

A CASE STUDY OF GIFTED EDUCATION IN  
TWO OKLAHOMA SCHOOL DISTRICTS

By

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## DEDICATION

“Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance, you must keep moving.”

Albert Einstein

The wobbly ride on this dissertation bicycle began five years ago. Without the support and encouragement of my friends and family it would not be the completed product it is today.

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“A brave man acknowledges the strength of others.” Veronica Roth

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#### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate and study the importance of educational services mandated for Oklahoma's gifted and talented students with the conclusion being likely able to assist educators in providing gifted service options to meet the needs of gifted learners. Research has shown the need to provide educational services to gifted children, yet many educators operate under the assumption that precocious students can best be served in a general education classroom.

The research questions for this descriptive case study centered on the stakeholders' account of the configurations of program options received and how effectively those services met the needs of gifted students. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews in two different districts at the elementary and middle school levels. Within each district, the interview participants included one teacher of gifted students, two parents of gifted students, and three students enrolled in gifted education program options.

The study found that both districts were reported to provide a plethora of options to meet the needs of their gifted students according to documentation submitted to the state; however, limited program options were available to the participants at each school. The stakeholder participants felt the services provided were meeting the academic needs of advanced students. While participant satisfaction with gifted services was noticeable, there was little evidence to demonstrate planning for social and emotional needs in either setting.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

In order for students to successfully transition from school to a more technologically advanced work force, they are adequately prepared through their local education agencies. The Marland Commission (Marland, 1971, p. III 10) reported many people were concerned that students who are gifted and/or talented were not getting the education necessary to reach their full potential. Educating the gifted was again recognized in 1983 in *A Nation at Risk* (1983). The National Commission on Excellence reported, “The educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people” (1983, p. 9). That Commission additionally stated, “Over half the population of gifted students do not match their tested ability with comparable achievement in school” (The National Commission on Excellence, 1983, p. 11). President Bush (2006) conveyed similar thoughts in his State of the Union Address, “If we ensure that America's children succeed in life, they will ensure that America succeeds in the world. Preparing our nation to compete in the world is a goal that all of us can share” (para. 101). While President Bush was focused on promoting No Child Left Behind, his thoughts could likely be taken as principles that are applicable to all students. Gifted children not only have significant differences with

age peers in cognitive ability, they need programs to address their social, emotional, creative, and physical needs (Feldhusen, 1994; Reis & Renzulli, 2010). Several studies (Hong, Greene, & Higgins, 2006; Janos Fung, & Robinson, 1985; Naglieri & Kaufman, 2010; Ozturk & Debelak, 2008; Reis & Renzulli, 2010; Riley & Karnes, 2005) have documented the psychological needs of gifted learners who have flourished when stimulated or squelched when inhibited.

The state of Oklahoma recognized the need to educate gifted students beginning in the late 1970s (Lalley, 1984). Since 1981, gifted education has been targeted with mandated intervention and funded by the state of Oklahoma (Education of Gifted and Talented Children Act, 1981). All Oklahoma school districts are required to screen and identify gifted students according to their needs. Besides screening and identifying gifted students, school districts are to provide “special programs, supportive services, unique educational materials, learning setting and other educational services which differentiate, supplement and support the regular educational program” (Education of Gifted and Talented Children Act, 1981, Section 904). Therefore, school districts that do not have separate program options to serve gifted students are required to address gifted needs through many other methods of differentiation. Additional service options planned for individual students include acceleration, differentiated curriculum, enrichment activities, and mentorships, to name a few.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Multiple research projects support the need for academic development of the nation’s students who are gifted, talented, or with high potential as a requisite for the future of America to meet the challenges of a global society (Colangelo, Assouline, & Gross,

2004; Marland, 1971; The National Commission on Excellence, 1983; Reis & Renzulli, 2010). These findings extend beyond academic achievement. For example, Reis and Renzulli (2010) discovered that high-achieving students who participated in enrichment experiences for five years or longer displayed higher levels of creative productivity than did their equally-abled classmates. Tomlinson-Keasey and Smith-Winberry (1983) found that girls who had experienced intensive gifted programs had higher career aspirations as they grew into adulthood. In addition, researchers (Moon et al., 1994) found increased feelings of competency in children placed in all-day programs for gifted students. However, many educators operate under the assumption that all students are best served in an academically heterogeneous classroom. Researchers (Callahan, 2004; Colangelo et al., 2004; The National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983; Kaufman & Plucker, 2011; Tomlinson, 1999) recognize the necessity to educate gifted children with appropriate and qualitatively different services to prepare them to meet the challenges of a global society.

Oklahoma public schools are required to provide gifted child educational services which means “special instructional programs, support services, unique educational materials, learning setting and other educational services which differentiate, supplement and support the regular educational program in meeting the needs of the gifted and talented child” (Education of Gifted and Talented Children Act, 1981, Section 904). Therefore, school districts that do not have a special class option to serve gifted students are required to address gifted needs through screening, identification, and differentiated instruction. According to the Education of Gifted and Talented Children Act (1981), all districts are required to provide an Annual Report of Gifted and Talented Education to the State De-

partment of Education. However, these individual reports tell researchers little about the state of gifted education across Oklahoma. This study is designed to describe how the needs of Oklahoma gifted students are being met in two districts at the elementary and middle school levels.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Feldhusen (1994) pointed out the goal of gifted programs must be to provide curriculum and instruction at a complexity, depth, level, and pace not appropriate for the average student. Such skills are more difficult to test than are basic skills. Doina (1997) indicated that many programs for the gifted are individualized to meet the needs of each student, many goals are too complex to define, and variations in programs make objectives difficult to measure. System wide or nationwide standardized tests cannot appropriately evaluate programs with such diversity. Doina (1997) went on to share the advantages and disadvantages of various evaluation instruments but concluded that methods of evaluating gifted programs needed more attention. Therefore, to better understand the gifted program options of Oklahoma public school districts, standardized instruments would not provide an accurate description of how students' needs are being met through gifted educational services, and there is a need to go deeper in determining how program options are meeting the holistic needs of learners in Oklahoma who are gifted.

Studying the services to gifted and talented students in two Oklahoma school districts may assist educators in designing and providing gifted service options. This study describes the services provided to gifted students in two Oklahoma school districts according to document review and stakeholder interviews. The descriptive case study methodology used in this investigation allowed analysis of the state of two Oklahoma

school districts' gifted education programs through directly working with stakeholders (Merriam, 1998). Analyzing the two districts' gifted programs from the perspective of the program stakeholders provides education specialists evidence to contribute more attention to political factors, such as resource allocation, curriculum development, and defining holistic needs of giftedness.

For this particular project, the various stakeholders (six students, four parents, and two teachers of gifted students) furnished the description of gifted education program options from their various perspectives. In order to develop an understanding of the nature of gifted education in Oklahoma, I completed twelve stakeholder interviews. I used open-ended questions sought to gain an in-depth understanding of gifted students, their need for more challenging exercises, what services are being provided, and how those services are meeting the needs of gifted students.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided this study:

1. How do stakeholders of gifted programs describe ways that services for gifted meet students' needs?
2. How do stakeholders describe the perceived effectiveness of the gifted programs in meeting the needs of gifted students?
3. What other truths can be revealed in this study?

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework for investigating and studying the importance of Oklahoma's gifted program options in meeting the needs of gifted learners was tied to the belief that such programs need to provide services that address their social, emotional, crea-

tive, cognitive and physical needs, not just their academic needs (Feldhusen, 1994; Reis & Renzulli, 2010). One theoretical model that combines all developmental needs into the curriculum planning is the Holistic Educational model (Montgomery, Strunk, Steele, & Bridges, 2012; Montgomery, 2013). Montgomery's method created a learning system that encompasses the total learner, addressing cognitive or academic needs (the mind) and activities that promote brain stimulation and psychomotor learning (the body); delving deeply into intuition along with expressing creativity (the spirit) and the need for social interaction and a sense of belonging in addition to psychological wellbeing (the heart). The cognitive domain includes thinking, and knowledge development. For the psychomotor segment, the Holistic Education model includes the body or sensing, doing and physical development. By planning program options or lessons using this model, educators create a curriculum that accommodates the total development of the learner-cognitively, creatively, emotionally, physically, and socially (Montgomery et al., 2012; Montgomery, 2013).

Gifted education is committed to advancing higher levels of thinking skills, building student interests, and increasing the awareness of affective behaviors (Feldhusen, 1994; VanTassel-Baska, 1983). The state of Oklahoma is committed to developing the gifted students within its borders. Oklahoma Education of Gifted and Talented Children Act (1981, Section 904) was initiated to ensure gifted and talented children of Oklahoma are provided with "special instructional programs, supportive services, unique educational materials, learning setting or other educational services, which differentiate, supplement and support the regular education program." By application, this includes students who score in the top three percent on any nationally standardized test of intellectual abil-



ity or may include students who excel in one or more of the following areas: intellectual ability, creative thinking ability, leadership ability, visual or performing arts ability, and specific academic ability (Education of Gifted and Talented Children Act, 1981, Section 904). Oklahoma's gifted education act was designed to ensure that students served in such programs not only are provided academic programs that differentiate from the "normal curriculum in pace and/or depth" (Education of Gifted and Talented Children Act, 1981, Section 910), but in addition are provided guidance and counseling that assists students in their academic careers and address the specific social-emotional needs of the gifted. Therefore, Oklahoma gifted programs fit the Holistic Education model (Montgomery et al., 2012; Montgomery, 2013) by accommodating the cognitive, creative, emotional, physical, and social needs of the gifted. Describing how the needs of gifted and talented students in two Oklahoma districts are being met and studying the significance of necessary services currently mandated and funded for Oklahoma's gifted and talented students through a qualitative case study could reveal the strengths and weaknesses of two district programs and contribute to the existing body of knowledge related to gifted education.

### **Researcher Role**

Education of academically gifted students has been the focus of my career for 20 years. My first four years of teaching involved facilitating the education programs of gifted students in Kansas and overlapped the completion of my Master's Degree program from Fort Hays State University. Upon moving to Oklahoma, I taught learning disabled students for two years until an opening occurred in gifted education. At that point, my career as a gifted education facilitator in Oklahoma began. Questions regarding the ne-

cessity of providing services to academically gifted students have arisen often during my teaching tenure, thus prompting this study.

This research project began as a class assignment during my doctoral pursuit. Data collected for that assignment laid the foundation for further research. My familiarity with gifted education and the Edmond Public Schools Educational Services Coordinator made it essential that I guard against bias and follow research protocol during one of the early interviews.

That familiarity continually spawned preconceived answers to the research question and was addressed as necessary during the study. It has been my belief throughout my teaching career that despite the material, each professional development opportunity should be a learning experience. It was that attitude of learning and open mindedness that I took to each interview with the hope of obtaining relevant and pertinent data for this research.

Having been a gifted coordinator for many years, I hold the opinion that options within gifted education are vitally important to generate a learning atmosphere for precocious children. Such a background provokes preconceived notions of particular delivery models and their value. Therefore, objectivity regarding the effectiveness of implementation was challenging. I endeavored to approach all aspects of the research with an open attitude. I demonstrated the trustworthiness of my research by using the four criteria developed by Guba and Lincoln (1992): credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

## **Research Method**

Crotty (1998) suggested that a theoretical framework would provide the premise for the methodology. Since Oklahoma's gifted programs are to deliver a differentiated curriculum for gifted students in pace and/or depth and include counseling services, Montgomery's Holistic Educational model (Montgomery et al., 2012; Montgomery, 2013) was the framework used to determine ways the data analysis met all developmental needs of gifted learners. In order to use that theory to learn how well Oklahoma education agencies were providing the differentiation, depth, pace, and counseling services for gifted students, I implemented a case study method of research.

Merriam (1985) defined a case study as "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit" (p. 43). Merriam pointed out that case studies provide an opportunity to better understand the operations and important aspects of a practice. Merriam further revealed that case studies focus on the holistic nature of the problem seeking to understand the situation in a natural setting. According to Merriam (1998), qualitative research covers several methods of study that better explain and help researchers gain a greater understanding of an event or circumstance with little interference to the situation. Later, she stated that qualitative research provides the meaning of a situation and its experiences that a quantitative study cannot. Kemmis and Wilkinson (1998) declared that qualitative research allows the researchers to analyze their practices, self-analyze, reflect, and understand their educational practices through richer investigation. Case studies also impart a humanization of research by working with stakeholders (Merriam, 1998). Case study methodology further provides harmony to the inquiry through dialogue and deliberation (Patton, 2002).

Articles and texts regarding research practices revealed an understanding about the philosophy of qualitative research. Qualitative research seeks to explore and understand individuals in a particular instance in-depth (Merriam, 1998). Merriam further stated that qualitative research is characterized by collecting information from field work. Analysis and interpretation of the data manifests itself into particular themes and forming the researcher's interpretation of the material into a flexible report (Creswell, 2009).

The problem for this study was to describe how the needs of gifted and talented students in two Oklahoma school districts are being met through a variety of program options. In order to gain a holistic understanding of the problem, a deep, saturated inquiry into the field of gifted education through the collection of cases was essential. Using a descriptive case study method was necessary to present a clear manifestation for the value of gifted services to school district leadership and state political leaders.

To establish the necessary background information, I conducted an interview regarding gifted programs from the perspective of the coordinator of gifted services for Edmond Public Schools. I collected more case study information by interviewing four parents, six students, and two teachers of gifted students in a couple of different settings. By studying the phenomena from several cases and various perspectives, I was able look at the similarities and provide a more compelling understanding of the value of gifted services.

Data analysis entails a systematic classification of people, artifacts, and events seeking to describe patterns and themes using the content method of characterizing and comparing the collected information (Merriam, 1998). According to Merriam (1998), the raw data is coded according to pertinent characteristics of the study. For this particular

study, I transcribed the interviews verbatim and sorted the data into specific groups that corresponded with Montgomery's Holistic Education model (Montgomery et al., 2012; Montgomery, 2013) and the research questions. I added sub categories regarding specific topics depending on the depth of the interviewee's response. Merriam (1998) explained that such analysis is inductive. I started the analysis with a certain number of categories with which to sort the data, but the categories grew throughout the study. Those categories included stakeholders' definition of giftedness, how student needs are met, how those needs fit into the Holistic Education model (Montgomery et al., 2012; Montgomery, 2013), and the stakeholders' perceptions of effectiveness.

According to Mertens and McLaughlin (2004), the triangulation of data provides the researcher the opportunity to seek a common understanding through more than one lens. Using more than one lens provides additional perspectives that complement one another and increases validity and reliability of the research (Merriam, 1998). I obtained triangulation through purposeful review and sorting of the evidence. Data to be triangulated for this project included school districts' program plans and policies, interviews with teachers, parents, and students, and information provided in the literature.

### **Significance of the Study**

Merriam (1998) pointed out that qualitative research seeks to understand people and make sense of the world they have created and their experiences. Since the researcher is the primary method for collecting the data, the entire context of the phenomena is taken into consideration and analyzed. This study was designed to describe how the needs of gifted and talented students in two Oklahoma school districts' are being met. Investigating and studying the needs of gifted students specific to Oklahoma can assist

educators in providing services for gifted learners in spite of deterrents. Gathering information regarding Oklahoma's gifted programs can also provide education specialists with evidence to provide more attention to political factors, such as resource allocation, curriculum development, and defining giftedness.

### **Assumptions/Limitations**

This study regarding rationalization of special services for Oklahoma's gifted students did have limitations in data collection and time constraints. Oklahoma has 532 public school districts required by law to provide services to their gifted students (Education of Gifted and Talented Children Act, 1981). According to the Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE) 2012 Gifted and Talented (GT) Annual Report (Barresi, 2012), 102,659 students were provided gifted services during the 2011-2012 school year.

The OSDE defined a gifted child as one who "demonstrated potential abilities of high performance capability and needing differentiated or accelerated education services" (Education of Gifted and Talented Children Act, 1981, para. 1). The Act (1981, para. 1) further states these students have "demonstrated abilities of high performance of capability." By application, this includes those students who score in the top three percent on any nationally standardized test of intellectual ability and may include students who excel in one or more of the following areas: intellectual ability, creative thinking ability, leadership ability, visual or performing arts ability, and specific academic ability. This study was limited to students who qualified for gifted education services based on that definition. Therefore, the focus was on students of high intellectual ability in general. Attributes such as demographics or additional exceptionalities were not addressed.

Qualitative research, because it seeks to describe a phenomena rather than report it, produces limitations (Merriam, 1998). Limitations came from seeking districts willing to participate, participation approval from the districts, the distance between districts visited, rhetorical and honest responses, and the period of time necessary to disseminate the information. Merriam (1998) discussed ways to assist researchers in disseminating and reporting the data. However, the amount of time spent on the material is up to the researcher. An accurate description of gifted programs from the interviews was limited by participants' basic knowledge of gifted education. However, responses provide a valuable picture of Oklahoma's gifted education programs.

Data collected by the OSDE *Annual Report on Gifted and Talented Education* (Barresi, 2012) were consulted. Limitations existed with OSDE data since each school district self-reports the information based on state guidelines. Further limitations existed because the Education of Gifted and Talented Children Act (1981) required districts to provide the plan for gifted programming options, which may not yield descriptive information on program goals nor how individual students needs are met.

A plethora of program options is available to gifted students in Oklahoma through private organizations and universities. Private programs include College for Young Scholars, Gifted and Talented Lyceum, Horizons Unlimited Gifted and Talented Academy, and International Aerospace Academy. Since the scope of this project was based on the value of gifted programs mandated and funded by Oklahoma state legislation, private service delivery models were not included in this study.

## Definition of Terms

The following terms were used throughout this project.

**Acceleration** is an educational intervention that seeks early entrance either at the kindergarten or university level; moving through age graded classes in less time; or moving through the curriculum at a faster pace (Clark, 2013)

**Advanced Placement (AP)** courses are college-level courses and examinations for high school students (Davis & Rimm, 1989).

**Enrichment activities** are activities, which are planned and designed with “higher order” thinking objectives in mind. Enrichment activities may include independent study and projects, learning centers, field trips, Saturday programs, summer programs, mentors and mentorships, and academic competitions (Davis & Rimm, 1989).

**Gifted and talented children** were defined by the 1981 Oklahoma legislature as those students identified from preschool through twelfth grade as “having demonstrated potential abilities of high performance capability and needing differentiated or accelerated education or services” (Education of Gifted and Talented Children Act, 1981, Section 904).

**Giftedness** is generally equated with high IQ scores. More recently, however, the definition of gifted or talented has become multidimensional to include a combination of non-intellectual qualities, intellectual potential, and creativity (Reis & Renzulli, 2010).

**Holistic Education** provides a learning system that includes the mind (cognitive), body (psychomotor), spirit (creative and intuitive) and heart (social and emotional).

**Identification criteria** are the standards used to determine student placement within a gifted program in Oklahoma (Education of Gifted and Talented Children Act, 1981).

Identification criteria is meant to be multipronged in nature and assess student strengths.



Typical identification criteria includes scoring in the top three percent on a nationally standardized test of intellectual ability and may also include excelling in creative thinking ability, leadership ability, visual and performing arts ability, and specific academic ability. Once all the identification procedures are completed, the determination is made within a school district whether to place a student in a gifted program (Education of Gifted and Talented Children Act, 1981).

**Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Program (Javits Grant)**

supports competitive grants to state educational agencies, school districts, colleges and universities, and other entities for research, demonstration projects, and other activities designed to enhance the ability of elementary and secondary schools to meet the educational needs of gifted and talented students.

**PASS (Priority Academic Student Skills)** are the skills required to be mastered for each grade or course level (Oklahoma State Board of Education, 2011).

**Pull-out Programs** are classes where small groups of elementary school students meet with a GT teacher/coordinator for special activities (Davis & Rimm, 1989).

**Underserved Students** are children who have historically been considered low-income students, and/or ethnic/racial minorities (Rendón, (2006).

**Twice-exceptional students** are children who demonstrate high achievement potential in one or more domains and who exhibit one or more disabilities as defined by state for federal guidelines (Lovett & Levandowski, 2006).

### **Chapter Summary**

The need to provide challenging educational activities to academically gifted students is vital not only for the future of the local and global communities, but for the suc-

cess of individual students. Gifted students in the state of Oklahoma are fortunate because legislators in 1981 established the need to mandate that every public school district in Oklahoma provide a plan for serving them and supplied the funds to support those services (Education of Gifted and Talented Children Act, 1981). Currently, individual districts may create program options for serving gifted students according to their individual needs.

The purpose for this study was to describe how the needs of gifted and talented students in two Oklahoma school districts are being met. Investigating and studying the needs of precocious students specific to Oklahoma may assist educators in providing services. At the time this research was being conducted, a limited number of studies had been performed legitimizing the need academically gifted children have for instructional services beyond regular classroom instruction, and little research has been conducted solely within the state of Oklahoma expounding the necessity to continue these opportunities.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

This review of the literature begins with the history of gifted education in the United States and the state of Oklahoma followed by details of giftedness. In order to provide a foundational framework, literature related to the history of gifted education and a history of gifted education in Oklahoma was reviewed. Since the focus of this study is on how the needs of gifted and talented students in two Oklahoma school districts' are being met at the elementary and middle school levels, this chapter examines literature related to the cognitive, social, psychological, creative, and psychomotor needs of children and youth who are gifted, the various program delivery models available to students in Oklahoma public schools, and program options found to be effective in meeting those needs.

#### **History of Gifted Education**

Galton started the earliest research studies of gifted individuals around 1865 in England (Hollingworth, 1927). According to early descriptions by Hollingworth, several additional studies of eminent people followed. Each study was searching for a common denominator among gifted individuals. The first mention of accelerated students in the United States was recorded at St. Louis, Missouri, in 1870 (Jolly, 2005). Documentation of an early form of grade skipping occurred at Woburn, Massachusetts, in 1884. In 1901,

the first special school for gifted was opened at Worcester, Massachusetts. Commencement of special schools led to the first longitudinal effectiveness research of gifted students (Chapman, 1981). Special classes, or “opportunity classes” as they were called, were created for gifted students attending in Los Angeles, California and Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1916. During the Great Depression, most people focused on basic survival needs, and interest in educating gifted students declined (Jolly, 2005).

The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) considered the launch of Sputnik in 1957 as the catalyst for the evolution of gifted education in the United States (NAGC, 2008). The predicament of gifted children was again brought into the spotlight in the 1970s with *The Education of the Gifted and Talented* report regarding the condition of gifted education (Marland, 1971). In this report, a definition of giftedness was accepted federally together with programming options. In 1970, Senator Jacob K. Javits sponsored a bill requiring the United States Department of Education to evaluate the status of the nation’s gifted and talented children. Limited federal funds were provided to state and local governments over the next ten years to develop gifted programs (NAGC, 2008). Gifted and talented education was consolidated at the federal level with the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act of 1981. Under PL 100-297 in 1988, the Javits Program for Gifted and Talented Education Program, i.e. the Javits Act, was created within the United States Department of Education.

According to the NAGC (2015), the Javits Act was defunded in 2011 due to funding cuts. Limited funds were appropriated in 2014 by grants according to one of two criteria: (a) to develop or improve education models that serve underrepresented student populations in gifted and talented programs; and (b) efforts to improve state and local

services for gifted and talented students. Besides the Javits Act grants, there are no federal funds provided to school districts for gifted education.

The U.S. Office of Education, that is the Department of Education, developed the first definition of gifted and talented in the 1970s. Having a definition guided individual states in developing legislation for gifted education (Marland, 1971). Educators across the United States and Canada became more committed to gifted services after the U.S. Department of Education report, “National Excellence: A Case for Developing America’s Talent” was released in 1993. At that time, the Javits Act provided grants for gifted research and initiatives. Funding for general gifted education programs was left up to the individual states. All fifty states had passed legislation for gifted education and had provided funds to support those laws. Research, programs, materials and the need for counseling services increased significantly during that era. When the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) became law, it redirected the focus of education toward raising the achievement status of low performing students (Gentry, 2006; Renzulli, 2005). While low achieving students have demonstrated gains in reading and math, education opportunities for gifted students have diminished (Gifted education state policies, 2014). Currently, the majority of states mandate services for gifted students. However, only four states mandate and fully fund gifted education.

According to Lalley (1984), the first mention of funding for gifted students in Oklahoma appeared in 1969. That funding was allocated to districts through an application process for a flat grant. Lalley pointed out that the lack of funding and a narrow definition of giftedness provided few gifted students an opportunity to receive special services.

In 1977, the Oklahoma legislature appropriated \$300,000 for gifted education. As a result, the direction for gifted education in Oklahoma dramatically changed.

The Oklahoma legislators of 1980 together with the Oklahoma Association of Gifted, Creative, and Talented (OAGCT) developed a state definition of gifted and talented. That definition led to the mandates of gifted programs (Lalley, 1984). Oklahoma became the seventeenth state to mandate education services for gifted and talented students (Barresi, 2012; Lalley, 1984). That legislation became known as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1981. Oklahoma mandated that funding for gifted education programs be provided through the state education aid formula. In 1990, the Oklahoma Senate passed Senate Bill 770 requiring school districts to notify the parents of identified students that their child had been identified for services. Each parent was to receive a summary of the program to be offered. Later, the legislature required districts to appoint a local school advisory board that would assist in developing district goals, a district plan, a district report, and other duties requested by the local school board. Further, legislation added a cap on the amount of funds that would be reimbursed to each district for providing gifted and talented services up to eight percent of the total average daily membership.

The OSDE defined a gifted child as one who “demonstrated potential abilities of high performance capability and needing differentiated or accelerated education services” (Education of Gifted and Talented Children Act, 1981, para. 1). The Act (1981, para. 1) further states these students have “demonstrated abilities of high performance of capability.” By application, this includes those students who score in the top three percent on any nationally standardized test of intellectual ability and may include students who excel

in one or more of the following areas: intellectual ability, creative thinking ability, leadership ability, visual or performing arts ability, and specific academic ability. In 1994, HB 2041 created the current definitions of gifted and talented children and required local boards of education to adopt a written policy with specific required criteria for placement consistent for grades one through twelve.

### **Oklahoma Mandate for Gifted Education**

The earliest attempts at mandating programs for gifted education in Oklahoma placed such programs under special education (Lalley, 1984). Once a definition of gifted and talented children was established, Oklahoma's legislators developed additional mandates. House Bill 1816 became the first piece of mandated legislation for gifted programs and gave school districts one full year to develop a plan for serving such students. The rules and regulations were broad and allowed local districts to implement programs as deemed appropriate for their students.

According to the Education of Gifted and Talented Children Act (1981) there are two different methods of qualification for gifted services in Oklahoma. Students identified as Category 1 on the Annual Report of Gifted and Talented Education are children who score in the 97th percentile or higher on a nationally standardized test of intellectual ability, taking into account the test's standard error of measure. Students who are identified as Category 2 on the Report are children who are identified by a multiple criteria evaluation assessment set up by the local school district. Unfortunately, as districts began developing their gifted program guidelines, they realized that supporting funds had not been appropriated.

Districts are required to serve students when they enter an Oklahoma public school and qualify for services. According to the Oklahoma definition of a gifted child (Education of Gifted and Talented Children Act, 1981), children can be served from four years old through graduation. If the school does not have a pre-kindergarten program, districts start serving students in kindergarten. How schools serve their students is a local district decision.

According to Lalley (1984), when Oklahoma began providing services only teachers with a valid special education certificate could teach classes for gifted students. When additional funds were appropriated, school districts were faced with the task of getting personnel certified in order to meet the increase of students they could serve. When the Education of Gifted and Talented Children Act of 1981 was signed into law, it urged districts to seek qualified individuals to teach gifted students, but the special education certification was dropped. Currently, as long as a teacher has a certificate to work with a particular age group, he or she may teach classes for gifted students (Hofmeister, 2015).

Proficiency Based Promotion is an additional option school districts must offer their students at least twice a year (Education of Gifted and Talented Children Act, 1981). The Proficiency Based Promotion assessment demonstrates that a student has obtained mastery of a course. To receive credit for the course, a student must score a 90% or higher on the proficiency based promotion assessment. These assessments are written by the local school districts and must be offered in all core curriculum classes encompassing the state standards.

For every student identified by the State Gifted Education Report as a Category 1, the district will receive a percentage of funding above what is normally given for each



student from state aid. Currently, that increase is .34 per child above the average per child funding amount (Education of Gifted and Talented Children Act, 1981). The increase is the same regardless of the district. Overall, some districts may receive more money from state aid, but the increase per gifted students will remain the same. In addition, school districts are appropriated funds for gifted programs up to 8% of their Average Daily Membership (ADM) for students identified using the multiple criteria method of placement. When the funding law was passed, the original authors of the bill tried to separate gifted funds from general funds to ensure gifted money provided differentiated programs for gifted students. The state legislators felt such a separation of funding would be too restrictive for school districts; gifted money is currently appropriated through general funds. The NAGC (2008) revealed that for many states, when funding for schools is up, funding for gifted education is supported. However, when funding for schools is down, funding for gifted education drops.

### **Programming Options to meet Learner Needs**

The Education of Gifted and Talented Children Act (1981) defines gifted and talented children as “those students who score in the top three percent (3%) on any national standardized test of intellectual ability.” The law also permits school districts to identify students using a multiple criteria method of assessment when standardized testing measurements are not available or in areas of capability that are not evaluated through standardized tests.

How local school districts provide services for their gifted students is a local district decision (Education of Gifted and Talented Children Act, 1981). Programming options available include Advanced Placement, academic competitions, enrichment, pullout

classes, guidance and counseling services and other services. The type of service provided depends on a number of factors. Delcourt, Cornell, and Goldberg (2007) pointed out that no particular method is better than another when providing services to gifted students.

The Education of Gifted and Talented Children Act (1981) requires the local board of education to provide programming options for identified students that will meet the needs of the individual. The Act also requires districts to ensure gifted students are provided a curriculum that is deeper, broader, and at a different pace than the other students in the class. There must be more to instructing gifted students than just having them spend more time on a topic.

The Oklahoma Priority Academic Students Skills (PASS) adopted in 1992 (Barresi, 2012) were the minimum skills required at each grade or subject level in order for a student to complete that grade or course. No PASS skills were developed for gifted programs. Oklahoma legislators revoked the PASS skills in favor of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) during the 2011 legislative session. The CCSS were developed in an attempt to gain curriculum consensus across the country (Development Process, 2014). Authors of CCSS, who were state governors and state commissioners of education, intended to develop a curriculum that would be more thorough and challenging than state standards. According to Van Tassel-Baska (2010), CCSS has outcomes that are desirable for gifted learners because students are required to build arguments and seek higher levels of thinking and problem solving. This curriculum focuses more on informational text without as much literature based reading materials. Students learn how to obtain information, not just to regurgitate facts. Learning is demonstrated by having stu-

dents write and apply the newly acquired knowledge. With CCSS, students not only have to support what they have learned, but also compare and contrast various ideas. Van Tassel-Baska (2010) stated the CCSS uses real world problem solving instead of just multiple choice types of assessment. Basically, the CCSS curriculum provides a form of gifted education to all students. Renzulli (1988) pointed out that by providing more advanced learning experiences for all students, educators have the opportunity to develop high levels of potential in all students. A number of gifted programming options are available for schools to develop opportunities for serving the needs of their gifted students. The Education of Gifted and Talented Children Act (1981) requires local districts to develop options that will meet the needs and interests of their individual gifted students in curriculum depth, breadth, and pace. Along with the special instructional programs, districts must also provide support services, unique educational materials and other supplemental materials that support differentiation of the regular education curriculum.

Several researchers (Feldhusen, 1994; Reis, 2004; Reis & Renzulli, 2010; Winebrenner & Devlin, 2001) suggested compacting or accelerating the curriculum so gifted students can continue through the material at a faster pace. The process of how the gifted child learns should be defined by the student's own learning styles. Winebrenner and Devlin (2001) mentioned the process, along with the child's learning style, should incorporate "creative and productive thinking and conceptualizing, focus on open-ended and problem-solving tasks, opportunities for meaningful research, and the skills to share what they have learned" (p. 5). Reis and Renzulli (2004) added that most students' preferences change as they grow older. By allowing students to develop their strengths, they increase knowledge.

Seminars originally began in large school districts with input from across the district. Educators from different specialties were able to assist in planning this unique opportunity to intellectually gifted students (Nidiffer & Moon, 1994). Activities were differentiated according to the student's knowledge, competency, level, and pace. Classes were designed to provide students an opportunity to develop their critical thinking, creative thinking, task commitment, independent study, innovative production, and problem solving skills through in-depth lessons on a variety of topics (Montgomery, 2004; Nidiffer & Moon, 1994; Reis, 1994). The Purdue Three-Stage Model of middle school seminars (Nidiffer & Moon, 1994) was different from other pullout classes. Students signed up for a particular topic that would meet for one day a week per semester rotating through the two hours of courses. This prevented students from missing the same class each week and allowed students to add a class to their schedule rather than drop one. At the high school level, Project LEAP (Montgomery, 2004) provided rural minority students the opportunity to explore areas where they could achieve academic success which could lead to college entrance.

Mentorships are the pairing of students with a teacher, student, parent/caregiver, or professional whose interests are similar to the young person's interests ("Mentoring," 2007; Runions, 1983; Van Tassel-Baska, 2005). The mentor guides the child to develop his ideas, exchange theories, and increase his strengths. Mentorships provide an opportunity for students to work alongside an expert in their area of interest and develop social or interpersonal skills. Students are able to gain access to other experts in the field gaining career opportunities as they are inspired and their interests are intensified. Runions (1983) added that mentorships also provide students with opportunities for leadership,

contribute to the students' flexibility of pacing opportunities, and contribute to community school relationships.

Summer programs are courses offered to students during the summer by colleges and universities (Feldhusen, 1994; Olszewski-Kubillus & Lee, 2004; Van Tassel-Baska, 2005). Such offerings are provided during the student's leisure time and allow for exploration into topics of academic interest. Participants often have to meet specific testing requirements. Since these courses often require an on campus residency, for a time, at the hosting colleges or universities, tuition is frequently required (Olszewski-Kubillus & Lee, 2004; Van Tassel-Baska, 2005). Such activities are either enrichment or acceleration in nature and may offer high school credit.

Saturday enrichment programs are activities designed to provide challenging activities for academically gifted students in preschool, elementary, and middle schools. By supplementing their regular school work, students are provided with the ideal lessons that focus on key ideas, interdisciplinary instruction, and independent studies (Feldhusen, 1994; Olszewski-Kubillus & Lee, 2004). High school students can receive high school credit for honors courses. An additional component to the Saturday enrichment programs is courses on giftedness offered to parents.

Academic competitions provide opportunities to stimulate work habits, develop productive attitudes, offer academic differentiation and stimulation, and provide affective benefits unavailable in a regular classroom situation (Campbell, Cho & Feng, 2011; Ozturk & Debelak, 2008; Riley & Karnes, 2005). The competitive nature of these activities provides the incentive to meet certain standards for participation. Through these competitions, students have the opportunity to increase their mental health, which also

intensifies intellectual potential (Ozturk & Debelak, 2008). Researchers reported gifted students need the challenges and accomplishments these competitions produce to develop healthy self-assessments, feature their academic abilities, and receive recognition for their accomplishments (Ozturk & Debelak, 2008; Riley & Karnes, 2005). Subjective judging can teach students resiliency and help them to understand themselves more fairly. Since competitions are an intricate part of life, academic competitions provide an opportunity for teachers to develop the strengths and minimize the weaknesses of these opportunities (Ozturk & Debelak, 2008). Riley and Karnes (2005) added that competitions provide gifted students the opportunity to spend time with other like-minded individuals. Additional benefits include exposing students to real world problem solving opportunities, providing hands on learning, offering exposure to new ideas, honing their presentation skills, tuning research experiences, and developing communication adeptness.

Researchers (Betts, 2004; Renzulli, 1988; Tomlinson, 1999) pointed out that differentiated curriculum allows the instructor to determine the level of complexity appropriate for individual students. As units and lessons are developed, the instructor is aware of certain objectives and content to be taught. Students are given choices that take into account their needs, interests, and abilities often discovered through a learner profile (Tomlinson, 1999). Through differentiation, the gifted student achieves the same goals as the other students but on a more complex level. Ongoing assessments allow the teacher to make adjustments to instruction as needed. As the teacher becomes more familiar and organized with differentiating the curriculum, learner outcomes move from highly structured activities to more self-directed studies.

Learning centers are an integral part of early childhood classrooms. Research by Snowden and Christian (1998) developed a four tiered model for learning centers. This model allows students to move from teacher planned and directed activities to more student planned and directed activities. Using a four level approach to learning centers provides an opportunity to incorporate flexibility and variety as teachers address the needs of young gifted students. These children are able to enjoy an assortment of activities while working at their own pace and depth of learning. Researchers (Cukierkorn, Karnes, Manning, Houston, & Besnoy, 2007; Daniel & Cox, 1988) reported that learning centers could provide self-directed learning and differentiation to the curriculum that can be beneficial not only to the gifted child but also the entire class. Activities for all subjects can be set up on a table in the regular classroom. The teacher and students can work together to set valuable goals ensuring center time is well spent.

The Great Books Foundation provides a wide range of literature anthologies through which group members discuss the material via “Shared Inquiry.” The idea is to advance reading comprehension and critical thinking skills as well as encourage reflective thinking. Felertag and Chernoff (1987) declared inferential thinking not only enabled students to absorb and interpret reading passages in greater depth but also helped students develop critical thinking skills and improved their feelings of self-worth. Van Tassel-Baska (1986) stressed the use of the Socratic method of questioning through the Junior Great Books program. Such thinking stimulates the building of analogies across disciplines. Great Books and Junior Great Books follow a pattern of questioning developed by the teacher. According to Hoskison and Biskin (1979), questions asked must include investigations into the reading passage for evidence. The questions should chal-

lenge debatable, incorrect, and conflicting statements. Students should be allowed to evaluate responses based on their own interpretation of a passage. There are no specific answers to the questions. Basic-question discussions continue until the topic is exhausted or the leader poses another question based on the main idea of the material. Recent research by Netz (2014) confirmed that an atmosphere where gifted students were allowed to discuss literature provided a fertile ground for dialogic discourse.

Honors, differentiated, or enrichment classes provide academically gifted students the opportunity to learn at a level appropriate to their instructional readiness and interest (Betts, 2004; McCoy & Rader, 2008; Renzulli, 1988). These researchers described various options for honors and differentiated instruction, yet the same premise is applied: One lesson is taught to the whole class with separate outcomes for each student based on ability and learning style. Renzulli (1988) continually urged the use of choices for understanding academic content with the opportunity to develop a product as demonstration of understanding. Reis and Renzulli (2010) pointed out that talented students who were not challenged with such courses never learned to work and often dropped out of high school due to underachievement.

One of the most widely recognized methods of providing differentiated instruction for gifted students is through AP courses (Daniel & Cox, 1988). According to Kremers' (2010) research, AP courses are rigorous courses developed to bridge the transition from high school to college. With numerous high school seniors having completed graduation requirements, many are ready to move to college course work. Kremers' (2010) research revealed the traditional attitude for high school seniors has been very relaxed. Such an attitude has left college-bound students unprepared for college course-



work. Kremers' (2010) investigation revealed a trend among educators to provide a seamless education system from high school to college while also providing an opportunity for their advanced students. Gifted students are thus challenged, better prepared for college, and earn college credit during the senior year of high school.

Gifted education specialists encourage independent study projects as a method of providing differentiation along with offering challenges and student autonomy (Powers, 2008). Betts' (2004) research revealed students gained a greater understanding of subject matter through independently studying, scrutinizing, and discussing a topic. Independent projects allowed students to develop their own conclusions, promote problem solving and critical thinking, assisted them in understanding their own values, and supported in determining their own decisions. Additionally, Betts revealed the teachers became facilitators as students became experts in their area of exploration. Learners are able to investigate real life situations and present products that may aid in solving the problems they have researched. Areas of passion are discovered, leading students to become life-long learners. When students were offered such a challenge, researchers (Powers, 2008; Reis & Renzulli, 2010) found underachievement to be reversed while interest in other areas piqued.

Enrichment courses (McCoy & Rader, 2008) offer students a deeper understanding of classroom topics by providing more intensive study. Enrichment activities may be novelty studies or innovations, may ensure a variety of fields to study, provide higher order thinking skills, include affective development, and advance academic motivation. Investigation and exploration are the foundations of enrichment classes. Research by

McCoy and Rader (2008) concluded that through enrichment classes, students have an opportunity to explore issues to a greater extent than is feasible in the regular classroom.

Marland's report to the United States Congress (Marland, 1971) found special grouping arrangements should be included as part of a differentiated program for gifted and talented students. *Education of the Gifted and Talented* (Marland, 1971) revealed that participants in special interest groups demonstrated improvement in personal and social areas as well as academics. Through this study researchers found gifted students could meet the demands of the expected curriculum while gaining depth and breadth of the topic more than their control group counterparts. Special interests groups resulted in better teaching, higher levels of thinking, questioning, independence, and social skill benefits.

According to Olszewski-Kubilius and Corwith (2011), correspondence courses through the postal service were a method of distance education for over 200 years. Technology has changed distance education to Virtual Learning Education. Advances in technology such as the radio, television, telephone, and computers allow colleges and universities to reach students through a variety of options. Inquiry by Olszewski-Kubilius and Corwith (2011) revealed the swift expansion of technology has allowed distance education, particularly online learning opportunities, to significantly increase. Correspondence courses provide an opportunity for districts to serve gifted students with advanced courses that previously were unavailable or were not accessible for various reasons. Burney and Cross (2013) agreed that distance learning opportunities not only assist in providing advanced learning opportunities for rural or small town youths to receive AP courses, but that some programs also began offering opportunities for students as young

as second grade. According to Olszewski-Kubilius and Corwith (2011), data revealed evidence of positive effects when gifted students took advantage of correspondence courses. Those positive effects include a greater understanding of the global community, self-directed learning, improved language and technology skills, problem solving skills, collaboration, reliability, and dependability.

Kaplan (1974) defined a resource room as a learning environment that provided for the specific needs of the gifted student. Research by Hong, Greene, and Higgins (2006) revealed that general education classrooms appeared to be providing differentiated instruction for gifted students. However, extensive differentiation could not be practiced to the same scale possible as in a resource room. These researchers (Hong et al., 2006) discovered that resource rooms could meet not only the cognitive development of advanced students but also their social and emotional growth.

Daniel and Cox (1988) considered flexible pacing to be the most important means of providing adequate learning opportunities for all students. Flexible pacing provided the most appropriate method of instruction by matching the students' abilities and learning opportunities allowing the learner to move forward at his own pace. The work of Van Tassel-Baska (2005) revealed public schools had difficulty in providing flexibility for students with special needs. Yet, the research of Daniel and Cox (1988) revealed that flexible pacing could be varied by intensifying or abating instruction or according to the students' needs. Van Tassel-Baska (2005) considered early entrance and early exit procedures to be elements of "nonnegotiables" when providing accommodations for gifted students. Many gifted students are ready to enter school before age level peers, or they may develop quickly within the school system. Early entrance to college can assist high

school students who demonstrate proficiency in high school subjects (Van Tassel-Baska, 2005).

An investigation by Cox (1982) found continuous progress allowed pupils to attend classes according to their instructional levels. This left a tremendous amount of responsibility on the children as continuous progress required students to self-manage their own learning. Researchers (Cox, 1982; Daniel & Cox, 1988) found the goal of continuous progress was to match instruction to the learning needs of the child. Daniel and Cox (1988) also mentioned that this method of gifted services should allow for the students to progress according to their ability and achievement, recognize the child's interests and capabilities, entail diversity in teaching methods and instruction, and allow the child to move to another group as need and accomplishment dictated.

Acceleration can take many forms such as early entrance to Kindergarten, content level or grade level acceleration, or early entrance to college. According to VanTassel-Baska (2005), acceleration should be one of the “nonnegotiables” of gifted programs. She stated that studies through the years have determined students learn at different rates and at a variety of levels. Reis and Renzulli (2010) concurred. Without acceleration, ability grouping produces very little if any student achievement. Meanwhile, pupils who were accelerated performed better on standardized tests and improved their college and career status and their college ranking attendance more than did non-accelerated peers (Colangelo et al., 2004; Rogers, 1991; Steenbergen-Hu & Moon, 2011). One of the challenges of classroom instructors has been to provide differentiated instruction to students with special needs. Van Tassel-Baska (2005) mentioned one of the benefits of the new

accountability standards, including NCLB, has been to force teachers to meet the needs of individual students.

Proficiency Based Promotion is a method of acceleration available to Oklahoma's gifted students. The Proficiency Based Promotion test demonstrates that a student has obtained mastery of a core curriculum course or grade level. Such tests may be requested by either the student, parent, or teacher. To receive credit for the course, a student must score a 90% or higher on the proficiency based promotion assessment. Once credit is obtained, the student may then move to the next level for that course or grade level. Failure to demonstrate 90% proficiency on the test will not penalize the student, but the child will continue to progress through the curriculum in the required chronological manner.

According to Hanson, Prusha, and Iverson (2015), concurrent enrollment is the ability of a student enrolled in high school to participate in college coursework. Investigation by Hanson et al. (2015) and Scheffel, McLemore, and Lowe (2015) revealed the idea of colleges providing courses at the high school level appealed to many high school students. Studies (Hanson et al., 2015; Scheffel et al., 2015) disclosed students who participated in concurrent enrollment classes were more likely to attend college, less likely to need remedial math courses, maintain a higher grade point average in college, and were more resolute in attaining a degree than their non-participating peers. Research by Daniel and Cox (1988) revealed concurrent enrollment led to both student and faculty members sharing the opinion that high school is no longer the end of education but the initiation to higher education.

Van Tassel-Baska (2005) described dual enrollment as the opportunity of a student to be excused from high school for part of a day to take one or more courses at a col-

lege campus. Dual enrollment is an opportunity for students to complete the freshman year of college while still in high school and should be considered a nonnegotiable element for academically gifted students. Such programs provide high schools students the opportunity to sample college earlier than tradition dictates. Early access to college courses provides an occasion for students to acclimate socially at an advanced level. Daniel and Cox (1988) revealed the opportunity for the high school pupil to be able to back out of college studies if the courses became too difficult or the student felt over-committed. Van Tassel-Baska (2005) further pointed out the benefit of dual enrollment for rural schools that could not provide advanced placement opportunities for their precocious students. Many states have the school district pay for college courses, provided the high school does not offer an equivalent class.

Davis, Rimm, and Siegle (2011) defined cluster grouping as placing “5 to 10 high-ability students in one regular class per grade, along with 15 or 20 regular students” (p. 149). The teacher receives training of some kind in gifted education and is willing to differentiate the curriculum for the gifted students. In this setting, pupils of similar abilities are challenged by interacting with peers at their levels (Winebrenner & Devlin, 2001). The study revealed that children placed in mixed ability groups have a tendency to rely on the high ability students to do the work. By grouping them together, new leadership skills emerge among the high achievers. Having more than one advanced student in a classroom also provides a challenge for the children to compete against each other, relieving the instructor of some of the responsibilities for providing challenging opportunities. As educators learn to provide differentiated instruction for the high ability group, the other groups improve as well. Winebrenner and Devlin (2001) declared that districts

not only provide a cost-effective method of meeting the needs of gifted youth but the methods of the trained teacher in gifted differentiation can be taught to the rest of the staff. This also means districts that could not afford a full-time gifted educator for a full-time gifted program can provide challenging learning opportunities. One postulation (Winebrenner & Devlin, 2001) is that as the instructor develops the skills to meet the needs of the advanced learners, he also increases the ability to meet other unique differences.

Research conducted by Kulik (1992) revealed that cross-grade grouping allows students to be grouped by ability, not by the traditional, rigid grade structure. Kulik (1992) and Tieso (2003) found that grouping practices, along with appropriate curriculum or differentiated instruction, produced academic and creative gains along with increasing thinking skills for average students in addition to the gifted and talented. According to Tieso (2003), the modern method of cross grade grouping allows students to move in and out of a group based on their current demonstration of achievement. Within the small cross-grade groups, students are given instruction specific to their current ability not according to their chronological age placement. Additional research disclosed a drop in self-concept or self-esteem among advanced students because they were intimidated by the presence of other high achieving students. This situation generally corrected itself in a very short time.

Reis and Renzulli (2010) revealed that most classroom teachers have had little, if any, training in meeting the needs of gifted students in their classrooms, leaving such children bored and unproductive. The typical heterogeneous, inclusive classroom provides little if any challenge or differentiation for academically gifted children. Preco-

cious youth grouped together for a period of time increased achievement levels and had other welcomed benefits (Gentry & Owen, 1999; Kulik, 1992; Rogers, 1991; Tieso, 2003). Providing an enriched curriculum or an intensified curriculum for the high ability group not only increased achievement for gifted students, other children also benefitted from the challenging material (Gentry & Owen, 1999; Kulik, 1992; Rogers, 1991; Tieso, 2003). Where classroom teachers have learned to differentiate instructional and other classroom strategies for gifted students, other pupils have advanced (Colangelo et al., 2004; Gentry & Owen, 1999; Winebrenner & Devlin, 2001). For Van Tassel-Baska (2005), instructional grouping of gifted students is a nonnegotiable. Experts (Feldhusen, 1994; Kulik, 1992; Tieso, 2003; Treffinger, 1982) recommended teachers pretest or check for mastery at the beginning of a unit to establish group placement. Students who demonstrated mastery of a unit should then be provided with a differentiated program that is unique according to their interests and learning styles. Van Tassel-Baska (2005) suggested that adding paper assignments or reading activities to such a group allows for more meaningful discussion or in depth investigation. Such writing activities provide an opportunity for students with skills to evaluate peer assignments. Classrooms lacking instructional groups have more difficulty providing differentiation. An additional benefit to small groups, according to Tieso (2003), found students to be more self-directed learners which can lead to more independent thinkers.

Another tool that is necessary when providing differentiation for gifted students is individualized instruction. Keefe and Jenkins (2005) stated that personalized instruction allows a child the opportunity to determine the content and rate of instruction adapted to his special abilities. According to researchers (Keefe & Jenkins, 2005; Van Tassel-



Baska, 2005), schools must implement policies that permit individualized instruction for gifted students, providing better use of the child's time. Individualized instruction should include an opportunity for the student to explore a real-world problem, produce inquiry questions, discover ways to pursue data regarding the topic, and finally to construct a solution to the situation. Several researchers (Gallagher, 1991; Keefe & Jenkins, 2005; Treffinger, 1982; Van Tassel-Baska, 2005; Winebrenner & Devlin, 2001) recommended multiple methods for individualizing instruction for gifted students.

According to Laurent-Brennan (1998), the International Baccalaureate (IB) program is designed to provide a prestigious, rigorous curriculum for independent and critical thinkers. Strong emphasis is placed on developing student awareness of local and world affairs. Originally developed in 1968 for high school juniors and seniors, IB now offers programs for students from age 3 to 19 (IB Communications Team, 2005-2013). Children between ages 3 and 12 have the opportunity to develop their inquiry skills not only about their classrooms but also the world. Between the ages of 11 and 16, students develop connections between the classroom and the real world as they become critical and reflective thinkers. High school pupils between the ages of 16 and 19 are academically challenged with exams that prepare students to be successful university scholars and to succeed beyond college as well. Students selected for IB not only completed the core subjects but additional courses from six subject groups over a two-year program. Laurent-Brennan (1998) observed that students completing the IB program received a diploma that is recognized for admission at any college or university throughout the world.

Programs for gifted students and gifted pedagogy effectively meet the needs of advanced children in a variety of settings, ethnic backgrounds, and socioeconomic posi-

tions (Colangelo et al., 2004; Gallagher, 2015; Kulik, 1992; Reis, 2009; Reis, & Renzulli, 2004; Renzulli, 1988). Researchers have noted that gifted program instructional techniques, when practiced in other curriculum areas, have benefitted students of other academic abilities (Renzulli, 1988; Van Tassel-Baska, 2010). Participating in gifted programs benefits gifted youth beyond the classroom by enhancing college and professional aspirations. Many gifted were inspired to postsecondary and advanced career plans (Colangelo et al., 2004; Reis & Renzulli, 2010; Tomlinson-Keasey & Smith-Winberry, 1983). One longitudinal study (Reis, 2009) found that gifted programs and curriculum helped students to develop interests, creativity and productivity.

### **Needs of Students Who are Gifted.**

Researchers (Cornell, 1992; Tuttle & Becker, 1980) revealed that the characteristics of a gifted child vary as much as differences among other children. Those characteristics, according to other researchers (Feldhusen, 1994; Reis & Renzulli, 2010) point out that gifted children require programs that meet their social, emotional, creative, and physical needs as well as their cognitive desires. Traditionally, there are certain attributes that appear in the majority of gifted individuals. It is important to note that not every gifted individual will have all of these peculiarities.

### **Cognitive Needs**

The Education of Gifted and Talented Children Act (1981, para. 1) defines gifted children as “those children identified at the preschool, elementary and secondary level as having demonstrated potential abilities of high performance capability and needing differentiated or accelerated education or services.” By virtue of the definition, the principle characteristic of gifted students is that they are more advanced cognitively than their

chronological peers (Song & Porath, 2005; Van Tassel-Baska, 1986). With some exceptions, the majority of gifted students have advanced language abilities. This means they usually procure a large working vocabulary and knowledge of a wide variety of topics. Typically, they can grasp abstract concepts at an earlier age than an average child. Often, having advanced language skills signifies early development of writing skills.

Much to the chagrin of parents and teachers, gifted students have an insatiable desire to learn (Rotigel, 2003; Tieso, 2003). The precocious child is forever wanting to know “How?” and “Why?” When compared with other children, these students are faster at developing logical thinking, understanding cause-and-effect relationships and solving convergent problems.

Mathematically gifted children likewise begin learning math skills at an earlier age than do their chronological aged peers. Students with superior art skills also appear to have instinctive artistic abilities and have superior visual memories as pointed out by Yun, Chung, Jang, Kim, and Jeong, (2011). Musically gifted students may begin as early as age one or two to develop a deep appreciation for music. However, the young precocious child may find their lesser advanced fine motor skills to be a hindrance to their rate of desirable progress (Cukierkorn et al, 2007).

Piirto (1993) and Tieso (2003) revealed the single most common trait of gifted students was their persistent motivation. The combination of motivation, insatiable curiosity, and advanced learning skills often leads to astounding accomplishments. Again, particularly with this characteristic, not all of these traits will manifest themselves in every gifted individual.

The ability to think quickly and see relationships differently than their average peers can be evident in the superior sense of humor many advanced children possess. Plucker and Callahan (2008) described gifted student humor as an occasion of pleasure that results from the opportunity to create it. Due to the internal desire to challenge themselves, the opportunity to add humor provides a stimulation for these students. Such a sense of humor will require the patience of teachers and parents (Davis & Rimm, 1989; Tuttle & Becker, 1980).

### **Social and Emotional Needs**

Early research by Hollingworth (1942) first mentioned the difficulties of social adjustment for gifted students. In her research, students with an IQ score between 125 and 155 adjusted satisfactorily with their environment, while those above an IQ of 170 had difficulty. This was later collaborated by Howard-Hamilton (1994) who revealed that the majority of gifted students were no different socially than their average peers. Studies (Hollingworth, 1942; Janos et al., 1985) discovered that children who felt themselves to be far more intelligent than their peers were more worried about being socially accepted than other gifted students. The affective factors that were revealed more commonly among highly gifted students were emotional excitability and high sensitivity. Overall, gifted youth were just as socially adjusted as were typical children. However, gifted scholars becoming accustomed to high praise can lead to high expectations and perfectionism. When such a child does not meet those expectations, frustrations and feelings of ineptness are manifested, usually through underachievement.

Lovecky (1992) defined passion as a feeling that provides a vividness to all experiences of life with intensity and complexity. These children often think with their feel-

ings. Typically, gifted students' cognitive development is years ahead of their grade level peers. Such children are intuitive to another person's point of view, causing them to be more empathetic toward the rights and feelings of others (Yoo & Moon, 2006). This leads the more advanced gifted to be particularly interested in the social issues, especially where injustices have been left uncorrected (Lovecky, 1992; Yoo & Moon, 2006). While they may be able to understand the implications of these issues, the lack of emotional maturity may cause the concern to become overwhelming.

According to Vialle, Heaven, and Ciarrochi (2009), social and emotional needs also surface in school when no gifted services are provided. In such settings, gifted students feel more alone and sadder than their non-gifted peers. In an effort to identify with classmates, gifted students may become underachievers. Olszewski-Kubilius and Limburg-Weber (1999) found that academically gifted students who had peers with whom to share their interests and aspirations were better able to cope with negative peer pressure. Siegle (2015) validated the need for gifted students, especially the profoundly gifted, to interact with students with similar abilities. By interacting with students of like mindedness, gifted children were less likely to develop social problems.

Highly creative youth are less likely to be identified for gifted programs since many require an ability test score in the top 3rd percentile. Rimm (1982) pointed out that teachers have a tendency to nominate the well behaved, teacher pleaser for gifted programs rather than the nonconforming, less conventional, highly creative child. However, researchers (Davis & Rimm, 1989; Lassig, 2003) mentioned that the highly creative student ultimately will contribute more to society than the well behaved, conforming child.

Another concern permeating public opinion is the social adjustment of accelerated students. According to Lassig (2003), one criticism of acceleration is having students feel superior or develop an egotistical attitude. On the contrary, the research discovered that when students are challenged, they discover that academic school work is not always easy. Leaving them in a regular classroom with same aged peers without differentiated instruction left the non-accelerated students with feelings of superiority. Wood, Portman, Cigrand, and Colangelo (2010) determined the lack of acceleration recommendations to be unwillingness on the part of teacher and school counselors to research the issue. Wood et al. (2010) discovered information regarding acceleration was obtained informally and perpetuated the myths of its effects regardless of research support.

### **Psychomotor Needs**

Early language and thought development are usually the first identifiers of precocious youth (Plucker & Callahan, 2008; Van Tassel-Baska, 2005). For gifted children, mental development outpaces their physical development. Advanced learners continually seeking cognitive input find daily activities with their age peers to be unfulfilling. Hence, precocious youth will seek the companionship of those who have a similar mental age. Hertberg-Davis and Callahan (2008) described gifted children as those who often seek the companionship of adults for conversation or playing games. Maslow (1943) determined that a person can gain access into a social network where their basic needs can be met. The social group can assist the child in meeting the psychological need to belong. Once the basic needs are met, a person is more motivated toward growth and development or self-actualization. Acceleration becomes an appropriate method of educating the gifted and talented. Kulik (1992) reported that critics of acceleration felt children were

not physically mature enough to be advanced. Standardized achievement tests showed that accelerated students outperformed non-accelerated peers of the same age and ability.

The desire for more cognitive input or a fierce curiosity is manifested in gifted students through high levels of energy and intensity, particularly in the creatively gifted (Plucker & Callahan, 2008; Tuttle & Becker, 1980). Other than in construction of analogical mathematical problems, the research of Klavir and Gorodetsky (2011) demonstrated how gifted students can be more flexible, appropriate, elaborative, and original than their regular classroom peers. Baer and Kaufman (2005) reported that there were many creativity programs for gifted students, yet the common theme was the emphasis of divergent thinking. Without lessons in a broad spectrum of divergent creativity, students could not transfer their creative thinking skills from one task to another.

### **Affective and Intuitive Needs**

Creativity transcends several domains including spirituality. Students of a creative writing class (Fraser, 2003), many identified as gifted, produced compositions that contained mystery, reverence, and transformative energy. Such spiritual insights were well beyond the knowledge of their regular classroom peers. By allowing gifted children an opportunity to express themselves through writing, students were able to tap into their inner selves and reveal emotional issues that were important to them. Such a process led to assisting in conflict resolution and emotional pain relief.

Lovecky (1992) described these creative thinkers as divergent thinkers. Lovecky reported that these creative and original children tend to fantasize much of the time, provide answers that are not typically the first thoughts of others, and are absent minded, disorganized, and intuitive. Such students are interested in following new ideas to see the

outcome, discovering how things work, and visualizing things holistically (Lovecky, 1992).

The same levels of energy and intensity that can be used for the benefits of gifted children can also be detrimental (Baer & Kaufman, 2005; Plucker & Callahan, 2008). Often, being creative presents itself as defiant behavior toward established norms. Such individuals may be perceived as having a mental illness (Kaufman, 2001). When these children are denied the opportunity to creatively express themselves, such students can become at risk for mental illnesses. Experts (Kaufman, 2001; Plucker & Callahan, 2008) pointed out that the nurturing of such gifts at an early age led to the accomplishments of creative and eminent adults. Researchers (Kaufman, 2001; Klavir & Gorodetsky, 2011) stated it is imperative that creative traits be nourished. When allowed to flourish, students find themselves more motivated and satisfied (Boazman, Sayler, & Easton-Brooks, 2012; Daniel & Cox 1988; Fraser, 2003; Kaufman, 2001; Lovecky, 1992; Plucker & Callahan, 2008; Reis & Renzulli, 2010).

### **The Needs of Diverse Gifted Populations**

Cross (2013) noted that in order to identify all of the potentially gifted students in the United States, educators need to move beyond their own conceptualization of giftedness in order to help the less privileged. While numerous identified gifted students come from financially wealthy families, countless others go unnoticed without appropriate identification protocol being in place.

Research by Foley-Nicpon, Assouline, and Colangelo (2013) pointed out that while twice-exceptional students are gaining increased recognition in literature, few educators outside of gifted education understood the needs of these children. Under the In-



dividuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), 14 categories of disabilities are listed. According to these researchers (Foley-Nicpon, Assouline, & Colangelo, 2013), autism spectrum disorders, specific learning disabilities, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and emotional disturbances are the categories most familiar to educators due to the profusion of research literature. However, due to the complexities of twice-exceptional gifted students, educators lack the experience in dealing with the unique needs of these children.

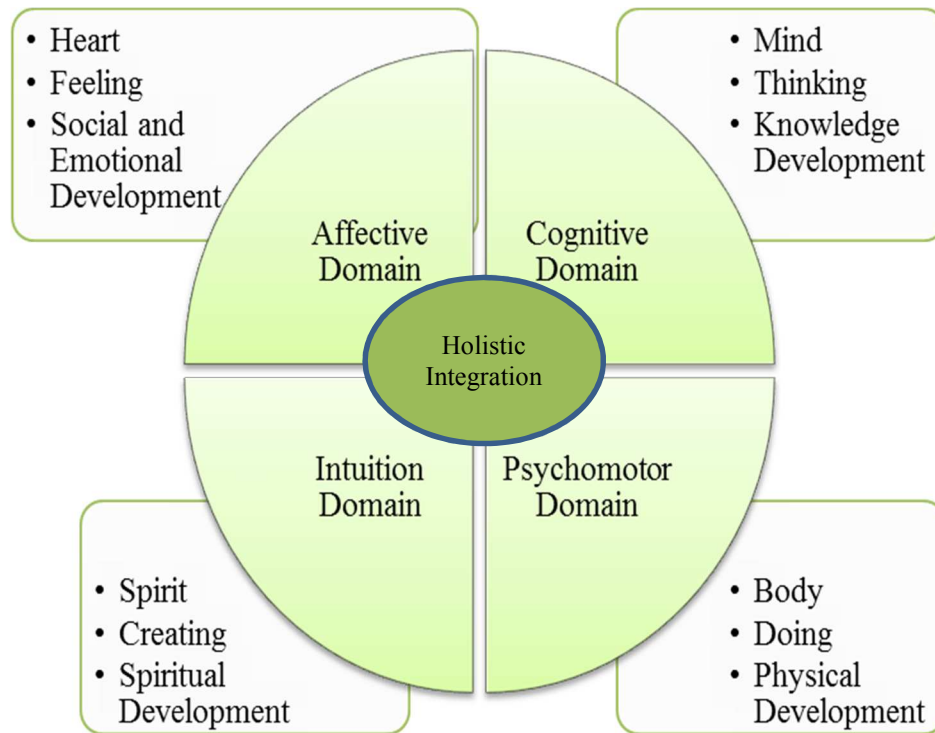
Coleman and Shah-Coltrane (2015) revealed that since 1974 progress has been made in reaching the underrepresented students in gifted and talented programs. However, there are still discrepancies between racial access to challenging curriculums, programs, and extracurricular activities. Schools serving high populations of minority students offer fewer advanced courses, and gifted and talented programs. Such schools have difficulty attracting qualified teachers, furnishing adequate facilities, providing the latest technology, supplying quality education materials, and maintaining sufficient funds. Black students are less likely than their white peers to enroll in challenging courses (Coleman & Shah-Coltrane, 2015).

### **Holistic Education Model**

As previously cited, research (Cornell, 1992; Tuttle & Becker, 1980) reveals that gifted students have varying characteristics. Yet, according to additional research (Feldhusen, 1994; Reis & Renzulli, 2010), those characteristics demonstrate how gifted children require programs that meet their cognitive, social, emotional, creative, and physical needs. Montgomery (Montgomery et al., 2012; Montgomery, 2013) desired to address the developmental needs together when educating gifted youth. For this purpose, the Holistic Education model was created. Montgomery's model provides a learning system

that includes the mind (cognitive), body (psychomotor), spirit (creative and intuitive) and heart (social and emotional).

#### Montgomery's Holistic Education Model



*Figure 1. Montgomery's Holisitic Education Model*

The basis for Montgomery's Holistic Education model (Montgomery et al., 2012; Montgomery, 2013) is the medicine wheel philosophy that appears among many Native American tribes. The medicine wheel consists of four quadrants, which symbolize the four directions (north, east, south, west), lifespan (birth, youth, adulthood, aged) or developmental domains (mind, body, emotion, spirit). According to Montgomery, holism provides an interconnectedness to those four quadrants considered necessary for producing a healthy, fulfilled student. The cognitive domain includes thinking, and knowledge development. The psychomotor segment includes the body or sensing, doing, and physical

development. Next, the social/emotional domain covers the affective or heart area which educates the feelings, and social and emotional development. The final domain, the creative/intuitive domain is the area that develops the creativity and spiritual development of a student. By planning program options or lessons using this model, educators develop a curriculum of total development for the learner—cognitively, emotionally, creatively, physically, and socially (Montgomery et al., 2012; Montgomery, 2013).

### **Chapter Summary**

Historically, the general public has felt that children who are gifted will get an education anyway (Gallagher, 1991). Unfortunately, according to Reis and Renzulli (2010), a survey of several thousand private and public third and fourth grade teachers found less than half had received specific instruction in educating gifted students. Additional research (Daniel & Cox, 1988; Reis, 1994; VanTassel-Baska, 2005) revealed that since the focus of American education is now on struggling learners, teachers have not received training in meeting the needs of gifted. Reis and Renzulli (2010) wrote that gifted children observed in regular classrooms received the same instruction and material 84% of the time as the other students. One observer of a gifted student noted, “The gifted student was inattentive during all of her classes. She appeared to be sleepy, never volunteered, and was visibly unenthusiastic about all activities” (Reis, 1994, p. 1).

Reis (1994) found when instruction is below mental development, a child’s mental expansion is delayed or even halted. Reis pointed out that when work was too easy for them, gifted students developed poor study habits.

Later research by Renzulli and Reis (2009) disclosed that gifted students benefit by being grouped together for instruction, acceleration, enrichment, and curriculum en-

hancement leads to higher achievement. Gifted education programs provide strategies that help gifted and high ability students in a variety of settings including college, future career plans, work, and achieving advanced degrees. Renzulli and Reis (2009) noted that gifted students and other students who were presented with a more challenging curriculum tested higher in reading fluency and comprehension than pupils who had not received such interventions.

The need to provide challenging educational activities to academically gifted students is necessary not only for the future of the local and global communities, but also for the success of the individual child. Gifted pupils in the state of Oklahoma are fortunate legislators in 1981 saw the need to mandate every public school district in Oklahoma provide a plan for serving them and supplied the funds to support those services (Education of Gifted and Talented Children Act, 1981). While several gifted programming options are available for schools to meet the requirements of these students, no one particular method will meet the needs of every student. Therefore, it has been left up to the individual districts to create a program for servicing gifted students according to their individual needs. Those children are identified either by scoring in the 97th percentile or above on a nationally normed abilities test or through a multiple criteria evaluation. The state education funding formula provides districts that identify their students for gifted services with additional money. Additional funds are also included so districts may provide services for their scholars identified through multiple criteria assessment up to eight percent of a districts ADM. Despite the challenges of limited funding and many districts in rural, isolated areas, the literature provides a variety of gifted service options that can meet the needs of Oklahoma's academically gifted youth.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

In 1981, Oklahoma became the seventeenth state to mandate education programs for gifted and talented students. This legislation became known as Education of Gifted and Talented Children Act (1981). Several addenda to that bill provided further clarification for public schools as they provide services to their academically gifted students. One addendum limited the number of identified students who would receive state funding.

As funding for public schools decreases, states and districts search for ways to stretch finances. Often auxiliary services such as band, art, and gifted education are reduced or eliminated (Murtha, 2009; Reis, 1994). When gifted services are reduced, gifted students become bored, inattentive, disruptive, unenthusiastic about classroom activities, and drop out of school (Reis, 1994). Reis and Renzulli (2010) discovered that where enriched learning experiences were provided, underachievement reversed, student interests, creativity, productivity, and aspirations soared, and career and advanced degree aspirations increased.

#### **Problem Statement**

Multiple research projects support the need for academic development of the nation's gifted students as a requisite for the future of America to meet the challenges of

a global society (Colangelo et al., 2004; Marland, 1971; Reis & Renzulli, 2010; The National Commission on Excellence, 1983). In their investigation, Reis and Renzulli (2010) discovered that high-achieving students who participated in enrichment experiences for five years or longer displayed higher levels of creative productivity than did their equally able classmates. Additional research (Colangelo et al., 2004; The National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983; Tomlinson-Keasey & Smith-Winberry, 1983) demonstrated the necessity to educate gifted students and prepare them to meet the challenges of a global society.

Oklahoma public schools are required to provide gifted child with educational program options which means “special instructional programs, support services, unique educational materials, learning setting and other educational services which differentiate, supplement and support the regular educational program in meeting the needs of the gifted and talented child” (Education of Gifted and Talented Children Act, 1981, Section 904). Therefore, all Oklahoma public schools are required to address the needs of gifted children through screening, identification, and differentiated instruction. According to the Act (1981), all districts must provide an Annual Report of Gifted and Talented Education to the State Department of Education. However, these individual reports tell researchers little about the state of gifted education across Oklahoma as a whole. This study was designed to describe how the needs of gifted students in two Oklahoma school districts are being met in two districts at the elementary and middle school levels.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Feldhusen (1994) pointed out the goal of gifted programs must be to provide curriculum and instruction at a complexity, depth, level, and pace not appropriate for the av-

erage student. Such skills are more difficult than basic skills to test. Doina (1997) indicated that many programs for the gifted are individualized to meet the needs of each student; many goals are too complex to define; and variations in programs make objectives difficult to measure. System wide or nationwide standardized tests cannot appropriately evaluate programs with such diversity. Doina (1997) shared the advantages and disadvantages of various evaluation instruments but concluded that methods of evaluating gifted programs needed more attention. Therefore, evaluating Oklahoma's gifted programs based on standardized instruments would not provide an accurate description of how students' needs are met through gifted services.

By investigating and studying the significance of services necessary to Oklahoma's gifted and talented students, my goal was to assist educators in providing gifted program options. I designed this study to describe the services provided gifted students in two Oklahoma school districts. The descriptive case study approach with stakeholders of two Oklahoma districts' gifted programs provided the methodology for this investigation. A case study helped describe and analyze the state of Oklahoma's gifted education programs by working directly with stakeholders (Merriam, 1998). Analyzing Oklahoma's gifted services from the perspective of the program stakeholders would also provide education specialists evidence to contribute more attention to political factors such as resource allocation, curriculum development, and defining giftedness.

For this particular project, the various stakeholders (students, parents, and teachers of gifted students) furnished the description of gifted education programs from their various perspectives. In order to develop a personal understanding of the nature of gifted education in two Oklahoma school districts, I completed 12 stakeholder interviews. I

used open ended questions to gain an understanding of gifted students, their need for more challenging exercises, what services were being provided, and how effective those services were in meeting the needs of gifted students.

### **Research Questions**

With the goal of gaining understanding of Oklahoma's gifted programs from the stakeholders' perspectives, the following research questions guided this study:

1. How do stakeholders of gifted programs describe ways that services for gifted meet students' needs?
2. How do stakeholders describe the perceived effectiveness of the gifted programs in meeting the needs of gifted students?
3. What other truths can be revealed in this study?

### **Research Design**

Qualitative research in education tries to uncover and understand a situation (Merriam, 1998). Creswell (2009) characterized qualitative research as collecting information from "emerging questions and procedures" (p. 4). Data were gleaned from the participant's setting (Merriam, 1998). Analysis and interpretation of the data were manifested into particular themes forming the researcher's interpretation of the material into a flexible report (Creswell, 2009).

This descriptive case study of gifted education programs in the state of Oklahoma can be beneficial from a qualitative method of research because such a project provides the opportunity to focus on the problem of how the needs of Oklahoma gifted students are being met from the perspective of the stakeholders. Merriam (1998) defined a descriptive case study as "one that presents a detailed account of the phenomenon under



study. Such research is beneficial since it presents basic information where little research has been conducted. To date, the literature review revealed that very few studies have been conducted in Oklahoma to determine the value of providing services to academically gifted students. Not only does a descriptive case study present a detailed illustration of the situation under scrutiny, case studies provide the opportunity to experience the setting from the participant's perspective, view the setting from the researcher's position, and allow a more accommodating experience than other methods of research. I was able to gain insight of a program's effectiveness by focusing on the students, parents, and teachers involved in gifted programs. I interviewed subjects from a variety of backgrounds to furnish evidence regarding what gifted education provides gifted students in two Oklahoma school districts. As I presented the open ended interview questions, and I gleaned information which furnished invaluable insight not afforded in questionnaires.

Reviewing the literature in Chapter 2 not only set the ground work for the study, but substantiated how this particular project is necessary for advancing Oklahoma's gifted programs. In particular, the previous research revealed the history of gifted education in the United States, the history of gifted education in Oklahoma, various program options, and the needs of gifted and talented students.

I selected participants for the purposeful, convenience sampling by seeking volunteers from the OAGCT membership and the list of Oklahoma public school districts that provide gifted education programs. According to Patton (2002), a small, purposeful sample would provide more credible information than a random sample. Additionally, Patton concluded that the sample size depends on the inquiry, usefulness, and credibility of the study as well as consideration of accessible time and resources. Such a sample

provided rich valuable information necessary for this particular phenomenon (Patton, 2002). I began with two school districts that varied in size and location. From each of the two districts, I interviewed an instructor of gifted programs, two parents of gifted students, and three gifted students between third and sixth grades. I collected additional data while I observed the settings in order to enhance the richness of the case and provide validity to the study. Collected information provided first hand details that interview participants may have over looked or may not have felt comfortable discussing. According to Merriam (1998), the observation supplied information regarding behaviors that are not evident during the interview. I recorded notes during the observation to furnish reference points that were beneficial as the interviews were interpreted.

### **Researcher Role**

My familiarity with gifted education and a local Educational Services Coordinator made it essential that I guard against bias and follow research protocol during this study. This familiarity spawned preconceived answers to the research questions and were addressed as necessary throughout the study. My belief throughout my teaching career has been that despite the material, each professional development opportunity should be a learning experience. This attitude was taken to each interview as I obtained relevant and pertinent data for this research. Merriam (1998) paralleled the role of the qualitative researcher with that of a detective taking time to investigate clues, conduct follow up inquiries, fill in the missing pieces, and put all the data together into a comprehensive report. As the qualitative researcher, my role was to provide background information that supplied meaningful interpretation of the incidents, collect and record data, analyze and interpret the open-ended information, and report the findings. In addition, I was to in-

crease the body of knowledge regarding gifted education in two Oklahoma school districts. I took on a combination of Merriam's (1998) outside observer and the participant observer as I perceived the surroundings. As an outsider, I was able to notice procedures that had become routine to the research participants yet assisted in substantiating the conclusions. As a current instructor of gifted students, I used my expertise in interpreting each setting once the interviews had been concluded. As the participant observer, I took notes during the interviews and observed the interview settings along with the classrooms for gifted student when available. For this particular study, I acted as a television camera scanning the area (Merriam, 1998). The research questions determined where my camera would stop, focus, and record information.

### **Participants**

Merriam (1998) described the role of the participant to be the key concern. It is the participant's perspective which provides the description and understanding of the phenomenon to be researched. Because this particular project was to study gifted programs within two school district of Oklahoma, data collected from the individual programs were originally designed to be provided by interviewing two parents, two students, and one teacher of gifted students from two districts of contrasting size and from opposite locations within the state. The number of participants was to be adjusted during the study to maximize the phenomenon's description as data were needed (Patton, 2002). All of the students from each district were to be between first and sixth grade. These interviews were foundational to the study.

The first step in seeking participants was to find two teachers of gifted students who would work with me. Participating teachers were employed by the cooperating Ok-

lahoma districts as the gifted education specialist. Once I had their consent, a request to conduct research within the district was sent to the district superintendent or the appropriate administrator. At that point, administrators were assured that all participants would be kept confidential by assigning pseudonyms to the district and respondents. After approval was achieved, I asked each district to distribute a notice to the students and parents of gifted program participants seeking two parents and two students who would be willing to share their experiences of gifted program involvement. Parent participants were to be the legal parent or guardian of a student identified and enrolled in the participating school district's gifted education program. Each student was required to be enrolled in the gifted program and be between the first and sixth grades. I asked willing volunteers to notify me via phone or email. I did not initiate contact with the research volunteers.

### **Procedures**

Merriam (1998) organized the qualitative research project into comprehensible phases (a) designing the study and selecting how the data will be collected, (b) collecting the data, and (c) data analysis. Phase one of my research was to design the study and select a method of data collection. Since the purpose of this study was to describe how the needs of gifted and talented students in two Oklahoma school districts are being met, data collected demonstrates how these districts provide a differentiated curriculum for gifted students in pace and/or depth and include counseling services in social, academic, and career/vocational areas. Montgomery's Holistic Educational model (Montgomery et al., 2012; Montgomery, 2013) provided the framework for this study because it contains the elements districts should be providing their gifted students according to the Education of Gifted and Talented Children Act (1981). The descriptive case study form of research

provided the opportunity to focus on the problem of how the needs of gifted students in two Oklahoma school districts are met from the perspective of the stakeholders. Open-ended questions sought to determine the understanding of gifted students, their need for more challenging exercises, what services are provided, and how effective those services are in meeting the needs of gifted students.

The next phase of my research project was data collection. Merriam (1998) stated that qualitative research provides the meaning of a situation and its experiences that a quantitative study cannot. Kemmis and Wilkinson (1998) agreed that qualitative research allows the researcher to analyze their practice, self-analyze, reflect, and understand their educational profession through richer investigation. I collected the data by interviewing two teachers, six students and four parents of students who participate in gifted programs from two different school districts. Each interview took no longer than one hour. These interviews provided the infrastructure to the study. Interviews followed a continuum from highly structured questions at one end to open-ended, conversation like discussions at the other (Merriam, 1998). For this project, I chose the semi-structured, middle of the continuum style of interview. The interviews were guided by a predetermined set of questions, but the direction of the conversation led to unintentional follow up questions. Opening questions were very general as I sought to put the subject at ease followed by more specific questions directed by the study. Interview Questions (Appendices A, B, C) focused on program goals, characteristics and needs of gifted students, qualification and implementation of services, and the perceptions of how those services were meeting the needs of the students. Each participant willingly shared their experiences and provided invaluable insight into gifted education from the stakeholder's perspective. I digitally

recorded and transcribed each interview. Transcripts of the interviews were typed out verbatim.

For the purposeful, convenience sampling, participating teachers of gifted students were selected by word-of-mouth volunteers from the OAGCT membership and the list of Oklahoma public school districts that provide gifted education programs. To provide breadth of understanding to the study, the districts from which they taught were at opposite ends of the state and of contrasting size. Depth of gifted program knowledge was achieved through focus on the two participating gifted programs. The style of programming options provided by each teacher was different as well. Research participation requirements from Homestead Public Schools (pseudonym) required a Consent To Participate in a Research Study (Appendix D) request be emailed to each family. Recipients of those emails were asked to contact me. From those who responded, I narrowed the choice of participants down on a first come-first served basis. The teacher from Montezuma Public Schools (pseudonym) was asked to send the Consent to Participate in a Research Study (Appendix D) home with each of her students. Parents and students who were interested in getting involved with the project were to respond to me by either phone or email. I did not initiate contact with any participants.

According to Merriam (1998), observations provide the opportunity to get a firsthand account of the situation being studied. Following Merriam's (1998) suggestion, I paid attention to the setting of each district's gifted program. Observing the surroundings enhanced my understanding of the participants' responses and provided information the interview could not reveal. Other items I observed included classroom activities, the students' interactions, and conversations with other students and district employees.

Along with the interviews and observations, I collected artifacts from each district. Each district in Oklahoma is required by law to provide a plan for gifted child education programs. Within the plan for gifted education programs, each district must provide the criteria for evaluating that program. The gifted education plans are to be kept on file in the district and be available for public inspection. Those plans and policies provided useful components for this study. Details such as information regarding gifted education placement, service options offered to the students, and other public documents were gathered throughout the study to validate information provided through the interviews. Gleanings from the literature further fortified data from the interviews.

The final phase of my data analysis entailed a systematic classification of subjects and proceedings as I sought to describe patterns and themes. Merriam (1998) described the narrative analysis method of data examination as studying the phenomenon like a story. The structure of the story is to emphasize a recalling, understanding, and summarizing of the data (Merriam, 1998). I transcribed the interviews and accompanying field notes verbatim. Next, I reviewed and compared the transcribed data with the artifacts and literature to find corresponding ideas and themes. Each answer was individually analyzed and compared with the other participants' responses. I attempted to use the open coding method to group the data and looked for patterns as the thoughts revealed were connected in some way. As the patterns emerged, the responses fit well within Montgomery's Holistic Education model (Montgomery et al., 2012; Montgomery, 2013), shifting the analysis from open coding to theoretical. As Merriam (1998) explained, such analysis is inductive. The topics revealed were based on what I had expected to find from previous experience and the literature. As patterns emerged, I assigned them titles.

I added sub categories depending on the interviewee's responses. Those emergent topics included stakeholders' definition of giftedness, the needs of gifted students, services provided to gifted students within each district, how effective the services provided are meeting the needs of the students, and the stakeholders' perceived evaluation of the program. I was unable to follow Merriam's suggestion to collect the data and analyze it simultaneously due to the limitations of the study. My final product is a descriptive case study of how gifted students' needs in two Oklahoma school districts are being met from the stakeholders' perspective that can be used as a testimony for public schools to provide services beyond the scope of regular classroom learning to precocious young people.

### **Participant Selection**

The original plan was to interview one teacher of gifted, two parents of gifted students and two identified gifted students and adjust the number of participants as data were needed (Patton, 2002). In order to gain multiple perspectives regarding gifted services, I sought school districts from opposite ends of the state and of contrasting sizes. Each district needed to provide gifted services to their students through an instructor hired for that purpose.

Participating teachers of gifted for the purposeful, convenience sampling were selected by word-of-mouth volunteers from OAGCT membership and the list of Oklahoma public school districts that provide gifted education programs. At that time, Oklahoma did not require an endorsement or certification in order to teach gifted courses. Therefore, the participating teachers simply needed to be employed by an Oklahoma public school as their gifted education teacher. Because each district is required to meet the



needs of their students according to the individual student's needs, the program options provided were likewise different (OSDE, 2013).

The teacher volunteer from Homestead Public Schools followed a resource consultation model while the Montezuma Public Schools participant used a pull-out method. Both districts provided these services for their first through sixth grade students. Research participation requirements from Homestead Public Schools required the Consent to Participate in a Research Study (Appendix D) be emailed to each family who had students in the gifted program. Recipients of the letters were asked to contact me. From those who responded, I narrowed the choice of participants on a first come-first serve basis. Since the interviews were to take place on a school day and changes to my schedule were likely to happen, I arranged to meet with the first three students who volunteered along with their parents. One of the parents was unable to be interviewed during school hours. That still left the number of parent subjects to be interviewed within my goal of two. An extra student was available to be interviewed in case circumstances changed the day of the interviews. The parents and teachers selected the times and places that were most convenient and comfortable for them.

The teacher from Montezuma Public Schools was asked to send the Consent to Participate in a Research Study (Appendix D) home with each of her students. Parents and students from Montezuma who were interested in volunteering for the project were to respond to me by either phone or email; I did not initiate contact with any participants. As the participants responded, I set times for the interviews. These volunteers were likewise selected on a first come-first served basis. The parents and teachers selected the times and places that were most convenient for them. The first parent met with me at the

school when he dropped his daughter off. The second parent was a teacher who made arrangements with the teacher of gifted to cover her class so she could meet with me. Parent participants were the legal parents or guardians of students identified and enrolled in the participating school district's gifted education program.

The students were enrolled in the gifted program between the third and sixth grade. Most of the students were interviewed at the campus where they were registered and in a room selected by the school administration. One student was attending a school program when I went to get him for our conversation. I had a meeting scheduled with his mother later in the afternoon at a local restaurant. Upon arrival at the destination, the parent asked if we could move to her home. This arrangement worked out well, and I was able to talk with the student after visiting with his mother.

### **Data Collection**

According to Merriam (1998), data collection for case studies involves interviewing stakeholders, observing the setting, and analyzing all the data. For this particular study, I started with ten interviews that would take no longer than an hour and would reveal the stakeholders' perceptions of the significance of gifted programs at individual school sites. The number of interviews grew to twelve because I wanted to ensure enough participants were available to provide the depth and breadth the study deserved. A total of twelve interviews were digitally recorded. Each interviewee was asked several open-ended questions (Appendices A, B, and C). Initially, I wanted to gain each individual's trust by asking general questions about him or her. As Merriam (1998) pointed out, the purpose of a descriptive case study is to provide an end product that entails a thick, rich description of the situation under investigation. In order to gain that depth, I adjust-

ed and added sub-questions as the subjects revealed their stories. One question added was each individual's opinion on a scale of 1 to 10 of how they would evaluate their gifted education program option. My focus remained on the stakeholders' were being met. Appropriate measures were taken to maintain confidentiality. Each individual and district was given a pseudonym. The list of participants, their pseudonyms, and signed consent forms were stored in a locked cabinet separate from the data and any analysis or reports pertaining to them.

As Merriam (1998) pointed out, while the interviews provide the majority of the data, observations provide important accompanying information. Therefore, I recorded my impression of the interviewee's surroundings and the role that setting played in program satisfaction. Notes were recorded during the observation process in order to be less obtrusive than video recording devices. Merriam (1998) recommended that the researcher document the observation immediately upon leaving the setting to retain as much valuable data as possible.

Each year, every school district within the state of Oklahoma is required to have a local advisory committee that develops a plan for its gifted students (Education of Gifted and Talented Children Act, 1981). That plan must include a means for providing services to identified gifted students, placement identification process, and a method to evaluate the program. I was able to glean information from district artifacts by searching school district websites and requesting the information through email. All publicly accessible documents were gathered from participating district websites. During the interviews, the teachers were asked to share any material they felt would be beneficial to the study.

I kept the records of this study private. Any written results were generalized or referred to individuals through pseudonyms, and I did not include information that would identify individual participants or school districts. My research records were stored on a password protected computer in a locked office and only researchers and individuals responsible for research oversight had access to the files. Consent processes and data collection were available to be observed by research oversight staff if necessary.

Reviewing previous analyses and studies of gifted education found in literature not only provided information about the current circumstances of these programs, but also assisted in shaping the current research project (Merriam, 1998). Merriam described the artifacts as any form of document not collected from interviews or observations. Collecting and analyzing the literature was dealt with in similar fashion as the interviews and observations. The research questions served as a guide while I solicited answers to the phenomenon. Since such data can be valuable to the study, authenticity is necessary when obtaining materials from fieldwork (Merriam, 1998). I was able to conduct a content analysis to determine document accuracy. Such analysis was sought to find commonalities between the interviews with teachers, parents, and students; recorded details from observations; information provided in the literature, and artifacts.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis entailed a systematic classification of individuals and activities seeking to describe patterns and themes (Merriam, 1998). Through this research I was seeking to describe how the needs of gifted students in two Oklahoma school districts were being met through a descriptive case study methodology approach. I chose the nar-

rative form of analysis. A narrative, from Merriam's perspective, is the telling of a person's story.

Gläse and Laudel (2013) suggested the first step in analyzing raw data is recognizing what information is relevant to the research. Merriam (1998) recommended analyzing the data simultaneously as information was gathered. Therefore, my first act was to take the digitally recorded interviews and field notes, and transcribe them verbatim following the discussions. Those data were then placed into NVivo 10 software to categorize and organize the data. While NVivo 10 is a valuable tool, which can assist in coding and categorizing large amounts of narrative text, it did not do any of my analysis. Using NVivo, however, caused the data analysis to become more theoretical as I looked for particular topics based on Montgomery's Holistic Education model (Montgomery et al., 2012; Montgomery, 2013). Additional analysis occurred using open coding of the data that further supported the theoretical framework. Analysis identified responses that provided common occurrences of words and phrases. Artifacts, field notes, and observations were analyzed along with the transcribed interviews. Data were continuously reviewed and coded.

According to Gläse and Laudel (2013), it was necessary to identify patterns that could be integrated as typologies were developed. The typologies were developed based on the theories that structured the data collection. In the case of this project, the first typology I uncovered was background information regarding gifted education programs in Oklahoma: identification criteria for gifted students, needs of gifted students, types of programming options, description of services, and the perceived effectiveness of the services provided.

Gläse and Laudel (2013) explained that data would contain variance. By comparing case studies, differences were revealed. Variances in this particular study included district size, backgrounds of individual gifted program instructors, types or methods of program delivery, and availability of service options.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Because a specific study regarding Oklahoma's gifted education programs has likely not been undertaken to date, there were limitations in data collection, including time constraints and availability of resources. This did not prevent the research from being completed; however, such a study did generate questions for future investigation. Having been a gifted education specialist for many years, I hold the opinion that gifted education programs are vitally important to generate a learning atmosphere for students with advanced cognitive abilities. To maintain reliability and validity for this study, I maintained the impartiality role of a reporter as I sought to carefully analyze data from the interviews.

According to Merriam (1998), validity and reliability in qualitative research, if possible, is difficult. Merriam suggested paying careful attention to how the information is collected, studied, reviewed, and explained. Guba and Lincoln (1992) proposed that the researcher analyze the data from the first interview then separate it into patterns and themes.

### **Validity.**

Validity for this project was obtained as I analyzed the interview data searching for experiences that overlapped. Those similar experiences resulted in common themes. I coded the common themes with assistance from NVivo 10 to visually find repetitive

threads. Additional analysis was conducted through open coding. I could then pinpoint the number of times specific themes appeared in the interviews. In addition, as I sorted the data, I searched for patterns and themes that corresponded with the research questions and Montgomery's Holistic Education model. Guba and Lincoln (1992) recommended the researcher search for examples where the details overlap.

### **Reliability.**

This was addressed by reviewing the data and noting where the respondents provided similar answers, thus providing credibility and transferability to my study. By comparing the 12 interviews and noting similar responses, consistency could be considered. I could then determine the interview questions to be reliable.

### **Triangulation of Data**

To further insure the validity of this case study, the data were collected in three different formats (interviews, observation, and artifacts), facilitating a triangulation of data. Patton (2002) and Merriam (1998) declared that triangulation would provide precision and credence to the findings. Using research questions and Montgomery's Holistic Education model (Montgomery et al., 2012; Montgomery, 2013) as the lens, I analyzed the data, seeking to obtain patterns and themes within each interview. Similarities were sought across the analyzed data. That information was compared to my experiences in gifted education, and district artifacts to provide the element of triangulation recommended by Guba and Lincoln (1992).

Table 1

Trustworthiness Table

Technique	Results	Examples
Persistent observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In-depth, accurate data</li> <li>• Sort relevance from irrelevancies</li> <li>• Recognize deceptions</li> </ul>	Purposeful data were obtained through 12 interviews, irrelevant information discarded
Triangulation	Data verification	Evidence was obtained through school districts' program plans or policies; interviews with teachers, parents, and students; my experiences in gifted education
Member checking	Test categories, interpretations, or conclusions (constructions)	Continuous review and comparison of the data
Thick description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provide data base for transferability judgment</li> <li>• furnish a vicarious experience for the reader</li> </ul>	Descriptive interpretation of the data
Purpose sampling	Generate data for the emerging hypotheses	A small, purposeful sample provided more credible information than a random sample.

### Chapter Summary

Oklahoma has 532 public school districts required by law to provide services to their gifted students (Education of Gifted and Talented Children Act, 1981). According to the OSDE 2012 Gifted and Talented (GT) Annual Report (Barresi, 2012), 102,659 students were provided gifted services during the 2011-2012 school year. The tremendous number of gifted students demands the necessity to meet their academic needs if the state of Oklahoma hopes to use this valuable resource in the future. This study gathered data



from stakeholders in two of Oklahoma's public schools districts in order to describe how the needs of gifted students in these Oklahoma school districts are being met. Interviews provided a thick, rich description of the phenomena being studied. Upon completion of the interviews, the raw data were transcribed verbatim and put into NVivo 10 for coding and analysis. Open coding provided additional analysis allowing for a more thorough interpretation of the data. The data interpretation was driven by Montgomery's Holistic Education model (Montgomery et al., 2012; Montgomery, 2013) and how the information answered the research questions. The data were triangulated with my experience as a gifted education teacher, cross examined among participants for patterns, and compared with the literature to ensure credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Through exploring the stories of the participants, I was able to get a unique glimpse into two Oklahoma school districts' gifted programs.

## CHAPTER IV

### PRESENTATION OF DATA

The purpose of this study was to describe the services provided gifted students in two Oklahoma school districts. Data for the phenomena were collected by interviewing the stakeholders of two different public school districts that provide gifted services through a gifted program coordinator. By studying the situation from several cases and various perspectives, I was able to find similarities and develop a compelling understanding of the value of gifted services. This chapter presents the data collected from those interviews.

In order to obtain such an understanding, the descriptive case study method of research was used to work directly with participants (Patton, 2002). The research questions guided the study to address the problem statement. Interview questions were designed to address the predominating research questions. The research questions were as follow:

1. How do stakeholders of gifted programs describe ways that services for gifted meet students' needs?
2. How do stakeholders describe the perceived effectiveness of the gifted programs in meeting the needs of gifted students?
3. What other truths can be revealed in this study?

Information from 12 stakeholders in two of Oklahoma's gifted education programs was gathered through individual interviews. Each stakeholder was asked several open ended questions. The data gleaned from those conversations provided invaluable insight not afforded through questionnaires. Upon completion of the interviews, a narrative analysis of the data was performed in order to study the phenomenon like a story. A complete analysis of the data is described in detail throughout this chapter.

### Participants

Twelve participants completed interviews for this study. Their pseudonyms and demographic information are detailed in Table 2.

Table 2

Participants' Demographic Information			
Pseudonym	Group	Gender	District
Angela	3rd Grade Student	Female	Homestead
Sandi	Parent	Female	Homestead
Tyler	4th Grade Student	Male	Homestead
Wendy	Parent	Female	Homestead
Rose	6th Grade Student	Female	Homestead
Susie	Teacher	Female	Homestead
Tiffany	6th Grade Student	Female	Montezuma
Manuel	Parent	Male	Montezuma
Gwen	6th Grade Student	Female	Montezuma
Briana	6th Grade Student	Female	Montezuma
Courtney	Parent	Female	Montezuma
Donna	Teacher	Female	Montezuma

I conducted an in-depth analysis of the data collected during interviews with the 12 participants. Data were provided through personal interviews with 12 stakeholders who currently are involved in Oklahoma's gifted programs. Those stakeholders included six students in grades three through six, four parents, and two teachers of gifted students. I selected the interview participants by word-of-mouth volunteers from among the Oklahoma Association of Gifted, Creative, and Talented (OAGCT) membership. The administration of two school districts agreed to participate in this study. In order to provide a more compelling understanding of the phenomena, the districts were of contrasting size from opposite sides of the state; one in the northeast quadrant of Oklahoma and the other in the southwest. One district was a large, suburban community while the other was located in a much smaller, rural community. I maintained anonymity and confidentiality by assigning a pseudonym to each interviewee and school district.

### **Homestead Public Schools.**

The Homestead Public School district is in the northern half of the state of Oklahoma. The National Center of Education Statistics (2015) considers Homestead to be a small suburb. The average daily membership for the district is approximately 17,000 students. There are three elementary sites for pre-Kindergartners through fourth grade, two intermediate sites for grades five and six, a middle school for grades 7 and 8, freshman center, and a high school. Approximate average student population at the elementary sites is 2,000 children. Each site consists of several buildings including the administration office, a cafeteria, and several classroom buildings generally comprised of one grade level with approximately 16 classes. One gifted coordinator is available per site.

**Angela.** Angela is a third grade girl who has attended her neighborhood school since she was a kindergartener. Her mother and father noticed through first and second grade that “she seemed to get bored a lot, and we were creating extra work at our home environment with a baby sitter, going to Kumon, doing extra things just to keep her engaged.” Her mother described her as being “quiet, a little shy,” so she was uncertain how Angela would do in a testing situation. As her mother indicated,

Angela didn’t test off the charts for gifted. She was really at the boundary of it actually; maybe even a couple of points below in one area but really did well in another area. But because of the teacher’s belief that she needed to be more challenged, and that was consistent from first grade and second grade, that’s how we were able to go into the gifted program.

According to her mom, Angela enjoys a variety of activities including researching things on the computer, tennis, golf, basketball, and playing school. Sandi, Angela’s mother, also mentioned that Angela’s first and second grade teachers noticed that she had insight to people or “We have an old soul in our classroom.” One of the characteristics of gifted kids is possessing intuition. Sandi said, “She definitely has intuition.” Her mother did not think Angela obsessed or was a perfectionist; instead she noted, “She’ll compartmentalize.” Angela likes things in a certain place and will let visiting friends be aware of that while they are in her room. When it comes to working projects, Angela will work on a project until it is finished, then she will put it away maybe returning to it months later if she is interested. Another trait her mother revealed was that Angela was a “right fighter, go by the rules. If you don’t go by the rules she has a hard time with that.” She also had

difficulty understanding why other children continue to make poor decisions. Angela hopes to become an architect when she grows up.

**Sandi.** Sandi is a professional working from home. She described herself as being driven and “a little type A.” While Sandi and her husband are working in their home office, they have educational experiences set up for Angela. Sandi explained, “So when we do things we say, ‘OK, we’re gonna [sic]—I need to work on a report, would you like to do the same time?’ We don’t believe in setting her in front of a TV.” She and her husband have “tried very hard not to impose any kind of work that we do.” They focus on letting Angela be “her own little self.” As a mother, her goal is “to provide her with whatever resources she needs to be successful and to live on her [own].” In our discussion of Angela’s placement, Sandi commented,

We filled out a sheet at the beginning when they ask if you want to do the testing or not. We didn’t do the fall. We did it in the spring. We actually talked to our teacher for second grade. We spoke with her and just said, ‘should we or should we not?’ I don’t over promise and under deliver on something but this is what we are seeing from our perspective.

After agreeing to the testing, Sandi became concerned for Angela because, “I’m a horrible test taker so I thought I don’t wanna [sic] put pressure on her.” Along with Angela, Sandi and her husband are raising his middle school daughter who has also been identified as gifted. When it came to gifted education Sandi and her husband seemed very satisfied with the product their district produced at both the elementary and middle school levels. Her description was, the “things we would have concern at middle school have

nothing to do with the gifted program. I think it's from being a teenager to be honest with you."

**Tyler.** Tyler is a fourth grade boy who has attended his neighborhood school since kindergarten. Both Tyler's older sister and brother have been identified as gifted. Tyler's sister was homeschooled until she started high school and has taken several AP courses. Wendy, Tyler's mom, and her husband "made a different decision for them [the boys] because they're different kids." Both boys were identified for the gifted program early in their elementary school years. Wendy could not decide if she should have him tested for the gifted program in kindergarten, but Tyler heard about the test in first grade and requested to be tested. After taking the ability test, he needed additional recommendations for program placement. When asked about his favorite subject in school, Tyler responded with history because, "It's just fun. Because it's fun to see what they did without electricity and all the things that we have now." During the past couple of summers, Tyler took it upon himself to research and study a topic on his own, which he shared with his class in the fall because, "I like to do projects just for fun." His mother described him as being able to keep himself challenged at whatever he is doing. "If there's a math thing that everyone else is struggling with, he'll just start timing himself to see how fast he can do it."

**Wendy.** Wendy is a certified Spanish teacher who grew up in South America. Both of her parents came from rural Missouri towns and began to raise their family in a similar fashion until they became missionaries in a large metropolitan city in South America. Upon graduating from a large British prep school, Wendy moved to Oklahoma to attend college and start her own family. She taught in the local district for six years

then became a stay-at-home mom. After her children started school, she returned to teaching at the local community college. One tradition she has continued from her childhood is reading aloud to her children. Wendy and her husband have a daughter and two sons.

**Rose.** Rose is a sixth grade intermediate school student. She attended her local neighborhood school until fifth grade. She could not remember much about the testing situation other than taking it “whenever I was young,” which was actually during her kindergarten year. In past years, she was pulled out of her classroom to attend the gifted class. This year her entire class participates in the gifted program. At the intermediate school, she is able to test out of a unit. When she tests out of a unit, her current gifted teacher has “a list of things to choose from to do for a project on a piece of paper.” Such projects are “during the same time period that our class was doing something and then we presented it to our class.” This year the gifted teacher has allowed students to complete an “inquiry project.” She described the inquiry project as, “where you get to choose any subject you want to learn about and you research that and create and present it in any way you want to.” Her goal is to become a pediatrician when she grows up. To prepare for that, she is already taking an advanced math course.

**Susie.** Susie grew up as a gifted student in her local district. Her teaching career began in a fifth grade classroom. After three years, she was asked to be the gifted coordinator for her building. She was the gifted coordinator for two years then tried school administration. It was quickly determined the administration role was not a good fit for her and she returned to teaching as a sixth grade teacher. She took a position in the State Department of Education after teaching sixth grade for two years. At the end of a year



with the OSDE, she returned to her local district as a building gifted coordinator, a position she is very passionate about.

Susie serves as the gifted coordinator for one of three elementary school sites in Homestead Public Schools. There are approximately 1,900 students at this site between prekindergarten and fourth grade. The majority of the students are white. Between 20% and 30% of the student population qualifies for free and reduced lunches. For the most part, each building contains one grade level. At the time of the interview, Susie was working with 100 identified gifted students. In regard to her present position she stated,

I serve as a resource and consultant to the teacher in providing resources, modeling lessons, pushing into the classroom to work with small groups. I also do work with my students in small groups in an effort to help support the classroom in delivering their regular classroom. I try to match my small group lessons with what it is they're doing just taking it to another level.

Susie's current administrator was "my gifted coordinator when I was in elementary school." It was her administrator who saw "that little spark was in me and she brought that to my attention and really encouraged me to start my master's program in gifted."

To her it was a case of "somebody asked, saw the potential, asked and then stepped into it and knew that it was a great fit." Susie has earned her master's degree in gifted education from Oklahoma State University.

### **Montezuma Public Schools.**

Montezuma Public School district is in the southern half of the state of Oklahoma. It is considered a distant town by the National Center for Education Statistics (2015).

The district is comprised of five elementary sites for pre-Kindergartners through fourth grade, an intermediate school for fifth and sixth grade, a junior high for seventh and eighth grade, a high school, and a learning center. The average daily membership for the district is approximately 3,800 students. Two media specialists also serve as gifted coordinators for the elementary sites. One gifted coordinator is available full time at the intermediate site. Gifted students at the junior high and high schools attend AP classes.

**Tiffany.** Tiffany, a sixth grade girl, is attending her local intermediate school. She qualified for the gifted program based on an ability test she was given in third grade. While she loves the gifted program, she strongly dislikes school. Her main problem is with other students in her regular classes. During class one particular student will stand in his chair and dance. According to Tiffany, “they always do something like every minute of the day to attract [attention] towards them self [sic]” while she wants to stay focused and finish her work. Reading is her favorite subject because “that’s the only subject that I mainly get As in and the teacher makes our learning experience fun at the same time.” One way her teacher makes learning fun is “if we do a preposition page we don’t do it on paper. We just get to do it on the Smart Board and get the little marker things to write on it.” When asked if she preferred hands on projects over pencil and paper, she said, “uh huh” [yes]. Sometimes “when we write reports, I make it complex so I seem more interested and more interesting.” I asked if she liked “to go above and beyond what is required of you in the regular class?” Her response was “uh huh” [yes]. Her father described her as “she’s smart, she likes wisdom” and “she shows a drive even though she comes home and says ‘I hate school’.” He knows she is “good at what she does.” Addi-

tionally he stated, “I know she has the drive for it.” He feels that Tiffany may be like he was when he was in school. Manuel provided this description of the situation,

I used to be where I would get so bored or I would have so many different things going on that school felt tough but it was easy. I know she has the drive for it. She just doesn’t—she’s stubborn. ... She’s daddy’s girl.

Tiffany’s biological mother comes and goes in her life and Manuel, her father, felt that “between life itself and Tiffany’s life and then school, they kind of overlap one another. She had a tendency to be distracted.” Later in our interview, Manuel described Tiffany as a teacher pleaser, which “gets her frustrated.” When working with her while completing math homework, he will tell her an easier way to complete the problem. “And she gets frustrated because she can’t remember each step or she’ll do it each step and then she gets a different answer because she miscarried a number or something like that.” Further discussion revealed, “She likes rules. She likes structure and she likes to do the way that she’s told when it’s written or something like that.” I asked if she was a perfectionist. His response was an emphatic “Yes.” At one point the district had suggested “bumping her up a grade, and I chose not to do that. I didn’t want her to be the little man out.” Upon graduation from high school, Tiffany hopes to become a hair stylist and get her bachelor’s degree in cosmetology because “I like doing hair.” While she was in fifth grade, the local college visited her school: “It seemed really interesting and I thought that I want to do that. I read about it and I thought it was really interesting.”

**Manuel.** Manuel, Tiffany’s father, is a construction worker currently home on disability after a work related injury. He was very passionate about the gifted program and the opportunities it provided his daughter. As a child, Manuel had problems with

boredom in school and was never offered the opportunity to participate. He was offered the opportunity to skip a grade.

I went through that when I was younger. I started thinking about how she would feel like I was in my position but I didn't want to do it either. I was a little person. I was a little kid. I was small and I was about her size. I didn't want to be that little kid. You know. So I was like, "Nah." My mom didn't want to do it either.

In describing his military training, Manuel stated,

I did aviation electronics. In six months they teach you four years of college. You want to talk about advanced training! I watched people mentally break down, start screaming in the middle of class they were handed so much information and we had to keep up. It didn't bother me none [sic].

At the conclusion of his military stint, Manuel, his wife and girls lived in several Oklahoma towns. The girls' mother left him several years ago and decided to come back into their lives about a year ago. Manuel told her, "Everything you do can and will affect every[one] around you. So if you're having, you're in a bad mood, the kids are gonna feel that." Mom's coming and going in their lives has caused the entire family to seek counseling. He and his second wife, two of his daughters and step children have lived in the local district for several years.

**Gwen.** Gwen is a sixth grade girl who has participated in the gifted program since the beginning of this school year. Her grandparents are her legal guardians. Other students' behavior and her mom's failing health caused the family to move from one Oklahoma town to the current location. Her fifth grade math teacher recommended Gwen be

tested for the gifted program. Gwen recalled, “Because she was like saying that I had like good grades and stuff and that she thought it might be the work might be too easy for me that I wasn’t being challenged enough.” Gwen puts pressure on herself to go beyond the classroom requirements because,

If the teacher recognizes that in a student then I think that they see it, but the other teachers might need to see it. So I think that in my reading class that I need to push myself a little bit more because that’s not my best subject.

She enjoys completing hands on projects, especially those that involve power point tasks. Because she spends a great deal of time at the hospital with her relatives, she plans to work in the medical field when she grows up, specializing in something vascular. Currently, she is working hard to do the best she can so she can get into a good college.

**Briana.** Briana is another sixth grade girl who has participated in the gifted program since she was in second grade. While Briana very much wanted to share her gifted program experience with me, she was very quiet. Most of her responses were very short and direct with little elaboration. While she likes reading, Briana stated, “I’d rather draw to be honest or doodle around.” When asked what she does while the regular classroom teacher is giving instructions, she stated, “It’s kind of boring,” but “I listen because its polite even though I get bored.” To escape the monotony, “I just kind of zone out sometimes when listening to her” and daydream. If she finishes her work in class, she works on other assignments or “If we brought a book, we read.” I asked her if she had to read a lot and she responded with, “Yes.” Her extensive reading has left her with an advanced vocabulary. At home she enjoys getting on electronics because “this is our generation,”

reading a “really good book,” and playing basketball. This year she plays basketball for a city team. Her goal is to become a marine biologist or a lawyer when she grows up.

**Courtney.** Courtney, one of the teachers at the intermediate school, volunteered to be one of the parent interview participants. Courtney’s insight provided the perspective of a parent as well as understanding from the classroom. Her son became a candidate for the gifted program when his classroom teacher noticed his state test scores and recommended him for further testing. The school noticed when his achievement test results came back “that his math was kind of through the roof with his third grade scores.” It was a few months before the counselor was able to test him, “and whenever they did he had scored like a 99% on the test.” Her son began participating in the gifted program at the beginning of this school year. Courtney described her son as “very mathematically inclined, but “[He] can’t spell to save his life.” Her son also “has a good memory reading” and “he likes to read novels and books.” He really likes the hands on projects he gets to do in the gifted program because he is “not so stressed in here [the gifted classroom].” “He can do things on the computer or they’re creating things ... It’s not just paper and pencil.”

**Donna.** Donna has been teaching for 12 years. She taught at the elementary, intermediate, and middle school levels of the local district where she grew up. Her principal recommended her for the gifted coordinator position two years ago when the former coordinator wished to return to the classroom. Donna earned her master’s degree in Educational Leadership from Cameron University and at the time of the interview was finishing up her doctoral degree.

Knowing Donna was a gifted student as a child and that she needed a change from the regular classroom, her principal approached her with the idea. She accepted the opportunity and loves it.

Her description of her childhood experience was,

I loved it. In fact, I felt closer—and you know you don't see your gifted teacher as often—but I felt closer to her. She seemed to understand me. ...Plus, in there it was new and exciting things that you don't learn in the regular classroom. You already know all that stuff. We learned that, you know, at home 'cause I wanted to.

I asked if she was continuing the pattern of teaching the way she had been taught in the gifted program and she responded with, "Yes. Well, along with research." She has not had any courses in gifted education, but was interested in taking the test for gifted certification. The college offering gifted education courses recommended some textbooks for her to read. Donna was able read the books and passed the test. Now she is applying those theories to her work. No particular theorist stood out to her, but she said,

What I've read, it solidified what I already knew. I apply what I needed as a kid and I apply what I need as an adult. Then take what I'm needing as an adult and I'm trying to give it to them now.

Donna's particular site houses approximately 500 fifth and sixth grade students in one building. The service delivery option is the pull out method. Donna will pull identified students from two classes in one grade level to meet with them one hour at a time. The gifted program schedule rotates constantly. Students usually get to attend class for

one hour, three times a week. With the constantly rotating schedule, students will not miss the same class more than once each week.

### **Data Analysis**

The data were collected through twelve individual interviews that I transcribed verbatim as well as through documents and notes. Therefore, my first act was to take the digitally recorded interviews and field notes, and transcribe them verbatim following the discussions. I then exported the transcribed data into the NVivo 10 program for inspection. After placing the data into NVivo 10, I was able to review the data searching for recurring thoughts and ideas. According to Merriam's (1998) suggestion, passages of the text were highlighted according to reoccurring responses. Additional analysis occurred through open coding of the data. Analysis entailed a systematic classification of the participants' responses seeking common occurrences of words and phrases. Artifacts, field notes, and observations were analyzed along with the transcribed interviews. All of the collected data were viewed through the lens of Montgomery's Holistic Education model (Montgomery et al., 2012; Montgomery, 2013).

As I reviewed the transcribed data, I noted data detailing similar participant experiences in gifted education. Those similar experiences resulted in common themes that I coded and named accordingly. The phrases entered into NVivo 10 could be identified by who, where, and when along with being categorized by theme. I noticed that coded material could often overlap into other themes. With NVivo 10, the interconnections between those themes could be coded while leaving the original code intact. The program also provided links for the codes to source documents. While NVivo 10 is a valuable tool for coding and categorizing large amounts of narrative text, it did not do any of my analysis.



Additional analysis occurred through open coding of the data. At this point, the artifacts and observation notes were included in the review. A list of the common themes is provided here. Discussion and results will be presented later in the chapter:

1. Definition of gifted
2. Characteristics and needs of gifted students
  - a. Cognitive
  - b. Affective
  - c. Psychomotor
  - d. Intuitive
3. Description of gifted services and options
4. Regular classroom
5. Perceptions of effectiveness
6. Benefits of gifted program participation
7. Recommendations

Table 3

Theme Exploration		
Questions	Major Themes	Supporting Themes
<b>1. How do stakeholders of gifted programs describe ways that services for gifted meet students' needs?</b>	Definition of gifted, characteristics, placement procedures, needs of gifted students, description of gifted services and options, regular classroom	Needs: Cognitive, affective, psychomotor, and intuitive Service options: Resource consultation, pull out, and others
<b>2. How do stakeholders describe the perceived effectiveness of the gifted programs in meeting the needs of gifted students?</b>	Benefits, effectiveness	Definition, characteristics, administrative support

### Theme Exploration

Questions	Major Themes	Supporting Themes
<b>3. What other truths can be revealed in this study?</b>	Recommendations for improvement	Parental knowledge of giftedness

The framework of Montgomery’s Holistic Education model (Montgomery et al., 2012; Montgomery, 2013) suggests the educational needs of a gifted student be met cognitively, emotionally, creatively, physically, and socially. As revealed through the literature in Chapter 2, all quadrants are necessary when educating the gifted child.

#### Research question 1

How do stakeholders of gifted programs describe ways that services for gifted meet students’ needs?

**Definition of Gifted.** The first theme that emerged from the data was the definition and characteristics of giftedness. The OSDE defined a gifted child as one who “demonstrated potential abilities of high performance capability and needing differentiated or accelerated education services” (Education of Gifted and Talented Children Act, 1981, para. 1). The artifacts revealed that both districts followed the OSDE definition of a gifted child as they identified students for gifted services.

#### Characteristics and Needs of Gifted.

Experts (Cornell, 1992; Tuttle & Becker, 1980) in the field of gifted students disclosed the characteristics of a gifted child vary as much as differences among other children. Responses from the parents agreed. One parent knew that her child was mathematically inclined but disorganized. Another stated that his daughter had wisdom and liked to have everything in a certain place. A third mentioned her child had a thirst for learning, was very organized, and had an intuition beyond her years. The fourth described her

son as constantly challenging himself, completing projects during the summer, and voraciously reading.

**Cognitive.** According to the literature (Song & Porath, 2005; Van Tassel-Baska, 1986), the principle characteristic of gifted students is that they are more advanced cognitively than their chronological peers. All of the stakeholders concurred with the researchers. When I asked the teachers, “What characteristics suggest that gifted students need a curriculum different from that for other students?,” nearly all of the participants mentioned their cognitive abilities first. One teacher responded with,

Being in a classroom and either being frustrated or bored or it’s just not being completely fulfilled in that classroom, needing more. Sometimes they show that by causing problems. Sometimes they show that by tapping too much. Umm...sometimes it’s just making goofy noises in the back of the room.

Other research (Piiro, 1993; Tieso, 2003) revealed the single most common trait of gifted students was their persistent motivation. Wendy remembered how her son had come home with a really advanced math packet.

They were almost brainteasers, but he was super interested. He was just like ‘this is so great.’ He would try to get them all done in one night because he was just so interested in it. Then he would get frustrated because he couldn’t do them all. But that’s just the point. Just to push him a little too far.

Researchers (Plucker & Callahan, 2008; Reis, 1994; Rimm, 1982; Tuttle & Becker, 1980) revealed that the desire for more cognitive input or a fierce curiosity is mani-

fested in gifted students through high levels of energy and intensity. Rimm (1982) pointed out that teachers have a tendency to nominate the well behaved, teacher pleaser for gifted programs rather than the nonconforming, less conventional, highly creative child. Both teachers agreed that a gifted student is not necessarily a teacher pleasing student. A gifted student usually cannot behave well in class because, as Donna stated, “Their brain has to be going all the time, and they can’t sit and listen.”

When the parents and students were asked, “What characteristics suggest that gifted students need a curriculum different from other students?” the parent’s responses varied but agreed with the researchers (Piirto, 1993; Plucker & Callahan, 2008; Rimm, 1982; Tieso, 2003; Tuttle & Becker, 1980). Responses from the parents included, “She loves to read.” “He keeps himself challenged.” “She is smart, and she also has wisdom.” and “He is very mathematically inclined.” The students said they were ahead in their classes; they learn faster; they “grasp” their subjects; their teacher’s think they need more challenges; they persevere through things and work hard; and they get good grades.

To elaborate on the cognitive need, I followed up with questions regarding activities in the regular classroom. One student was asked what she did while the instructor was reteaching a subject. She mentioned that she daydreamed a lot or “zoned out.” Another hated attending the regular classes because other students would interrupt the teacher or act out in order to get attention, but she loved going to the gifted classroom where she could learn. Wendy said that her son would time himself to see how fast he could complete an assignment in order to stay challenged. A classroom teacher as well as a parent of a gifted child, Courtney mentioned that to just have the gifted kids read a book when they completed an assignment was doing them a disservice when “they can go

above and beyond and be challenged.” Such comments agreed with those of researchers (Reis, 1994; Reis & Renzulli, 2010) as they revealed that most classroom teachers have had little, if any, training in meeting the needs of gifted students in their classrooms leaving such children bored and unproductive. The literature (Van Tassel-Baska, 2005) further revealed the typical heterogeneous, inclusive classroom provides little if any challenge or differentiation for academically gifted children.

**Affective.** Research (Hamilton, 1994) revealed that the majority of gifted students were no different socially than their average peers. The third, fourth, and fifth graders’ responses revealed this to be the case. From the younger students’ perspectives, the other classroom pupils were happy for the children who participated in the gifted program. As Tyler said, “You get things that not many other people get and that lots of other people wouldn't think that that's actually a thing.”

In order to uncover the affective needs of the students, I asked them, “What is the greatest challenge about being gifted?” Rose’s view agreed with that of researchers (Reis, 1994; Reis & Renzulli, 2010) when she stated,

I think that the greatest challenge probably is that you are forced to challenge yourself. Because in normal classes a lot of the time you can't do that. Because it's not that hard, but whenever you are in the gifted program you're actually forced to challenge yourself and you learn a lot more. But that's also a good part of it and another challenge is you have to leave class sometimes for it and then you miss what's in class and then you sometimes still have to take the test for that so you don't really know all about it because you were gone. But normally it's not that hard.

Briana responded, “People like expect a lot more things out of you and sometimes that pressure can build up over time.” Gwen commented, “[The greatest challenge is] just trying to get...all the work that you need done.” The literature (Janos et al., 1985) agreed that high expectations from others can lead to frustrations and feelings of ineptness.

Tiffany reflected,

[Gifted] has always had its advantages. But I really don't like how people say that I'm smart and I'm the teacher's favorite just because I'm, like, smarter than the others. And every year, like no matter what, they always just think that.

When I asked Briana how she dealt with the pressure, she said she taught herself how to relax. Briana also noted, “She [gifted teacher] kind of explains to us what it’s like. And knowing that someone else knows what’s happening makes you feel better.” I followed that response with, “Is that one reason why you like the gifted program because the rest of the people in that room understand you?” She answered, “Yes.” I also asked Briana if her gifted teacher ever explained to her what it meant to be gifted. Briana’s explanation agrees with that of the researchers (Plucker & Callahan, 2008; Van Tassel-Baska, 2005) that precocious youth will seek the companionship of those who have a similar mental age. “Our brains kind of think differently. You put more meaning into something than there actually is.”

Researchers (Hong et al., 2006) discovered that resource rooms could meet both the cognitive development of advanced students, and their social and emotional growth. Tiffany’s comments provoked a follow up question, “So every year you have students that tease you about being gifted?” “Uh huh [yes]. They think that gifted is like extra

stupid or something like that. I don't know, like I would just brush it off because I know it's not true so why worry about it?" Additional responses from the students noted the advanced children enjoyed hanging out with the other advanced students. As Briana related, "People expect a lot more things out of you and sometimes that pressure can build up over time." Donna described how her students walk through the door of her classroom, "You can watch them. You can watch them as they walk in the door. They're like 'Ah, Ms. Donna.'" She remarked that the gifted class was their release, an opportunity for her students to be themselves and not what other people expect them to be as opposed to the regular classrooms.

The parents were not asked a direct question about the struggles their children faced by being labeled gifted. However, I asked questions about how their children handled different situations. Sandi and Wendy both mentioned that their children were hard on themselves, but the children used their experiences as learning opportunities and discussed problems with the parents.

Since Donna used the pull out style of services, I specifically asked her, "Do you have a set affective type of curriculum that you use, or do you just deal with being gifted when it comes up?" She answered,

We just deal with it when it comes up. I don't, I mean you know, like I said, we just spend the first couple of days talking about it. Talking about what it means, talking about, you know, what we need to do; but I don't have a particular curriculum that I use with them. I've looked at a few, but I didn't feel like they really addressed the issues that we really have.

Donna added,

We spend a lot of time just [talking] and mostly it's one on one. You see the desk sitting there because I'll sit here. And I'll listen in there while they're researching, but there's always somebody sitting right here going, 'Ms. ... I don't know what to do about this. This kid is picking on me.' .... First thing I do is, 'OK, we gotta[sic] let things go. It doesn't change who we are and really the way we think about ourselves. One of the first things we need to look at is how do we think about ourselves and then how do we deal with other people and relate to other people knowing who we are.

**Psychomotor.** Researchers (Kaufman, 2001; Klavir & Gorodetsky, 2011) feel that it is imperative that creative traits be nourished. Researchers (Boazman et al., 2012; Daniel & Cox 1988; Fraser, 2003; Kaufman, 2001; Lovecky, 1992; Plucker & Callahan, 2008; Reis & Renzulli, 2010) reported that students allowed to flourish found themselves more motivated and satisfied. With their minds moving faster than their bodies, gifted students need a physical outlet. Answers from parents indicated they agreed. One of the parents mentioned the opportunity her child had to execute hands-on activities instead of the regular classroom worksheets. This provided an avenue of expression for her child and allowed him to be more focused in his regular classes. Students mentioned they liked the gifted class because they were provided more hands on activities. If someone in the gifted class did not understand a concept, the teacher would implement different learning styles to help the student grasp the idea. As Manuel described learning,

Just like, you know, some people do it. They can see it and do it. They need to be hands on. They can do it or they can hear it and do it. They



[teachers] just gotta [sic] figure it out with each student and not many teachers take the time with [students] to figure that all out.

Experts (Baer & Kaufman, 2005; Plucker & Callahan, 2008) in gifted education revealed that the same levels of energy and intensity that can be used for the benefit of gifted children can also be detrimental without a means of release. Creativity can provide an outlet for the fiercely curious gifted child. The students said it best. Rose answered,

I learn a lot more than I normally do whenever I go to Ms. [teacher's name]. Because, especially whenever we do our inquiry projects, which is where you get to choose any subject you want to learn about; and you research that and create and present it in any way you want to. And so we don't normally get to do that in school. We normally, we have like guidelines that we have to choose our projects upon. But it's really cool to do that because then you can learn about whatever you want. I can learn about different things as I've told you a lot, many times. And it can help me explore different areas that I might be interested in but don't know it.

Angela stated,

I just like how they do all of the different things in there. Just like if we did Roman architecture we wouldn't keep just doing that but choosing different things. Like we do math now and so they do different things.

That's what I like— the activities and that.

Gwen voiced her thoughts,

I look forward to it because I get to do fun stuff. But I'm still learning it.

But I'm doing it in a way that the normal teachers don't really do it. Like I

get to do it hands on and they just kind of, when they do it, they just like read it out of the book. But I like the [gifted] more hands on approach because you get to, like it's more fun that way.

**Intuitive.** As previously mentioned, gifted education researchers (Baer & Kaufman, 2005; Plucker & Callahan, 2008) recommend creative expression as an opportunity for precocious youth to vent their intense energy. The students' comments vehemently agreed as they glowingly described various projects they had completed as part of the gifted program. Tyler described a booklet he had created for a Middle Ages study, "It was really cool 'cause my booklet was filled on each page and I barely had room to put a picture." Rose reported about a diary she had completed about a soldier in the Revolutionary War. Tiffany shared about a robot dog she and a partner were completing. She described the various ways they could program the dog. Sandi shared about her daughter's Roman Colosseum and the architectural projects Angela liked to complete. Angela followed up with pride as she told about her Colosseum being on display in the school library. Courtney reported how her son had learned to create a PowerPoint while attending the gifted class.

### **Homestead Public Schools Service Options.**

According to Homestead's Gifted Education Plan, several service options were available for students based on their abilities, interests, and needs. Because it was a larger district, Homestead was able to provide more options for their students. All of the interview participants mentioned various types of services available in the Homestead district.

**Acceleration.** Gifted specialists (Reis & Renzulli, 2010; VanTassel-Baska, 2005), claim that acceleration is a necessity for gifted students. Historically, studies have determined that students learn at different rates and at a variety of levels and should be allowed to progress at their own pace. Susie enthusiastically agreed as she highlighted acceleration first.

We're really good about acceleration. At the beginning of the year, I'm really tapping into teachers, especially when I think about mathematics. You know, how are they doing on their pretests with those first couple of weeks trying to gauge how they're doing because I'm kind of one of those sticklers that, you know, if they've got it—we're moving them on. We've got a couple that are accelerating in math as far as the next grade level, and then even some that accelerate just within the grade level—they're just moving at a quicker pace.

**Curriculum compacting.** Researchers (Feldhusen, 1994; Reis, 2009; Reis & Renzulli, 2010; Winebrenner & Devlin, 2001) proposed compacting as a service option so gifted students could continue through the material at a faster pace. Curriculum compacting is available for Homestead's gifted students. According to their Gifted Education Plan, curriculum compacting is a three step process. Susie explained how it works,

[We begin by] looking at the pretest—what do they already know, giving them extensions for things they do know, and then independent study.

We've got some kids where teachers have come to me, especially in reading, where we've got third and fourth graders reading at a level Z 12, 9th grade equivalent, 'What do I do with them?' So I meet with them, as far

as, trying to get independent studies set up where they're looking at things of interest, which typically are going to involve high level nonfiction texts and then having them produce products that they can share with their peers.

**Advanced Placement and counseling.** Researchers (Daniel & Cox, 1988; Kremers, 2010) found that AP courses were a common method of acceleration for advanced students. The studies revealed that AP courses not only provided a rigorous curriculum, but equipped high school students with college classroom experience while they were still at home. Susie described how the high school gifted coordinator followed up with his students looking at, “who are the gifted kids, and are they taking at least one AP class. And if not sitting down and talking about why.” In this manner he can direct the students toward classes that match their interests. At the middle school level, Susie commented on the recent change where all students have the opportunity to begin taking AP classes. In addition, Susie thought the middle school still tried to cluster group the gifted students.

**Curriculum compacting and classroom extensions.** As revealed earlier, researchers (Feldhusen, 1994; Reis, 2009; Reis & Renzulli, 2010; Winebrenner & Devlin, 2001) proposed compacting as a valuable service option. Susie accordingly provides her site with this option using the Classroom Consultation model. She is able to look at the classroom subject pacing guides and provide classroom extension pieces for students. She related,

“So it’s—it’s taking the objective, but taking it to a higher level. They have those resources ready to use with small groups. So, if a student gets

50% [on the pretest, the teacher and I look for] which objectives do they need the extension on. The teacher knows that for their small group. For the student that gets an 85% or higher, some teachers may let them move on to the next unit. Some instead of doing the lessons, say they get a 95% on their pretest. They're doing the extensions.

**International Baccalaureate Primary Years (IB).** The literature (Laurent-Brennan, 1998) declared that students involved in IB develop connections between the classroom and the real world as they become critical and reflective thinkers. Susie offered this explanation:

[IB is] very much a kind of looking at rigor and things like that. Well, the Primary Years program is for elementary schools. And basically it's an organizational framework for the curriculum. It's based off of six trans-disciplinary themes: Who we are, where we are, place and time, how we express ourselves, how we organize ourselves, sharing the planet. And it's very much based on like conceptual based learning, inquiry based learning. It's very much gifted ed. I mean its huge and that's why I love it. Because, it's looking at those big trans-disciplinary themes, thinking about what we're teaching, and how we can really conceptualize that and connect it back to bigger ideas with that focus on inquiry.

**Proficiency Based Promotion.** Both Susie and the Homestead Gifted Education Plan mentioned Proficiency Based Promotion as another available offering. As previously noted, researchers (Reis & Renzulli, 2010; Van Tassel-Baska, 2005) described Profi-

ciency Based Promotion as a method of acceleration that should be offered as a gifted education option.

**Pull out program.** With the exception of Susie’s Classroom Consultation Model, gifted coordinators in the Homestead district provide a pull out program. Several researchers (Davis et al., 2011; Winebrenner & Devlin, 2001) documented the value of grouping precocious children together. The students likewise mentioned the advantages of the gifted class in addition to sharing some of the activities: advanced math concepts, classroom presentations, completing problem solving activities, critical thinking and logic puzzles, independent projects, math contests, and research opportunities.

Tyler said, “We started doing more things in third grade, but in second grade it was doing lots of problem solving and puzzles...trying to stretch your brain until you can do the bigger projects the next year.”

**Tiered assignments.** The literature (Cukierkorn et al., 2007; Daniel & Cox, 1988; Snowden & Christian, 1998) revealed this model allows students to move from teacher planned and directed activities to more student planned and directed activities. This is another option provided in the Homestead district. Teachers are to use a variety of levels of activities ensuring that students explore topics that build on their prior knowledge and extend that capacity for continued growth. Susie described how this worked at her site,

[The] classroom teachers are really good about differentiating—so offering tiered assignments ... Carolyn Tomlinson's piece [which is] tiered assignments. They look at having students use multiple resources, looking

beyond just the text book, “What else can we pull in?” The classroom teachers do the compacting piece as well.

**Other options.** Homestead’s Gifted Education Plan listed several other service options that were available. Susie provided this description,

[Another] one [is], flexible skills grouping. So really having nice fluid groups, you know, based on their readiness and interests. That service serves them well in reading because we follow the Reader's Workshop model. Then for math it serves them really well because we follow the Math Workshop model. So very much having that mini lesson—eight to ten minutes, whole group, and then breaking off into different groups based on readiness or interests where the teacher can kind of help guide on their needs.

### **Montezuma Public Schools Service Options**

Montezuma Public Schools, although much smaller, was able to provide service options described in the literature to gifted students on a reduced scale. According to the Gifted Education Services description, gifted students in Montezuma were provided services within their classroom during the first grade. A pull-out program was available for students through the sixth grade. From the seventh grade through high school, Advanced Placement classes are available. In addition, students may be screened for Proficiency Based Promotion. Donna reiterated that information,

At the elementary schools there’s [sic] two librarians who take care of the elementary schools. Uh, one of those librarians pulls them out for gifted for an hour a week, and she travels. And then the same thing for the other

one. So there's, you know, there's two [teachers] with additional duties. I'm here [at the intermediate school]. I pull 'em [sic] out three times a week an hour each time. At the junior high, there's not necessarily a gifted program. They go into accelerated classes. The same thing [happens] with the high school. They're pulled out in elementary school, I think in the first grade before they're actually pulled out, they may be given some extra things. Then, of course, we've got the AP classes. Once you get into junior high and high school, its all, you know, AP stuff.

**Curriculum compacting.** While the research (Feldhusen, 1994; Reis, 2009; Reis & Renzulli, 2010; Winebrenner & Devlin, 2001) and the Montezuma Gifted Education Service plan mentions curriculum compacting as a service option, Donna's feelings were, "I don't necessarily want to do that. Because, if I teach what they've already taught in the classroom, they're gonna [sic] be super bored."

**Grade skipping.** While studies (Reis, 1994; Renzulli & Reis, 2009) found that when instruction is below mental development, a child's mental expansion is delayed, halted or gifted students developed poor study habits. Manuel and Donna clearly disagreed with the research. Manuel mentioned his daughter being offered the chance to move to the next grade. His perception was, "There was a time that they were talking about bumping her up a grade. I chose not to do that. I didn't want her to be the little man out."

Donna also emphatically answered negatively toward grade skipping. In general a lot of us [she was identified as gifted when she was a student] need the extra social training. Because it's hard for us to connect with



other people because our brains work differently.... Then to take that and then put additional social stress on them, it's just not right. As well as adding the social components of the hormonal changes that come on earlier when they're not ready for it, and introducing music that we're just not ready for, and movies that we're not ready for. And then you get into high school. Everybody else has a car and that's just... You certainly don't want to send your 13 year old kid off with a boy who's in the same grade who has a car. No! I can become passionate about these particular subjects.

As the research (Kulik, 1992) reported, critics of acceleration feel that children are not physically mature enough to be advanced a grade level. Maslow (1943) refuted this point when he found that once a person gained access into a social network where their basic needs can be met, the same person was more motivated toward growth and development or self-actualization. Acceleration becomes an appropriate method of educating the gifted and talented as upper grade levels provide an occasion for students to acclimate socially at an advanced level. Standardized achievement tests further emphasized that accelerated students out performed non-accelerated peers of the same age and ability.

**Proficiency Based Promotion.** Since Proficiency Based Promotion is a form of acceleration, Donna's feelings voiced agreement with those who criticized it in the literature (Kulik, 1992),

I had kid who [was accelerated] in the first grade. She would come to me when I taught second grade. She would come to me, and I would do indi-

vidual math lessons with her in second grade. She ended up just skipping second or third grade. ... Yeah, she's in the same grade as my kids. So I don't think that socially it was as easy as they thought it was gonna be. And she ended up, she does struggle socially and still does spend some time with my kids who are like a grade below.

**Pull out program.** The literature (McCoy & Rader, 2008) revealed that programs where students were offered an enriched curriculum helped students gain a deeper understanding of classroom topics by providing more intensive study. The Montezuma pull out programs supported that research by providing novelty studies or innovations, ensuring a variety of topics to study, providing higher order thinking skills, allowing for affective development and advancing academic motivation. Interviewees mentioned working on advanced math, advanced vocabulary, brain teasers, class presentations, cooperative learning tasks, educational games, hands on activities, independent projects, logic puzzles, PowerPoint ventures, research projects, and having the opportunity to share their feeling with an experienced gifted educator.

## **Research question 2**

How do stakeholders describe the perceived effectiveness of the gifted programs in meeting the needs of gifted students?

Data analyses revealed the sub themes: definition of giftedness, characteristics, and administrative support. These overlapped the major themes: benefits of gifted education and the stakeholders' perception of effectiveness.

Each district's gifted education policy followed the statutes of the Oklahoma Education of Gifted and Talented Children Act (1981). All four parents mentioned the sup-

port of the administration in providing gifted services for their children. They all were grateful for the opportunity provided to their children regardless of the service delivery model involved. At the individual buildings, Donna and Susie reported the principals recognized something in each teacher that suggested a good fit for working with gifted children. The gifted teachers are allowed to provide the service option they feel is right for their students. When materials are needed, the teachers are provided the necessary items. Parents of the gifted students receive newsletters and are encouraged to ask questions.

Artifacts from the districts verified that each district followed the Gifted and Talented Children Act (1981) by establishing goals for their programs. While only one of the adults could give me the exact goal of either gifted program, they all could point to the district plan where the specific goals were written. The goal for Homestead district according to what the teacher read was

Assessing the intellectual level of identified students and considering the unique learning characteristics of the child, expanding curriculum opportunities to allow gifted students to move through the core curriculum at an appropriate flexible pace, providing differentiated curriculum to meet unique needs appropriately matching support services to each individual child, and structuring learning environments that address the unique needs of gifted students to accommodate a variety of learning grades and styles.

Donna elaborated on the Montezuma goals by adding objectives for her students. Those objectives were to lead the gifted students of Montezuma to where they could produce self-directed learning and guide them to where they could work successfully in the

regular classroom. Research by Renzulli (1988) and Tomlinson (1999) pointed out that differentiated curriculum allows the instructor to determine the level of complexity appropriate for individual students, yielding self-directed learners. The parents felt the goal of the program was to provide advanced learning. Such rationale is in line with research (Hong et al., 2006), which discovered that resource rooms could meet the cognitive development of advanced students. Sandi described the goal:

[The] goal for this is to really capitalize on students that have the propensity to greater learning. That could mean writing. It could be math. It could be cultural advancements. Whatever it is they seem to be a little bit above in their grade level or their age. It would be to really capitalize on that and help them continue to build them and make them better. Encourage engagement and also encourage them to understand the opportunities that may lie ahead and provide a resource for them to continue developing them. I would say to develop the skills that they've identified that they have strengths in.

Time in the gifted program depended upon the type of service provided and availability of the teacher. While several gifted service options (Davis & Rimm, 1989; Nidiffer & Moon, 1994; Reis & Renzulli, 2010; Tomlinson-Keasey & Smith-Winberry, 1983) mention various lengths of time, Renzulli and Reis (2009) stressed that programs for the gifted should be individualized to meet the needs of each student. At Homestead, Susie went into a classroom for short, small group lesson each week, while the pull out teacher pulled them out several times a week for approximately one hour. Another Homestead teacher met with her students for one hour each week, but the time rotated so

students did not miss the same class. Because Rose's entire class had been identified as gifted, her gifted class was at the same time and day each week. Donna was able to pull her students out of the regular classroom for an hour, three days a week, while other teachers in the Montezuma district could meet with the kids only a few minutes weekly. When I asked Angela if there was anything she would do differently with the program if she was in charge, she answered, "More time." When I asked why she wanted more time, she said, "Well, I think it's really fun. And you only get to do it like three time days, [I mean] three times a week. And I think it's just really fun and umm, I—I just like going there."

Everyone, with the exception of Rose, mentioned the groups being small. As the teacher, Donna was able to arrange her schedule accordingly because,

It keeps small classes. They were trying to do it every single day. Well the classes were 15 to 20 at a time. I don't feel like I can get a hold of 'em [sic] at 15 or 20 at a time and I need them smaller. So we're getting at between six and ten. That also makes it to where they can individualize their learning. They don't like being in teams and so, you know, if they choose to be in a pair they can. But these classes are small enough that I have enough resources that each person can individually work.

Because of the service delivery model Susie provides, she kept her groups small.

I also do work with my students in small groups in an effort to help support the classroom teacher in delivering their regular classroom [instruction], so I really try to match my small group lessons with what it is they're doing, just taking it to another level.

Because the focus of this project was to describe how the needs of gifted students in two Oklahoma school districts are being met, I wanted to discover if the stakeholders were satisfied with the service option in which they participated. To discover the outcome of this quandary, I asked a similar question in different ways. The students were asked, “What is the best part about being in the gifted program?” or “If you were in charge of teaching the gifted program what would you do?” A few of them I asked, “On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate your gifted program?”

Angela’s answer to the interview question, “What is the best part about being in the gifted program?” fell in line with the research of Piirto (1993) and Ties (2007) when they described gifted students as having persistent motivation, insatiable curiosity, and advanced learning skills. Angela said,

I really like all of the activities they do with you and how they, umm, Oh, like, I just like how they do all of the different things in there. Just like if I, if we did Roman architecture, we wouldn't keep just doing that but choosing different things like we do math now. And so they do different things. That’s what I like, the activities and that.

Briana’s response to having an instructor who understood gifted students corresponded to the research of Reis and Renzulli (2010). Briana stated, “Ms. Donna, she’s awesome. She is nice, funny. She isn't too strict. She’s lenient and she is like a friend, another kid that’s in the group with us.”

Gwen’s answer aligned with the research (Hong et al., 2006; Kaplan, 1974), “Not necessarily being able to get out of class, but like, being able to get out and, like, do stuff

that, that you wouldn't normally do in a like a regular class. Umm, it's just really, like, fun."

Several students concurred with Feldhusen (1994). Rose declared that she learned more by attending the gifted class. She particularly felt the independent projects provided more learning opportunities since students were able to select their own topic of interest. Once research was completed on the subject, students were able to create a product and present the information to fellow classmates. Tiffany expressed it this way,

Because, like, it makes me feel, like, superior than [sic] everyone else; makes me feel like I'm on top of everyone else and it's always fun in there. Like, even if we're doing hard work me and my friends always have, like, a fun time. And Ms. Donna's really nice. Just leaving class and being with Ms. Donna and, like, hands on projects and stuff like that.

Tyler's description was,

I think the best part is that you get to learn as much [as you] like. You get to go, get out of what you already know and get to the unknown. You know what I mean? And to, like, stretch your brain as far as my teacher can get it. Ms. can get it and to help it grow. Like, as like, since sometimes in my class it's just state this but, like this, but sometimes in Ms. ... it kind of expands.

The interview question I asked the parents and teachers in regard to their feelings about the gifted program was, "What does your school district do well in addressing the needs of gifted?" Their responses corresponded to a plethora of research (Colangelo et al., 2004; Gentry & Owen, 1999; Kulik, 1992; Reis & Renzulli, 2010; Rogers, 1991;

Steenbergen-Hu & Moon, 2011; Tieso, 2003) disclosed in the literature. Courtney replied,

I just think that giving those students an opportunity to work together with one another is really important for them. Because, you know, sometimes whenever you have gifted students in class, well, they might just be, I mean, I've seen them, you know, they're just put with another lower student, like, "help him." You, like, "teach, teach so and so how to do this cause you're smart and you can do it." But I think getting to be in a classroom that all other students that are higher order thinking, then that challenges them on another level. You know, a little bit of the healthy competition, or in [gifted] they can really, kind of, be challenged a little bit more than just in a regular classroom setting.

Donna commented,

I think we do well because we have our own classroom and we have our own supplies, and we have the things that we need. Once we get up there [junior high and high school], we address the AP and we address, you know, getting them ready for those CLEP tests where they can CLEP out of the college classes. Things like that. That's great.

Manuel answered, "I think that they've, that they're advancing farther at a faster pace rather than just generalized education."

Sandi explained,

I think they encourage identification. I think they encourage engagement by the people that we have in charge here as well as in middle school. Try



to get on the same level as the kids in understanding what their strengths are and develop them. I think one of the main things here that I've noticed with the gifted program is that accessibility and availability of the coordinator. So if there's questions, I mean the project they're working on right now for math, the letter came out that said, "Do not help them. Let them try it first and then go back and maybe take a look and see if they got it right. We won't let them go on and fail but see what they're first stab of it is." I had one of them that I didn't really know what the real answer was. Some of the new word problems and things that they solve things [sic] is difficult for me. So I emailed the teacher. I said, "This is what her answer was. I let it go. It seems to me her answer's correct, but I could be wrong. So we're just gonna [sic] let her go with what that was." I immediately got an email on that [said], "She did it correctly. We did this together. Here's the goal and here's what we were looking for." I just think, for me, I feel it's like a team effort. If there's a reason for a concern or if there's a concern on their end I feel like there's access both ways.

Susie described her feelings about the gifted program:

I'm just trying to think where I'm going to start. You know, I think one of the things we do well is having the teacher be the service. You know the main source of delivery but providing them with the training in order to be able to do that. I feel like we do well, umm, when I started every single teacher went through, my goodness, I don't know how many hours it was. It was hours and hours and hours of differentiation training. It was a mul-

multiple day, full day experience that we went through so we were all trained in and we all followed the book by Carolyn Ann Tomlinson. We haven't been doing that here in the past couple of years but you know I'm really thoughtful about where I place my gifted students. So the majority of my teachers have been through that training. I think we do a nice job. Yeah, I'd say supporting the teachers. I feel like that's where we do a really good job and meeting the needs in the classroom. I feel like I have the freedom to do what I need to do to meet the needs of the kids.

Wendy replied,

I think they keep us fairly well informed. I think they, umm, I think they tell us as they get older. I think that there is more, umm, you know, it's hard for me to know because I'm such an advocate for my kids. I don't know. I, when I think about it, I don't know how much would have happened if I hadn't been involved. So I think they throw a lot of opportunities out there but sometimes you have to kind of look for them. Umm, I think the best thing they do is that they do provide, I mean if you want to do Tiddlywinks, they have a Tiddlywinks club. If, you know, they have everything at [Homestead High School] because it's such a big school. Umm, so I think that's probably the thing that is the best as far as any kind of giftedness or anything that you're interested in. They have everything but you have to look for it. It's not super, well, not publicized all the time.

Another interview question that supported this research question was, “How effective has the gifted program been in meeting the needs of your children?” Courtney answered,

I think it's been effective in that that he, umm, well—ok, last year we had discipline issues sometimes as far as because he had so much free time in class. And he would get in trouble for talking and not doing what he was supposed to be doing. And this year we've had none of that because he's busy because he's in class and then he gets to come here [gifted class]. He can get out some of that extra energy and do the activities that he needs to do. And so it gives him an outlet and he's challenged. He's not getting into trouble in class because he's done in five seconds and, you know, doesn't have anything else to do. So that's been good for him.

Sandi described her feelings:

Right now very, very good at meeting those needs. From Angela's perspective it would just be from this year. Really getting her engaged and looking at things differently. They have to have team effort and really rely on other people's strengths. She hasn't had a chance to do that outside of athletics before now and I think that'll be important whether it be debate, whether it's engineering camp or whether it's fashion design, or whatever. I think kids need to learn early on those different skill sets working independently and as a team. So that's [gifted] provided that for her and also thoughts of beyond checking off the box or just homework. So that getting a dictionary, going to the library and looking at encyclopedias, even

though they're antiquated, still it's looking at all resources available to you. I think that they have totally met our needs to this point there.

Wendy answered,

I'd say, I don't know how you'd quantify that exactly. Umm, 75% effective probably? I mean, I think there's a lot more that they could've done if they'd had more man power and, umm, I mean, I would have loved for them to do some field trips or, you know, stuff like that. And I feel like it's, they can only do so much so with what they have had to work with. I think they've done pretty well.

Each year, according to the Education of Gifted and Talented Children Act (1981), every Oklahoma school is to develop a plan to serve their advanced students. That plan must include a means for providing services to identified gifted students, placement identification process, and a method to evaluate the program. I asked the teachers, "How does your district determine the effectiveness of its gifted education programs?" Susie answered,

I feel like that is-probably is a ... parent surveys or teacher surveys about services. That's something we probably need to do a better job of. Umm, you know, at the end of the year we do have teachers do a, umm, an evaluation of each student just to see if they feel like gifted services are a good fit. Umm, so that's when we look at each student, umm you know. But I feel like that is probably something we need to do a better job of as far as really data wise, you know. OK. How, how could we evaluate that? I think, you know, the qualitative you know, I feel like, you know, each

nine weeks a teacher gives me a newsletter of what it is they are doing in the classroom so I can very much look at that and see, 'Ok, qualitatively, you know what are we doing to meet their needs?' But when I look at, like, satisfaction ratings or things like that, that's something we need to probably grow on.

I posed the question to Donna a little differently, "On a scale of 1 to 10 how would you evaluate your gifted program? Her response was,

Here? It's at a five. I know that there are things that I could do better, but I'm working on the constant change. So that's a decision making things [sic] that we need to do. Maybe a six, but I definitely like to-I don't know. You can always do better.

### **Research question 3**

My final question to direct this project was, "What other truths can be revealed in this study?"

Responses from the parents demonstrated they wanted the best for their children and were interested in advocating for them. Sandi commented, "My goal is to provide her with whatever resources she needs to be successful and to live on her [own]." However, when I asked the parents specific questions about gifted education, the response from each was, "I don't know."

This question revealed that most of the participants felt like the gifted education experts (Renzulli, 1976; Renzulli & Reis, 2009; Riley & Karnes, 2005) that a more individualized form of programming would be the best method for providing services to gifted students. Comments from the adults included: "I think it needs to be treated more as a

special education program.” “I just, I really wish they did have the individualized training though.” “I think that would probably help out a lot of students even the ones that weren’t gifted, maybe more hands on projects.”

I asked the students, “If you were in charge of teaching gifted students, what would you do differently?” Four of them aligned with Renzulli and Reis (2009) as well; that they would like to complete more independent projects. “I would also do the independent project but I would do it more often, too, because I think that maybe two or three of them would be even better because then you can learn about a few topics that you want to learn about.” “I would probably just do more projects. Umm, I mean, if I, like, was a teacher and I saw some of the students’, like, perspective[s], then I would want to do more projects.” “I’d let them study, I wouldn’t, they could study the, uh, people in my group they would study ... anything they want.” “I would, maybe like, do the same thing a couple of times because a lot of the kids like what we do and want to do it more.”

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter provided a description of two Oklahoma public school district gifted programs through the eyes of their stakeholders. Such description provided the data for this particular study. Once all of the data was transcribed, continual analysis of the material revealed similar responses that could be coded, grouped, and arranged into themes. Those themes revealed: the stakeholders definitions of giftedness, characteristics and needs of gifted children, how two districts support the needs of their gifted students, the service options available for advanced children, regular classroom activities, the stakeholders’ perception of how well the program is doing in meeting the needs of the gifted students, the benefits of the service option provided for the participants, and what the stakeholders felt could be done differently. The data revealed that the stakeholders’ defi-

nitions, characteristics, gifted student needs, several service options, the benefits and possible improvements of the programs and how the data aligned with gifted education research. One of the parents and one of the gifted coordinators did not agree with the research that acceleration was an appropriate service option for advanced students. While both districts mentioned a program evaluation in accordance with the Education of Gifted and Talented Children Act (1981), Homestead Public Schools had not completed a program evaluation by their stakeholders in the four years Susie was a gifted coordinator.

The final summary of this study, including conclusions, implications, and recommendations for future research are contained in Chapter 5.

## CHAPTER V

### FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Oklahoma public schools are required to provide gifted children educational programs such as “special instructional programs, support services, unique educational materials, learning setting and other educational services which differentiate, supplement and support the regular educational program in meeting the needs of the gifted and talented child” (Education of Gifted and Talented Children Act, 1981, Section 904). All Oklahoma school districts are required to screen and identify gifted students according to their needs. Besides screening and identifying gifted students, school districts are to provide “special programs, support services, unique educational materials, learning setting and other educational services which differentiate, supplement and support the regular educational program” (Education of Gifted and Talented Children Act, 1981, Section 904). Therefore, school districts that do not have “special programs” (Education of Gifted and Talented Children Act, 1981) to serve gifted students are required to address gifted needs through some or many methods of differentiation. Those options include, but are not limited to acceleration, differentiated curriculum, enrichment activities, and mentorships. According to the Act (1981), all districts are required to provide an Annual Report of Gifted and Talented Education to the State Department of Education. However, these individual reports tell researchers little about the state of gifted education across



Oklahoma as a whole. The purpose of this study was to describe how the needs of Oklahoma gifted students are being met in two districts at the elementary and middle school levels. This chapter provides a summary of the study, interpretation of the findings, conclusions drawn from the findings, and offers recommendations for future studies on the topic of gifted education in Oklahoma.

### **Summary of the Study**

As I sought to gain an understanding of the phenomena studied, a descriptive case study approach was used with stakeholders from two different Oklahoma districts. A major source of my data came from interviews. The stakeholders interviewed included two teachers of gifted students, four parents of gifted children, and six students enrolled in a gifted program for a total of 12 interviews. These participants volunteered to share their experiences in gifted education. I conducted each adult interview at a location of their choosing and conducted student interviews at the respective schools. This was necessary to achieve a comfortable environment for open dialogue. I asked open-ended questions seeking to determine an understanding of gifted students, their need for more challenging exercises, what services were provided, and how effective those services were in meeting the needs of gifted students. I then transcribed each interview verbatim. Additional data were collected from observations during the interviews and artifacts collected from each district regarding gifted educational programs. Those artifacts included the Homestead district gifted education plan, and the Montezuma gifted education policies and services information.

All of the collected data were viewed through the lens of Montgomery's Holistic Education model (Montgomery et al., 2012; Montgomery, 2013). The final phase of the

study began using NVivo 10 for data analyses. Analysis of the data using NVivo 10 proved to be theoretically driven rather than theme based, making an additional review of the data necessary. My second attempt to review the data using open coding once again produced themes that centered around the theoretical framework. Those themes correlated to the research questions, the needs of gifted students as revealed in Montgomery's Holistic Education model (Montgomery et al., 2012; Montgomery, 2013), and the stakeholders' perceptions of gifted education in two Oklahoma public school districts. Additional reflection was obtained through triangulation of the data with the literature and my experiences in gifted education.

### **Findings**

According to a review of the literature in Chapter 2, the conventional wisdom of the general public historically is that gifted children will get an education (Gallagher, 1991). However, the research (Reis & Renzulli, 2009) revealed that classroom teachers have not received training in meeting the needs of gifted students. Additionally, 84% of the time precocious children are in a regular classroom, they receive the same instruction and materials as the other students. Studies (Cornell, 1992; Tuttle & Becker, 1980) revealed many characteristics of gifted children. However diverse the student characteristics, Reis and Renzulli (2009) pointed out several common needs beyond the cognitive desires of these young people. Those additional attributes to be met include social, emotional, creative, and physical needs. The Education of Gifted and Talented Children Act (1981) requires each Oklahoma school district to provide "special instructional programs, support services, unique educational materials, learning setting and other educational services that differentiate, supplement, and support the regular educational program in meet-

ing the needs of the gifted and talented child.” Montgomery’s Holistic Education model (Montgomery et al., 2012; Montgomery, 2013) suggests the educational needs of the whole student be addressed through their social, emotional, creative, cognitive and physical activities. In order to meet the needs of the gifted child, all quadrants are necessary. Therefore, according to the literature and The Education of Gifted and Talented Children Act (1981), all Oklahoma public school districts are required and should provide educational services that meet the needs of their gifted students.

From the themes that emerged as I reviewed the data, the following information was revealed.

### **Psychomotor**

Both districts provided for the body (doing, psychomotor domain, physical development) by allowing students to complete hands on projects such as building robots, completing projects to go with an independent project, or creating a structure to share with their classmates. Such activity afforded the students an outlet for expression. Those opportunities assisted the student in being more attentive in the regular classroom. One parent mentioned the opportunity her child had to perform hands on activities instead of the regular classroom worksheets. This provided an outlet for her child and allowed him to be more focused in his regular classes.

### **Affective**

The literature revealed that gifted students needed counseling in order to deal with social acceptance, sensitivity, emotional excitability, high expectations, and perfectionistic tendencies (Janos et al, 1985). According to Montgomery’s model (Montgomery et al., 2012; Montgomery, 2013), this portion would pertain to the heart. Both districts pro-

vided counseling for their gifted students. Because of the pull out method of service delivery, Montezuma had the opportunity to provide individual counseling to gifted students. Affective lessons were taught briefly at the beginning of the year by one service provider in the Homestead district.

### **Cognitive**

All of the stakeholders shared evidence of how their district was providing for the mind section of Montgomery's model (Montgomery et al., 2012; 2013). The participants agreed the regular curriculum did not provide the challenges gifted students need. While both districts identified students for gifted services based on additional sources to the ability test, as recommended by The Education of Gifted and Talented Children Act (1981), both educators agreed the teacher pleasing students were not necessarily the children that needed gifted services. The instructors felt the truly gifted youngsters were those with a mind that kept going while their body tried to keep up. The students felt they needed the program because they were ahead in their classes; they grasped concepts quickly; they also persevered through tasks and worked harder than other classmates.

### **Intuitive**

According to Montgomery's Holistic Education model (Montgomery et al., 2012; Montgomery, 2013), in order to attain holistic development an awareness of the arts is necessary. All of the students mentioned some type of project they produced that made the gifted class fun. The parents glowingly discussed topics their children had studied in the gifted class and the products they had created. Teachers described how they planned extension units or topics the children could investigate and manufacture a product as evidence of their learning.

## **Research question 1**

How do stakeholders of gifted programs describe ways that services for gifted meet students' needs? In regard to services designed to meet the needs of gifted individuals, evidence demonstrated a wide variety of available options depending on the size of the district and available funding. Homestead Public Schools offered a large selection of options. The stakeholders of the Homestead gifted program mentioned acceleration, curriculum compacting, tiered assignments, differentiated instruction, flexible grouping, and Proficiency Based Promotion. The Montezuma Public School district was able to offer similar options on a reduced scale.

Clark (2013) described acceleration as an educational intervention that either seeks early entrance at the kindergarten or university level; moving through age graded classes in less time; or moving through the curriculum at a faster pace. VanTassel-Baska (2005) stated that acceleration should be one of the “nonnegotiables” of gifted programs, yet one of the instructors and one of the parents strongly responded negatively toward grade skipping students. That teacher also did not believe in curriculum compacting for students. As two parents were describing their individual child's involvement in the gifted program, the term acceleration was mentioned. However, within the context of the parents' responses, acceleration appeared to be interchangeable with a more challenging curriculum.

All of the stakeholders in this study—parents, students, teachers—supplied similar thoughts on the benefits of gifted opportunities. The impression was the pull out option for gifted services provided a more challenging curriculum than the regular classrooms. The experts (Davis et al., 2011; McCoy & Rader, 2008; Reis & Renzulli, 2010;

Tomlinson-Keasey & Smith-Winberry, 1983; Winebrenner & Devlin, 2001) agree that a pull out method of services does provide precocious youth with more challenging curriculum than the regular classroom.

The stakeholders and artifacts agreed that gifted youth were provided some independent study activities. The research (Betts, 2004; Powers, 2008) sympathizes with this thought as independent studies allow students to scrutinize, discuss a topic, develop their own conclusions, promote problem solving and critical thinking, assist them in understanding their own values, and support in determining their decisions.

### **Research question 2**

How do stakeholders describe the perceived effectiveness of the gifted programs in meeting the needs of gifted students? Overall, the stakeholders believed their respective gifted programs were effective in meeting the needs of the gifted learners. As mentioned earlier, the research concurs that enriched educational opportunities do benefit advanced students. The students considered their particular enrichment classes to be effective because each opportunity provided the children with fun, challenging learning experiences (Colangelo et al, 2004; Reis & Renzulli, 2010; Tomlinson-Keasey & Smith-Winberry, 1983), a teacher who understood their giftedness and their differences (Mills, 2003), variations in class (Montgomery, 2004; Nidiffer & Moon, 1994; Reis, 1994), and opportunities to learn about topics the students selected themselves (Renzulli, 1988; Tomlinson, 1999). Concerns from the students dealt with having to leave regular education instruction, needing to work on projects outside of class, wanting more time in the gifted program, and desiring to complete more independent projects.

The parents were thankful their children had the opportunity to participate in the gifted program. Parental opinions revealed the classes were effective because their children had an opportunity to work with other students of the same academic rank (Siegle, 2015; Winebrenner & Devlin, 2001); the challenges were on a higher level than in the regular classroom; teachers communicated what was happening in the gifted program; learning opportunities included teamwork and independent projects; and their students received additional learning experiences not available to all individuals (Betts, 2004; McCoy & Rader, 2008; Powers, 2008).

Concerns from the parents involved wanting gifted students to learn through field trips, desiring earlier identification of participants (Clark, 2013; Pfeiffer & Petscher, 2008), and providing more individualized instruction (Keefe & Jenkins, 2005; Van Tassel-Baska, 2005). The educators felt the gifted services were well supported by the districts and building administration; resources were available as necessary; and there was freedom to provide necessary gifted opportunities as deemed essential by the instructor (Mills, 2003). The teachers expressed concerns that the regular classroom instructors did not know how to identify gifted students (Bianco, Harris, Garrison-Wade, & Leech, 2011) or how to provide challenging learning opportunities for gifted students during regular classes.

### **Research question 3**

What other truths can be revealed in this study? Based on the responses, this project revealed that most of the stakeholders felt a more individualized program would best serve the needs of gifted students. Experts (Keefe & Jenkins, 2005; Van Tassel-Baska, 2005) concur that providing individualized learning opportunities is a beneficial use of

time for advanced students. Responses from the parents included desiring the gifted education to be similar to the special education programs, and more individualized attention. One parent suggested that individualized instruction would “help out a lot of students, even the ones that weren’t gifted,” to which several studies (Gentry & Owen, 1999; Kulik, 1992; Rogers, 1991; Tieso, 2003) agree.

Four of the six students wished to complete more individualized learning opportunities. Not only did they desire more projects, the children wanted to study more topics based on their individual interests. Similar findings were revealed in the literature (Ren-zulli & Reis, 2009).

The literature review, the Education of Gifted and Talented Children Act (1981), the artifacts, and the interviews all mentioned that gifted students require and should have their needs met. Noticeably lacking from the interviews and district artifacts was a needs assessment other than for academic skills (Tomlinson, 1999). While the interviewed teachers had an understanding of what gifted students need, both having been identified as gifted during their grade school years and both having read expert advice on instruction of gifted students, neither produced evidence beyond the discussions about a needs assessment other than academic measurements. All of the students and the parents interviewed mentioned academic needs of advanced students. Sandi did mention that her daughter assesses people and situations differently than do other children, but did not mention this as a need to be addressed by the school. The parent who was a classroom teacher shared the academic need of keeping gifted students in her classroom challenged, but the other domains of the gifted student were not discussed.



## **Conclusions**

The outcome of this study indicated that the studied districts do provide services to their gifted students. The preferred method of service at the elementary and intermediate schools was pull-out programs. However, several other options were available depending on the size of the district and the availability of the gifted coordinator. As students progressed to the middle schools and high school, those services were limited to Advanced Placement courses, with the exception of a cluster group at one middle school.

All of the stakeholder groups agreed that the gifted program provided a more challenging curriculum with hands on activities not available in the regular education classes. While the parent who was also a classroom teacher mentioned differentiating for her gifted students, the other parents and none of the students described challenging opportunities in the regular classroom unless initiated by the child. The only regular education classrooms where differentiated instruction did occur was where the gifted coordinator was able to go into classes and work with advanced students in small groups.

This study did find evidence that the needs of gifted children as revealed in the literature are being addressed. The Education of Gifted and Talented Children Act (1981) and both districts' plans for gifted education state that gifted students will be provided with services that meet their individual unique needs. Yet, there was no evidence that the gifted students had been assessed regarding their unique needs nor that a program was specifically designed to address those requirements. This is an area of concern since the stakeholders and the literature revealed that an individualized program was the best option for meeting the needs of advanced students.

Another disparaging note revealed by this study was the attitude regarding acceleration. While VanTassel-Baska (2005) stated that acceleration should be one of the “nonnegotiables” of gifted programs, one of the instructors and one of the parents strongly responded negatively toward grade skipping students. The teacher also did not believe in curriculum compacting for students as she felt it only added more work to students who already understood the concepts. Therefore, it would be in the best interest of advanced children for parents and teachers of gifted to be made aware of appropriate acceleration and the benefits associated with this form of service option.

Finally, all of the stakeholders were grateful for the opportunities provided by gifted education programs. There was agreement that gifted programs are worth the importance that is revealed in the literature (Colangelo et al, 2004; Reis & Renzulli, 2010; Tomlinson-Keasey & Smith-Winberry, 1983). Each stakeholder mentioned activities that corresponded with the whole realm of Montgomery’s Holistic Education model (Montgomery et al., 2012; Montgomery, 2013). Those components demonstrate that each district is providing services for their advanced students. This study revealed compelling stakeholder support for gifted education in these two Oklahoma school districts.

### **Recommendations for Practice**

While there is strong support, the study also exhibited room for growth in several areas. With additional research, educational leaders can continue to develop and improve the gifted education opportunities within Oklahoma. Future research should focus on specific issues that will be beneficial to and help structure gifted services and its lasting impact on precocious youth.

The unique needs of gifted students are referred to in the literature, the Education of Gifted and Talented Children Act (1981), and in the data, but there was little evidence beyond the cognitive realm that other needs within these two districts had been assessed. Based on this information, districts need more information regarding the psychomotor, psychological, creative, and social needs of gifted children. In order to meet the unique needs of the gifted students, each one should be regularly given a needs assessment, beyond the cognitive realm, in order for a program to be established that addresses those strengths and weaknesses.

Another recommendation is for district or building administrators to provide professional development opportunities regarding differentiating instruction and how school districts can implement customized education practices. Research from the literature cited in Chapter 2 (Daniel & Cox, 1988; Reis, 1994; Renzulli & Reis, 2009; VanTassel-Baska, 2005) clearly indicated the inadequacies of the regular classroom to provide for the needs of gifted students. The students' request for more time with the gifted teacher exhibited their desire for more challenges. Parents and children alike suggested more independent learning opportunities and hands-on projects. Precocious youth require differentiated lessons throughout their entire educational careers even when they are not in the gifted classroom. Professional development in curriculum differentiation and instruction appears to have been pushed aside over the past few years. If such training is not available to general education instructors, then advanced learners need to be placed with classroom educators who know how to provide a variety of challenging activities to their students.

While independent learning opportunities and hands-on projects furnish advanced students with academic challenges, these students require an individualized program that matches their education to their needs. As previously mentioned, gifted students should be assessed regularly to identify their strengths and weaknesses in relation to the needs revealed in this study. Educators would then be able to develop an education program specifically designed to meet those needs.

While there is strong research support for acceleration (Colangelo et al, 2004; Kulik, 1992; Reis & Renzulli; 2010; The National Commission on Excellence, 1983, VanTassel-Baska, 2005), there seems to be limited understanding of how it is applied. The OSDE and research from the literature recommends acceleration and proficiency based promotion as a programming option, yet this study demonstrates that such an opportunity is discouraged by some teachers and parents of gifted youth. While students in one district were allowed to work at a faster pace through their class assignments, they could work only to the end of the yearly expected exercises before having to sit through the same lessons and read a book while the other student completed their tasks. As mentioned by Wood et al. (2010), all stakeholders of gifted education need to be informed regarding the benefits of this option from gifted education experts' research.

This study revealed a lack of parental knowledge regarding giftedness and gifted education. Several questions to parents regarding information about gifted services received an "I don't know" response, or I was asked how I would answer the question. While parents from both districts were satisfied with the communication efforts of the gifted instructors, it would serve schools well to increase awareness regarding gifted education in general.

## **Limitations of the Study Design**

The OSDE defined a gifted child as one who “demonstrated potential abilities of high performance capability and needing differentiated or accelerated education services” (Education of Gifted and Talented Children Act, 1981, para. 1). The Act (1981, para. 1) further states these students have “demonstrated abilities of high performance of capability.” By application, this includes those students who score in the top three percent on any nationally standardized test of intellectual ability and may include students who excel in one or more of the following areas: intellectual ability, creative thinking ability, leadership ability, visual or performing arts ability, and specific academic ability. This study was limited to students who qualified for gifted education services based on that definition. Therefore, the focus was on students of high intellectual ability in general. Attributes such as demographics or additional exceptionalities were not addressed.

Callahan (2004) pointed out that evaluations cannot be used “for generalizability to other settings or with the expectation of expanding the general knowledge base” (p. xxvii-xxviii). She further stated that most evaluations are for pointing out a specific district’s achievements in satisfying the needs of their particular gifted students. Therefore, this project would be limited in its scope of discovery by virtue of the fact that the interviewees’ opinions cannot be generalized to other districts, programs, or their stakeholders.

Qualitative research produces limitations because it seeks to describe a phenomenon rather than report a situation (Merriam, 1998). I found limitations for the interview portion of the study related to the distance between the participating districts. Because each district was approximately two hours from my home, all of the interviews for each

district were scheduled within one day. This made it difficult to transcribe each interview immediately upon completion. I did begin transcription and analyses of interviews as soon as possible after leaving the first district and before my scheduled appointments with the second. NVivo 10 provided assistance in immediate dissemination of the data. However, only I could determine the amount of time spent on the material. As the report was written, it became clear that further analysis was necessary. Each subject was asked to answer honestly and truthfully. Such truthfulness and accuracy from the interviews, provided further limitations as some subjects were concerned about confidentiality.

Many programs are available to gifted students in Oklahoma through private organizations and universities. Private programs include College for Young Scholars, Gifted and Talented Lyceum, Horizons Unlimited Gifted and Talented Academy and International Aerospace Academy, among others. Because the scope of this project was to describe how the needs of Oklahoma gifted students are being met according to the Education of Gifted and Talented Children Act of 1981, I did not include private service delivery model implementation. This study was limited to two gifted program options provided for students through two Oklahoma public school districts.

### **Recommendations for Research**

This study dealt specifically with the perspective of gifted education from the stakeholders of two Oklahoma school districts. While both districts were very different in many areas, future research could expand the knowledge base about Oklahoma's gifted education programs by interviewing stakeholder groups from all districts. Such research would provide a more effective implementation of gifted services ensuring a more satisfactory product.

The qualitative nature of this study provided a deeper understanding of specific stakeholders. Collecting quantitative data from all districts would allow for all stakeholders to provide input regarding the effectiveness of gifted education as opposed to a limited number. Such research would also collect data from districts that provide gifted services without the advantage of a teacher assigned to that position. This study focused only on the districts with a gifted instructor. Additionally, a quantitative study of this nature could provide statistical information about those served including the cultural diversity and economically disadvantaged high ability students.

Because one of the parents interviewed was a classroom teacher, this study was able to gain a brief snapshot of gifted education from her perspective. However, adding teachers and administrators to the research would provide additional depth to such a project and indicate how pull out students compare to those being served in the regular classroom. Classroom observations would indicate how the expectations of the stakeholders align with the teachers' practices. Supplemental artifacts such as shadowing gifted students or obtaining work samples from them might produce valuable insight into the experiences of precocious youth.

Other specific issues revealed by this study could be considered for future information dissemination. For example, data regarding the pros and cons of acceleration or curriculum compacting could be distributed to parents, along with counseling, to alleviate their trepidation. Only then the idea of acceleration and whether it truly is beneficial to students or detrimental could be determined. This is an example of truly needs based gifted education.

## **Chapter Summary**

This study was designed to describe services provided gifted students in two Oklahoma school districts. By interviewing stakeholders of gifted education, obtaining artifacts from two districts, and analyzing that information, this project revealed the value of gifted education services to advanced students in two Oklahoma school districts. Such information could be used by school administrators and policy makers in their decision making processes. Knowing how stakeholders and voters feel about such opportunities gives school leadership the information necessary to determine how to address the problems and improve educational experiences of gifted students. Overall, these findings provide a favorable view of gifted education programs in two Oklahoma school districts.



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## APPENDIX A

### Teacher Interview Questions

1. What influenced you to become involved with gifted education?
2. What characteristics suggest that gifted students need a curriculum different from that for other students?
3. How do students qualify for gifted services? Are there alternative methods of placement?
4. What types of services can be provided for gifted students in the State of Oklahoma/your district?
5. How does the administration at your school/building support gifted education services?
6. What are the goals of the gifted program in your school/district?
7. What does your school/district do well in addressing the needs of gifted and talented students?
8. How does your district determine the effectiveness of its gifted education programs?



## APPENDIX B

### Parent Interview Questions

1. Do gifted and talented students require specialized services?
2. What characteristics does your child have that suggests he needs a curriculum that is different from other students?
3. What types of services are provided for gifted students in your district?
4. How does the administration at your school/building support gifted education services?
5. What are the goals of the gifted program in your district?
6. How effective has the gifted program been in meeting the needs of your child?
7. What does your school/district do well in addressing the needs of gifted and talented students?

## APPENDIX C

### Student Interview Questions

1. What does it mean to be gifted?
2. How did you get into the gifted program?
3. What characteristics do you think suggest a student needs a curriculum that is different from other students?
4. What is the greatest challenge about being gifted?
5. What is the best part about being involved in the gifted program?
5. If you were in charge of teaching gifted students, what would you do differently?

## APPENDIX D

### Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date: Monday, November 03, 2014  
IRB Application No ED14160  
Proposal Title: A Case Study of Gifted Education in Oklahoma

Reviewed and Expedited  
Processed as:

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved Protocol Expires: 11/2/2015

Principal  
Investigator(s):

Marcia Rains	Bernita Krumm
625 Country Side Trail	310 Willard
Edmond, OK 73012	Stillwater, OK 74078

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The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

☒ The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval. Protocol modifications requiring approval may include changes to the title, PI advisor, funding status or sponsor, subject population composition or size, recruitment, inclusion/exclusion criteria, research site, research procedures and consent/assent process or forms
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of the research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Dawnett Watkins 219 Cordell North (phone: 405-744-5700, dawnett.watkins@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,



Hugh Crethar, Chair  
Institutional Review Board

## VITA

Marcia Rains

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Thesis: A CASE STUDY FOCUSING ON THE NNED FOR GIFTED EDUCATION  
IN OKLAHOMA

**Major Field:** School Administration

### **Biographical:**

#### **Education:**

Completed the requirements for the Doctor Education in School Administration at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in July, 2015.

Completed the requirements for the Master of Science in Special Education at Ft. Hays State University, Hays, Kansas in 1994.

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education at St. Mary of the Plains College, Dodge City, Kansas in 1992.

#### **Experience:**

Enrichment Specialist: Edmond Public Schools  
1001 W. Danforth, Edmond, OK 73012 2002 - present

Gifted Facilitator: Guymon Public Schools  
801 N. Beaver, Guymon, OK 73942 1999 - 2002

Special Education Teacher: Guymon Public Schools  
801 N. Beaver, Guymon, OK 73942 1997 - 1999

#### **Professional Memberships:**

Oklahoma Association of Gifted, Creative and Talented  
Cooperative Council for Oklahoma School Administration