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Special Schools and Programs Network National Association of Gifted Children

Ellen Honeck, PhD
Chair
honecks@comcast.net

Anne Johnson
Chair-Elect
ajohnson@esacadiana.com

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Low-Income Gifted Students' Perceived Long-Term Effects of Participating in a Summer Enrichment Program

Corina R. Kaul M.A., Susan K. Johnsen, PhD., & Mary M. Witte, EdD.

"I hope that when I have children they can be in a program like Project Promise. It does so much mentally and emotionally and academically and it creates great memories and friendships that last a lifetime." (Former participant)

Low-income, high-ability students have the greatest need for services to optimize their potential, but are at the greatest risk for being overlooked (VanTassel-Baska, 1998). Low-income students are underrepresented in gifted education (Baldwin, 2002; Worrell, Szarko & Gabelko, 2000). They are at-risk for rising to and staying at upper achievement levels (Olszewski-Kubilius & Clarenbach, 2012; Wyner, Bridgeland, & DiIulio, 2007) and are less likely to attend and complete postsecondary education compared to their higher-income peers (Jack Kent Cooke, 2015b). VanTassel-Baska and Stambaugh (2007) referred to these learners as *overlooked gems* that need support to flourish to their greatest potential.

The National Summit of Low-Income, High Ability Learners urged researchers to share program models and components that effectively cultivate talent and promote academic achievement (Olszewski-Kubilius & Clarenbach, 2012). Although many universities provide talent enrichment programs for school-age youth, few programs report any formal assessment (Subotnik, Olszewski-Kubilius, & Worrell, 2011) and little, if any, research regarding most effective program elements (Clasen, 2006; Levine & Nidiffer, 1996).

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REMINDER

The SS & P Network is seeking nominations for a chair-elect for 2016-2018.

Nominations and questions may be directed to

[Ellen Honeck](#) or

[Anne Johnson](#).

Deadline: April 11, 2016

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Low-Income Gifted Students' Perceived Long-Term Effects of Participating in a Summer Enrichment Program (continued from p. 1)

The purpose of this study, therefore, was to examine low-income gifted students' perceptions regarding the effects of Project Promise. Specifically, the guiding research questions were:

1. To what degree did participants perceive that Project Promise influenced their educational/career decisions, personal development, and social relationships?

2. To what degree participants perceive that Project Promise had a generational influence on their family of origin and/or their future family?

Context: University for Young People's Project Promise Program Description

Baylor's University for Young People (UYP) is a university-based summer enrichment program for high-ability students in grades 4 to 12. All participants must be identified as gifted by their local school or through the UYP alternative identification process, which considers parent and teacher surveys, recent achievement and aptitude scores, a student product sample, and/or potential in a domain.

"...a strategic feature of the program is the mentor-led cohort groups of 10 to 11 students."

Project Promise students are a subset of UYP attendees who meet HUD Federal low-income eligibility requirements. Since 1999, over 300 low-income, high ability students have been provided scholarships funded by a City of Waco HUD Community Development Block Grant. Scholarships include tuition, daily transportation, and complimentary lunch. Once admitted, Project Promise students receive annual scholarships until the summer before their senior year of high school as long as the family's income remains within federal financial limits.

Approximately one-third of the students who attend UYP annually are Project Promise students (i.e., 55 to 65 students of the total 120-170 student population). Parent meetings encourage high expectations and provide infor-

mation on higher education. When an enrollment opening occurs, siblings of participants are given first priority.

The overarching goal of Project Promise is to prepare low-income high-ability students for higher education through exposure to a university campus, enriching course content, and the development of positive peer and mentor relationships (Kaul, Johnsen, Witte, & Saxon, 2015). Whether students are walking to class, eating lunch in the dining hall, or playing soccer, they are surrounded by collegians and immersed in a college environment. Gifted educators or university professors teach STEM, fine arts, liberal arts, or life skill courses. During each weeklong session, students select a morning and an afternoon course that corresponds with their interests, personal strengths, and career goals. The schedule also purposefully includes daily socialization time in order to promote friendships with other high-ability peers. Finally, a strategic feature of the program is the mentor-led cohort groups of 10 to 11 students. Serving as role models, mentors encourage students to aspire to higher education through conversations and written daily mentor/student dialog journals. Intentionally building relationships. The mentor also facilitates peer interaction as the students eat, play, and participate in team building activities.

Methodology

Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected using an online survey instrument in 2014. In 2015, a short follow-up survey collected additional information on participants' paths and perceptions of higher education.

Instrument. The original online survey, based on Lee, Olszewski-Kubilus, and Paternal's (2009) model was designed to address the participants' perceptions of the educational, career, social, personal, and generational effects of Project Promise (Kaul, 2014).

Participants. The population for this study included all adult (18 years or older) individuals who had attended Project Promise for three or more years. Of the 128 individuals who met these criteria, 89 participants completed the online survey (70% response rate). All Project Promise participants

were raised in low-income homes, and over 80% of the participants represented gifted minorities including 52% Hispanic and 29% Black. Survey respondents were representative of the total population with respect to sex, race, ethnicity, and age.

Results

Education. Participants reported that Project Promise courses prompted them to select more challenging courses in middle and high school, prepared them for higher education, influenced their decision to attend higher education, and broadened their career options. Every participant successfully completed high school, and over 94% ($n = 84$) of the participants attended postsecondary education. Over half of the participants reported attending a 4-year university ($n = 49$) with 33% having earned a terminal degree as of summer 2015 (6% associate, 4% technical school, 19% bachelor's degree, and 4% master's degree). An additional 40% were attending post-secondary or graduate school at the time of the survey.

Social. Project Promise relationships with peers, instructors, and mentors had positive effects on participants. Participants perceived that their Project Promise peers, instructors, and mentors had high expectations for them, motivated their academic achievement, and positively influenced their social, emotional, and academic development. Participants reported making close, life-long friends with Project Promise peers. While participants rated all of the social influences highly, their perceptions of the positive effects of mentor relationships were highest.

Personal. Participants perceived that their Project Promise involvement facilitated a better understanding of their strengths, fostered confidence that they could succeed academically, increased their self-esteem, inspired goal setting, and motivated them to work and study harder to achieve academically.

Generational. Survey participants also reported that their parents were supportive of their involvement in Project Promise, and they believed their participation influenced their parents to have higher expectations for their achievement.

Furthermore, participants' siblings were supportive of the program and were also inspired to attend higher education.

Although not all of the participants have started their own families, participants agreed that Project Promise has influenced how they will academically support their own children and inspired them to have higher goals for their descendants.

Conclusion

Participants perceived multidimensional benefits as a result of their involvement in the program. Integrating these findings with Lee et al.'s (2009) model resulted in the development of the Partnership for Promoting Potential in Low-Income Gifted Students Model (Kaul et al. 2015). The Partnership Model is a new framework for understanding key program components in developing low-income gifted students, including a strong program, support to parents, and the provision of supportive people (peers, mentors, and instructors).

Program. The job of the program and its administrators is to connect parents, mentors, instructors, peers, and courses in order to maximize a low-income student's talent and potential. Students and their families are best served with sustained, ongoing leadership and funding (Olszewski-Kubilius, 2007). Supportive of university programming, Schaefer and Rivera (2014) reported that low-income middle school students reframed their academic trajectory to include higher education after participation in a one-week college campus experience.

Parents/Families. Financial and practical provisions, such as meals and transportation, allow low-income students to attend enrichment programming. Research has repeated-

“Participants perceived multidimensional benefits as a result of their involvement in the program.”

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ly demonstrated that involved and supportive parents are one of the most important factors on low-income student academic success (Borland, Schnur, & Wright, 2000; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Kitano, 2003; Olszewski-Kubilius, 2007); therefore, actions that support parents and siblings may provide a ripple effect of positive outcomes for the family.

People. The development of supportive peer networks and the provision of qualified mentors and instructors who serve as role models is the third key component. Scheduled activities with high-ability peers enhance student growth and achievement motivation. Additional interpersonal benefits include exposure to diverse individuals (Clasen, 2006; Johns Hopkins, 2010) and increased confidence in the ability to compete with advantaged peers (Olszewski-Kubilius & Thompson, 2010). Mentors may be especially important for low-income students (Johnsen, Feuerbacher, & Witte, 2007; Stambaugh, 2007; White-Hood, 1993).

“Long-term investment is more likely to result in lasting benefits for low-income students...”

Potential Results of Participation in Special Programs

Long-term investment is more likely to result in lasting benefits for low-income students (Clasen, 2006), and, therefore, allowing participation for multiple years may promote the best outcomes. Potential benefits of programming include increased parental academic interest and achievement expectations (Lee et al., 2009). Moreover, students (and their participating siblings) experience academic, social, and personal growth. Relationships with program mentors, instructors, and similar-ability peers promote confidence in participants' academic abilities, motivate academic effort, and increase the likelihood of postsecondary attendance. In turn, an increased academic and career trajectory contributes to higher expectations, goals, and aspirations for the participants' future children. With generational implications, opportunities to nurture low-income students' academic and career potential is important because it benefits students, their families, and local communities. Subotnik et al. (2011) acknowledge that considerable resources are needed to optimize the potential of economically disadvantaged high-ability students, but assert that “the benefits to society of that investment cannot be overestimated” (p. 37).

“Project Promise helped me learn how to aspire for greatness, to set the goals and most importantly to achieve them! I know how to prepare my kids for the same.”

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ATYP and GATE: A Collaborative Model Serving Middle School Students with High School Content

by [Nan Janecke](#), [ATYP Program](#) Coordinator, Western Michigan University

Profoundly gifted middle school students who already know a majority of the course content frequently languish during these years, with teachers and administrators who worry more about the social and emotional needs of adolescents

than about challenging them academically. These students are usually ready for high school content, but not in large enough numbers to devote an entire class to them, so where and how can you give them what they need in a budget-friendly manner? Two proven and effective examples are The Academically Talented Youth Program (ATYP) at Western Michigan University's Lee

ATYP: Academically Talented Youth Program

Honors College and Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) at Michigan State University's, Outreach and Engagement. These rigorous, regionally-based programs serve advanced and accelerated students, primarily in middle and early high school, and offer a curriculum based on students' intellectual capacity, not their year in school. The mission of ATYP and GATE is to provide these children with stimulating and challenging material, ensuring that they are discovering new subject matter every day, at a pace and level that meets their academic needs, while at the same time acknowledging the funding issues of local schools and providing a cost-effective gifted education option.

ATYP was created in 1981 by gifted education pioneer Carol McCarthy and adapted the Hopkins model, using the proven principles of the Talent Search for student identification; fast-paced instruction; self-teaching and learning through homework, problem selection, and feedback; and nationally normed tests to document achievement. ATYP improved upon this model by coordinating with multiple school districts and higher education, utilizing school day/instructional time over summer enrichment, requiring schools to recognize achievement with high school credit and placement in next-level content courses, and using foundation grant moneys from public schools to pay for delegated services. Because of students'

documented achievement and the program's unique variables, ATYP qualified as a national demonstration program with the Department of Education's National Diffusion Network from 1986-1989.

From a founding group of six math students, in the last 35 years the program has grown to serve nearly 4,000 children. Currently, over 225 students from public, private, and homeschool settings are enrolled in classes in English, mathematics, and computer science on both Western's Kalamazoo campus and at its regional center in Battle Creek. What has come to be known as "the ATYP model" has been replicated in several locations throughout the state, including Michigan State University's GATE program, which was founded in 1984 by Dorothy Lawshe. GATE holds classes for a total of approximately 300 students not only in East Lansing, but also in Lapeer and Novi. The model's flexibility to meet local needs – those of the student population, of school districts, of the Intermediate School Districts, and of higher education – makes it an easy option to reproduce.

The foundation of this model is a curriculum that compacts four years of high school courses into a two-year sequence. The math sequence at both ATYP and GATE consists of Algebra I & Algebra II the first year, and geometry and pre-calculus the second year. The language arts sequence consists of honors English 9 & honors English 10 in year one, and honors English 11 & honors English 12 in year two. In addition, ATYP offers AP English (both Language & Composition and Literature & Composition) and AP Computer Science. A fourth year capstone class, "From Sophocles to Smartphones: Literature, Philosophy & Media," has also been developed. GATE, which calls their math sequence CHAMP (Cooperative Highly Accelerated Mathematics Program) and their English sequence ISHALL (Intensive Studies in Humanities, Arts, Language and Literature), also offers a

GATE: Gifted and Talented Education

French sequence known as LEAF (Langue pour Etudiants Avances de Francais). Students are granted high school graduation credit at their home school for these classes.

ATYP and GATE have many aspects in common. Students become eligible for both programs by receiving qualifying scores on either the SAT or ACT, taken through Northwestern University's Midwest Academic Talent Search (NUMATS). The programs seek comparable scores for acceptance – approximately a 520 on the math or English portions of the SAT, or a 21 on comparable sections of the ACT, although GATE also requires applicants to participate in an interview process. (As the new SAT rolls out, qualifying SAT scores may change as new scoring norms are identified.) Students take the SAT or ACT in the winter and spring of each year to qualify for classes that begin the following September. In both programs, these classes meet during the school year on the college or ISD campus one afternoon per week for 2.5 hours. In both cases parents are primarily responsible for transportation, although a few school districts do provide busses.

Classes meet the Common Core Standards for math and English and give exams for all courses that have suitable exams available; students score very well on AP exams, with class averages that usually range about one point higher than the national average on a five point scale. Grades and student evaluations are sent to the student's home and guidance counselor each semester. Counselor support is vital to student success, bridging the gap between the program and the regular school, helping to arrange student schedules, and making sure that students have appropriate support and study space. Regular communication between program staff and counselors at participating schools is a key component to a smoothly operating organization.

There are some ways in which ATYP and GATE differ, primarily in their funding models. ATYP is a public school option: if you attend a public school that school pays the \$350 - \$400 per semester tuition. Students and their families are responsible for a \$50 per semester enrollment fee, however that

fee is waived if the student qualifies for free or reduced lunch. Students who attend private school or who are home-schooled are responsible for their own tuition. GATE's reservation fee of \$100 and \$750 per semester tuition are paid by the family, although an increase in enrollment over the past year has prompted a modification of the program's financial aid processes, with a new and more comprehensive financial aid application being provided to applicants. Students who receive scholarships are encouraged to take the "GATE Gives Back" pledge to serve future GATE students like themselves. Because of this improved system, GATE programs have become more accessible and sustainable for current and future students. Regardless of the funding model used, the collaborative nature of the classes makes them a budget-friendly option for schools and families; the cost-effectiveness of pooling students is one of the most attractive features of the model for participating schools, most of which will have only a handful of qualifying students each year.

There are several educational advantages for students who attend these programs. First is the obvious advantage of advanced and accelerated content, allowing students to tackle curriculum they're ready for, when they're ready for it. The intellectual challenge of these classes fosters a greater depth and breadth of knowledge and encourages life-long learning. Students also gain self-confidence and understanding of their own abilities by completing the required course work and participating in stimulating discussion and debate of the subject matter. Once students have completed the math and/or English sequence and received early high school credit, they have additional room in their high school schedule for more advanced classes and are ready to dual enroll in college courses if they so choose. These classes appear on their high school transcript and demonstrate a willingness to accept academic challenge in the classroom.

"...the cost-effectiveness of pooling students is one of the most attractive features of the model for participating schools..."

ATYP and GATE: A Collaborative Model Serving Middle School Students with High School Content (continued from p. 7)

Additionally, the fast-paced courses and demanding homework schedule requires students to develop a strong work ethic; students learn study skills that give them a sizeable advantage in both high school and college.

There are advantages to holding classes in conjunction with a university for all stakeholders. Rooms and infrastructure are already in place, the regional location draws students from throughout the area, and it showcases the university and can be a recruitment tool for the admissions office. Since education is the key role of the college, supporters who believe in the program mission may be easier to find, as are available and highly-trained instructors. In fact, teachers with a passion for their subject matter and an ability to develop students'

"I loved the independence and overall... well, intelligent feel to the class.."

—GATE alumnus

are essential to student learning and to program success. These instructors develop students' critical thinking skills rather than just producing mathematicians or writers. They understand the sequence of curricular ideas, and the importance of struggling, in great depth, with important concepts; they dismiss pre-conceived notions of instructional time required for student understanding, using instead active classroom discussion, meaty homework assignments, and periodic, rigorous tests to assess comprehension.

For educators and parents contemplating the creation of a program using the ATYP model, there are several potential roadblocks to be considered. First, where will the program be housed? Is there a local college, university, or ISD with available classroom and office space willing to provide a location? Second, which funding model will you use? Both the public school and private tuition models have been effective; you could also consider a formula that is some combination of the two. Third, can you get buy-in from the school districts in your region? Having supportive superintendents who will agree to both the funding and to

granting students the early high school credit is critical to program success. Fourth, how will students be transported to classes? Will school districts provide bussing, or will parents form carpools and bring students onto campus themselves? Fifth, does your state allow schooling in middle school to count for high school credit? Michigan law that requires school districts to grant credit for material learned, regardless of when it was learned, has helped to broaden the appeal of both programs and strengthen credibility in the community.

The response to these programs by both parents and students is overwhelmingly positive. Said one parent:

ATYP has been everything we had hoped it would be. It is NOT simply throwing middle school students into a class several years ahead of grade level and pounding them with work, sink or swim. And it is NOT a year-long celebration of how bright they are (no matter how they are viewed at their home school, they will all stress out, most in a healthy way). It IS a recognition that these kids can handle a much higher level and faster pace of work than most of their peers, but also that they are still children.

A GATE alumnus says of CHAMP, "It has helped me to better manage my time, gain confidence, and helped me to become a better problem solver. I loved the independence and overall... well, intelligent feel to the class." And most importantly, said a former student, "I learned to challenge myself, and that I could get through any challenge I faced if I worked hard enough."

The ATYP model seems to be unique to Michigan. It works because of the voluntary cooperation of multiple districts and families, and because it successfully integrates the needs of both school districts and advanced students. Content acceleration occurs as part of the school day, delivery is cost effective, and student progress, often extraordinary, is documented annually. Even with three decades of success behind them, both ATYP and GATE continue to look to the future. Current objectives include growing enrollment, becoming more diverse and inclusive,

and further enhancing the reputation of the programs with middle schools, high schools, and universities. Ultimately, however, the success of these programs lies in the motivation, hard work, and commitment of its students, students who have gone on to accomplish great things at their home schools, at prestigious universities across the country, in their careers, and in life. Their achievements are tangible proof of how ATYP-model programs can help gifted students fulfill their potential.

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ATYP's website at <http://www.wmich.edu/honors/atyp>

Center for Talent Development website at <http://ctd.northwestern.edu/numats>

GATE's website at <http://gifted.msu.edu/>

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Executive Function: A Practical Approach for Students in Grades 1-5

[Paula Majeau, M.Ed.](#) and [Shannon Fruge, M.C.D.](#)

Editor's note: This article is the first in a two-part series.

The topic of executive function is not new to the field of education. We've all been teaching the importance of active listening, organization, planning, mindfulness and study strategies to our students for many years. Recently, the term "executive functioning" has become a popular buzzword.

"We didn't reinvent the wheel but rather, created a unique service delivery model—a systematic approach to all students."

While this attention has brought to light the impact executive function has on everything we do, the next step is to provide systematic instruction and application of the skills necessary for all students to succeed, including high ability learners.

Traditionally, students classified as gifted or "strong" students are perceived to have their executive function skills under control. Because they are "smart," shouldn't organization, time management and planning just come naturally?

Working at a rigorous SEM school for strong and gifted learners has shown us that this isn't always true. Throughout the school year, we were identifying more and more students who were in need of executive function tutoring. These students were not necessarily identified with a specific learning difference or ADHD; they were perceived to have sufficient capacity to get their 'stuff' together, but they didn't seem to be working to their potential. Academic ability and intuitive executive function skills don't necessarily go hand-in-hand.

Armed with a background in working with students who struggle with executive function, as well as this realization that students without clear deficits might need to be explicitly taught these skills, we consulted our school's head. Collectively we decided to teach executive function skills as a "stand alone" subject to all students in grades 1-5 each week for 30 minutes.

Our premise was - if we taught all of our first through fifth grade students the same curriculum, we would know that they had all been introduced to these skills. If they were unable to learn and utilize these skills after clear and consistent instruction, then we could consider the possibility of a learning difference and the necessary intervention. Our ultimate goal was for every student to confidently enter middle school with the necessary executive function skills so often lacking in that age group.

Our next step was to acquire curriculum materials to

support this endeavor. After attending many excellent conferences and seminars aimed at developing students' executive function skills, and after consulting multiple manuals suggesting research-based tools, we discovered that the program we were searching for might not exist. Theory to practice. We were looking for the explicit teaching of skills thought to come naturally, but truly needing to be systematically taught and practiced. The resources we found were created primarily for struggling learners, and intended to be used in a one-on-one setting, rather than for full-class instruction. We needed a year-long curriculum designed to be taught in a group setting and targeted to a range of learners, including those of high ability.

At this point we decided to design our own program. We didn't reinvent the wheel but rather, created a unique service delivery model—a systematic approach to all students. Drawing from the various resources we found in our research, we developed a year-long curriculum for each grade level that by fourth and fifth grades covers the skills necessary to move successfully into middle school. Components of the program are active listening, active reading, metacognition, mindfulness, organization, planning, study strategies, and test-taking strategies. These components are introduced at developmentally appropriate ages, with lessons increasing in depth and complexity over the years.

The class is called *Executive Function Class*. We are fortunate to have the support of our head of school, who provided us a designated time each week to work with the students.

The students not only understand what the term "executive function" means, but also refer to us as their "Executive Function teachers." Each week, we practice the skills in a fun but impactful way. Our students are excited to participate in each lesson and eagerly share stories about how they use their new skills. As a school, we are devoting the necessary time and demonstrating to our students the value of developing strong EF skills.

Through our experience and research, we understand that the development of EF skills starts very early – even before our children enter school, so for this reason we also include parents in this instruction. Classroom teachers keep

"Components of the program are active listening, active reading, metacognition, mindfulness, organization, planning, study strategies, and test-taking strategies."

parents informed about what we're working on each week, and we ask for their support at home in ways such as checking that their student is using her planner correctly, that she has a designated spot for her backpack, and is packing up the night before.

We are currently in our third year of teaching this curriculum, and have received positive feedback not only from classroom teachers, but also parents. Our school has high standards and expects students to perform. We are giving all students the necessary instruction to successfully manage the rigorous expectations, allowing them to perform and produce at a level commensurate with their ability. We know that these skills are emerging and developing, and our goal is to help our students master the self-management necessary to achieve to their potential.

Executive function skills are not the same as academic ability – but they definitely impact how successful our students can be.

Editor's note: This article is the first in a two-part series. Part II will outline the authors' program in more detail, including some of the students' favorite activities.

Shannon Fruge and Paula Majeau teach at the [Episcopal School of Acadiana](#) in Lafayette, Louisiana.

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Special Schools & Programs Network Mission

The Special Schools and Programs Network believes that gifted/talented students are served in a variety of alternative settings, such as private independent schools, magnet, or specialty schools; Saturday or summer programs; and university-sponsored schools and institutes. These private and publicly funded special schools and programs are vital to the ongoing research and comprehensive delivery of services addressing the needs of gifted individuals. This Network is dedicated to promoting alternative, experimental, comprehensive services to gifted individuals beyond the scope of the traditional public school settings, and reporting in a scholarly way the findings and activities developed and practiced in the special schools and programs in order to benefit all gifted students.