- Secondary General Education	14
Teacher K- Elementary Gifted Education	35
Teacher M- Elementary Gifted Education	23
Teacher N- Elementary Gifted Education	15
Teacher O- Elementary Gifted Education	10
Teacher P- Elementary Gifted Education	40
Teacher Q- Secondary Gifted Education	40
Teacher R- Secondary Gifted Education	10
Teacher S- Secondary Gifted Education	12
Teacher T- Secondary Gifted Education	33
Teacher U- Secondary Gifted Education	8

Table 7: Teacher Survey Results

Q1. Please rank the following choices (1=very, 3= somewhat, 5=not at all) about resources and how gifted children are affected in your classroom:

	1=very	3=somewhat	5=very little/not at all
not enough instructional time to teach	26.92%	59.62%	13.46%
not enough money for supplies and materials	29.41%	45.1%	25.49%
not enough staff development on how to meet needs of gifted students in the general classroom	40.38%	42.31%	17.31%
not enough paraprofessional/aide support	43.14%	33.33%	23.53%
not enough planning time	51.92%	40.38%	7.69%

Q2. Please rank the following choices (1=very, 3= somewhat, 5=not at all) about curriculum and how gifted children are affected in your classroom:

	1=very	3=somewhat	5=very little/not at all
less instructional time in "non-tested" subjects	29.41%	54.09%	15.69%
traditional curriculum (pre-Common Core) is an "inch wide and a mile deep"	41.18%	47.06%	11.76%
traditional curriculum (pre-Common Core) is a "one size fits all" with not enough differentiation	40.38%	50.0%	9.62%
less creative learning opportunities in which students participate	55.77%	32.69%	11.54%
transition to Common Core standards	19.23%	69.23%	11.54%

Q3. Please rank the following choices (1=very, 3= somewhat, 5=not at all) about testing and how gifted children are affected in your classroom:

	1=very	3=somewhat	5=very little/not at all
changes in the schedule due to testing practices	21.57%	56.86%	21.57%
too much test prep (focusing heavily on tested indicators)	65.38%	36.92%	7.69%
tests written at a low level (not a lot of higher level thinking skills)	42.31%	42.31%	15.38%
pressure to have all students meet standards	67.31%	25.0%	7.69%
too much focus on all types of test scores	65.38%	25.0%	9.62%

