

PRINCIPALS' PERCEPTIONS ON EDUCATING ELEMENTARY STUDENTS  
WHO ARE GIFTED

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

Students who are gifted need student centered academic challenges and authentic problems to spark reflection and enhance student outcomes. When academic needs are not met, students who are gifted may not reach their full academic potential and may lose motivation for learning. A primary reason for students who are gifted to underachieve in academics is equated to school factors including lack of instructional resources, social/emotional support, and teachers who are unprepared to teach students who are gifted. The purpose of this phenomenological research study is to explore the perceptions and lived experiences of participating elementary school principals in an urban school district. The research questions explore elementary school principals' perceptions of the implementation of practices, programs and instructional methods that support their programs for students who are gifted and the teachers of students who are gifted.

In dedication to my husband, John, whose steadfast support carried me through, reminded me  
there are no short cuts, and always left a light on for me.

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## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

### **The Current Status of the Elementary Education for Students Who Are Gifted**

Within our nation's school systems, students who are gifted, or those with the highest potential in academic and creative areas are educated according to district, state and national level policies (Renzulli, Siegle, Reis, Gavin, & Reed, 2009). According to the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC), services for students who are gifted provide pull-out or resource classes for enrichment, grade or subject level acceleration, and can also include specific segregated classes for students who are gifted which are not made available to other students in general education classes (NAGC, 2014b). Nationally, 51.9% of the services for students who are gifted at the elementary grade levels consist of part-time, pull-out classes for one to four hours per week. At the middle school level 64.3% of services for students who are gifted are special classes of homogeneously grouped students within a regular school setting. Meanwhile the predominant service delivery model (90.7%) for students who are gifted at the high school level is that of Advanced Placement (AP) courses (Callahan, Moon & Oh, 2014).

Consider the daunting responsibilities of elementary school principals and teachers who are employed in large urban school districts as they attempt to meet the academic needs of students who are gifted. Because the federal mandate of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2001) requires that instruction be directed at increasing the academic proficiency of the striving and struggling learners (VanTassel-Baska, 2006a), the law essentially limits the amount of time, monetary and human resources that are available to support students who are gifted. In reality,

since they are already academically proficient, students who are gifted do not have the same level of academic support as their peers who struggle to learn (Ward, 2005).

### **Relevance and Significance**

Studies conducted during the last few decades have demonstrated both the need for and the benefits of programs specific for students who are gifted. Of special interest are the documented benefits that can occur for all children when strategies and programs for students who are gifted and programs are extended to other students, as well (National Association for Gifted Children, 2014b). This research contributes to the body of literature describing the perceptions of elementary school principals in the implementation of practices, programs, and instructional methods that support their programs for students who are gifted. The large urban school district where the research study took place began screening second grade students from Title 1 schools for gifted in 2013. Because of the number of students identified many school leaders of elementary schools decided to provide universal screening for gifted to all second grade students.

In the spring of 2013, the large urban school district where this study took place conducted a program evaluation of the exceptional student education (ESE) that included programs for students who are gifted. The evaluation was conducted by an external evaluator and had two specific purposes. The first purpose was to analyze the ESE student population. The second purpose was to make determinations on the district's ESE program effectiveness. Specifically, the second purpose of the program evaluation focused on the ESE program's effectiveness in supporting positive outcomes for students receiving special education services as well as students who were gifted and had received special services. The results of the program evaluation indicated that the large urban school district had increased efforts to augment the

number of students served in programs for students who are gifted. The final report from the program evaluator showed that, while many services are being provided for students who are gifted, the administrative oversight and guidance needed for effective programming was a challenge (Evergreen Solutions, 2013). While the school district has received commendation for developing and implementing a comprehensive in-service program for teachers to add an endorsement in gifted education to their certificate, the program evaluation indicated the professional development opportunities for teachers of students who are gifted needed to be increased (OCPS, 2013).

As with qualitative research done by Billington, McNally and McNally (2000), this research attempted to erode the boundaries between experience and expertise, and theory and practice. With a multiple-participant phenomenological research design, the strength of any inference made increases when factors recur with more than one participant (Lester, 1999). This study drew on the views of multiple principal participants and their teachers of students who are gifted. In order to answer the research questions posed in this qualitative research study, an analysis of responses from the participating principals and teachers suggested themes which support the effective implementation of programs, practices, and instructional methods.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The needs of students who are gifted are not sufficiently met in today's schools. Students who are gifted need content beyond what is included in the general education curriculum, opportunities to learn at their own rate, and opportunities to participate in projects that reflect their interests and support critical and creative thinking (Eakin, 2007). Many schools in the United States present an environment that fails to encourage or challenge the minds of students who are gifted and lack enrichment and acceleration in academic content (Eakin, 2007).



Students who are gifted differ from students in general education in terms of learning style, depth and complexity of understanding, and potential. However, the United States does poorly at identifying students with a “knack for visualizing objects in the mind’s eye” (Chen, 2014, para. 13)—a skill important for inventors, architects, dentists, artists, and orthopedic surgeons (Chen, 2014). David Lubinski and Camilla Benbow of Vanderbilt University have co-directed the Study of Mathematically Precocious Youth (SMPY), a decade’s long study that has tracked more than 5,000 individuals who are gifted. Their studies reveal that students who are gifted and who missed out on accelerated learning opportunities still, on average, do well. However, in the 2014 follow-up on 320 study participants, 44% had earned an M.D., Ph.D., or law degree. As a result of the opportunities to explore content that reflected their interests and the additional supports provided in programs for students who are gifted, many of the study participants have high-powered careers (Chen, 2014). In today’s competitive global economy, school districts must develop their exceptional human capital. SMPY shows that it is possible to identify young students who are gifted and who are most likely to achieve great works.

The recent adoption of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) calls for general education teachers to recognize and address student learning differences, and incorporate rigorous content and application of knowledge by implementing higher-order thinking skills (National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC), 2014a). Although the CCSS refers to educating students who are gifted, a description of advanced work beyond the standards is not addressed. However, there is evidence of accelerating coursework in Mathematics in the CCSS appendix materials. Although the new content standards are considered more rigorous than most current state standards, they fall short in meeting the specific needs of students who are gifted, and if held strictly to the standard, could actually limit learning (National Association for Gifted

Children (NAGC, 2014b). To overcome this shortcoming, it is beneficial for teachers of students who are gifted to create a full range of supports, including differentiated curriculum, instruction, and assessments. Research on gifted education also indicates that in order to support complex curriculum and deepen student learning, school administrators must support and provide teachers with relevant professional development (National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC), 2014b).

The role of the school-based leader is pivotal to the success of a school's programs for students who are gifted (Fullan, 2005). However, principals are often faced with the conundrum of how to balance the unique demands of school accountability and the allocation of resources specific to their schools. As site based managers, principals must manage and determine the allocation of resources to support academic programming at their schools. More often than not, the funding allocations for programming for students who are gifted are minimal. Resources are often syphoned away from gifted programs and funneled into intensive intervention programs in order to meet the requirements that all students demonstrate adequate yearly progress (Quinn, 2005). "It's hard to argue students who are gifted need as much one-on-one help as students with special needs" (Assouline, Colangelo, VanTassel-Baska, & Lupkowski-Shoplik, 2015, p. 54).

Academics, practitioners, and researchers have concluded that leadership is a central variable in the equation that defines organizational success (Bennis & Nanus, 1997; Dubrin, 2004; Yukl, 2002). Principals are charged with evaluating teachers who implement research-based instructional strategies that lead to student achievement (Waters & Grubb, 2004). Oftentimes principals may lack the pedagogical knowledge regarding the gifted framework and on educating the gifted. Meanwhile, teachers have long expressed concern about students who

are gifted and who fail to perform in school. (Cardon & French, 1966; Satir & Cardon, 1969). To adequately assess what is needed for teaching students who are gifted, principals must identify and understand practices that promote effective instruction of these unique students (Boscardin, 2005). Effective school leaders support their teachers and staff in identifying professional development that nurtures the growth of professional practice, continuous improvement, and in turn, supports the vision and goals of the school (Murphy, Elliot, Goldring, & Porter, 2006). However, there is limited research on the amount of information principals receive about educating students who are gifted while in their preparation program. Therefore, many principals in the early stages of their career may lack the ability and knowledge to effectively implement and manage programs for students who are gifted (Alvarez McHatton, Boyer, Shaunessy, & Terry, 2010).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The first chapter in the 2004 breakthrough report, *A Nation Deceived: How Schools Hold Back America's Brightest Students* is entitled "America Ignores Excellence" (Colangelo, Assouline, & Gross, 2004). The researchers referenced public media proclamations that our nation's schools are producing weak students who lag behind same age-peers in other countries. In the report, Colangelo et al. (2004) revealed how America's students who are gifted are reading shampoo bottles at age three, editorials by five, and are able to add up groceries, until they go to school and things change. Students and parents hope that things in school will get better, but things rarely do, and for many, nothing changes. Thus, the price that is paid is the "erosion of American excellence" (Colangelo et al., 2004, p. 1). As we move forward in this century, we need to invest in our most academically talented students in order to remain competitive in the global economy. According to Renzulli (2012), "history has shown us that highly able

individuals assume important positions in all walks of life including government, law, science, religion, education, politics, business, and the arts and humanities” (p. 155). The responsibility of educators is to maximize the potential of all students, including meeting the needs of the gifted. Colangelo et al. (2004) reported “many administrators and teachers want to provide students who are gifted with the flexibility to move at the pace of their talents; however these educators want support and validation from the school community” (p. 11).

In 1988, Congress passed the Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Student Education Act (Javits), which provided funding for the research and support of programs for students who are gifted. The Jacob Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Act (1988) was premised on the idea that students who are gifted, like all other students, should receive the services they need to develop their full potential. The Javits Act, was the only federal program dedicated specifically to gifted and talented students. With the enactment of IDEA, in 2011 Congress defunded the Javits Act. In order to gain the respect and political support of governments and funding agencies, the field of education for the gifted needs to wade through the unsubstantiated practices that are often perpetuated by self-proclaimed experts or those that prey on the vulnerabilities of parents seeking solutions for their children (Knobel & Shaughnessy, 2002).

The heralded call is to implement change that will prove powerful and impactful when educating students who are gifted. A shift in educating students who are gifted results from “discontent over existing practices, plans to incorporate new practices, and the willingness to try new techniques and methods in instruction delivery” (Kuhn, 1970, p. 71). With the excessive demands on administrators and teachers in the educational system it is easy to think that students who are gifted can make academic progress on their own (Renzulli, 2002). As educators move forward with various service delivery models for educating students who are gifted, it is

important for both administrators and teachers to evaluate the effectiveness of the delivery system.

By examining the strengths and influences of principals who administer programs for students who are gifted, we will understand how to provide effective instruction and better serve diverse populations (Knobel & Shaughnessy, 2002). Renzulli and Reis (1997) collaborated with several school districts and have found that when programs for the gifted were in place, all students exhibited the benefits of academic differentiation. Differentiating for all students, not just for the gifted, has several benefits including preventing high achieving students from the stigma of elitism, providing a flexible platform for developing the gifts and talents of students who might go unrecognized if there was no differentiation, and allowing teachers to meet the needs of students who are gifted (Renzulli, 1999).

The primary purpose of this research study was to examine elementary school principals' perceptions, based on their perceptions and lived experiences, of best practices, service delivery models, and instructional methods that support the education of students who are gifted in a large urban school district. The findings from this study contributes to the existing gap in the literature on this subject. In this study the researcher aimed to determine the essence of the experience as "perceived by the participant" (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen, & Razavieh, 2009, p. 472). Of interest to this research study are the perceptions and lived experiences, the first-hand accounts and impressions, of the elementary school principals, and specifically how they support programs for students who are gifted on the campus of his or her elementary school.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Leadership styles are associated with an organization's performance (Murphy, Elliott, Goldring, & Porter, 2006). This study explored the perceptions and lived experiences of

effective or highly effective elementary school principals concerning the implementation of practices, programs, and instructional methods that support their school's programs for students who are gifted. Instructional leadership provides a framework for school principals who possess a vision for learning. Instructional leadership refers to those principals who have a significant concentration on maintaining high teacher expectations for teachers and students (Hattie, 2009). Bennis & Nanus (1997) established that principals who are instructional leaders sharpen their teachers' skills and enhance their knowledge from their own experiences. In Hattie's 2009 meta-analysis, research on the influence of principals on student achievement outcomes confirmed that instructional leadership has the greatest impact on student outcomes. Hattie's 2009 review found instructional leadership criteria that has the strongest correlations with student achievement outcomes include: (a) committing to and participating in teacher learning and development; (b) evaluating and giving feedback to teachers on their teaching and the curriculum being used in their classrooms; (c) making strategic decisions involving resources with a focus on instruction; (d) setting clear goals and expectations; and (e) ensuring an orderly and supportive learning environment by maintaining classroom instruction as the focus both inside and outside classrooms. Principals as instructional leaders can support teachers of students who are gifted by providing access to high-quality professional development that focuses on strategies to differentiate instruction, the pace of learning, and the assessment for students who are advanced (Greene & Cross, 2013). In addition, these instructional leaders empower their teachers to continually develop their pedagogical skills, participate in professional development and develop their own leadership potential. These effective leaders create a vision of high standards of learning, and believe that all students regardless of label or status, are capable of learning.

## **Research Questions**

1. What are the perceptions of elementary school principals, who are identified as effective or highly effective on The Leadership Evaluation Model (OCPS, 2012), concerning the implementation of practices, programs, and instructional methods that support their programs for students who are gifted?

2. How do elementary principals who are identified as effective or highly effective on The Leadership Evaluation Model (OCPS, 2012) support the teachers of students who are gifted in their schools?

3. What are the lived experiences of the elementary school principals who are identified as effective or highly effective on The Leadership Evaluation Model (OCPS, 2012) and how do these experiences impact the implementation of practices, programs, and instructional methods that support their programs for students who are gifted?

## **Research Design**

This research study used a qualitative research approach. The use of this approach allowed the researcher to collect the views of a number of participants who have experienced the same phenomenon of being evaluated as effective elementary school principals with programs for students who are gifted. Phenomenological research aims to discover the meanings behind *lived experiences*, as perceived by people or groups of people. This phenomenological study's aim was to find a deeper understanding of a phenomenon, look for core meanings, or the essence of the experience. As Creswell, Hanson, Plano Clark and Morales (2007) discussed, unlike grounded theory of theorizing views and generating a theoretical model, phenomenologists describe what participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon. In this method,

phenomenologists work from specific statements and experiences, not abstracting statements to construct a model from the researcher's interpretations (Creswell et al., 2007).

In Phase 1 of the study, the researcher reviewed district data of elementary schools that have implemented programs for students who are gifted on their school's campus. The researcher conversed with the learning community area superintendent from the urban school district and reviewed potential elementary school principals who met criteria to participate in the research. Purposive sampling was used in this research study. In collaboration with the district's learning community administrators, the researcher identified specific elementary school principals to participate in this research study from within the population of elementary school principals in the large urban school district. Unlike random studies, which deliberately include a diverse cross section of ages, backgrounds and cultures, the idea behind purposive sampling is to concentrate on people with particular characteristics who will better be able to assist with the relevant research (Ary et al., 2009). The purposive sample of principals identified to participate in this study are representative of elementary school principals who attained a rating of at least Effective or Highly Effective on their most recent School Leadership Evaluation and implement programs for students who are gifted on their school's campus. Criteria to participate in the research include:

- a. A rating of at least *Effective* or *Highly Effective* on the most recent School Leadership Evaluation Model. The principal who achieves at this level is described to have leadership performance that has local impact (Orange County Public Schools, 2012). This principal is adequate, necessary, and clearly makes a significant contribution to the school. The ratings on the School Leadership Evaluation Model adopted by this



large urban school district range from Highly Effective, Effective, Needs Improvement and Unsatisfactory.

- b. The presence of a principal-lead program for students who are gifted on his or her elementary school campus.
- c. Willingness to participate in the study, and give consent to engage in interviews that will be audio-recorded.
- d. Identification and nomination of a principal by a learning community area superintendent. The large urban school district in which the study took place is divided into six learning communities that are geographically based with an almost equal distribution of elementary, middle and high schools within each learning community. One learning community's focus is on school transformation and has schools distributed throughout the district.

Once identified, the researcher contacted the elementary school principals who were identified by the learning community area superintendent to schedule an interview. The interview addressed the principals' perceptions of the implementation of practices, programs, and instructional methods that support programs for students who are gifted on their campus. During this first phase of the study, the researcher revealed her role as the researcher, her role as a doctoral candidate at the University of Central Florida and her role as an instructional resource teacher for post-secondary programs in the school district's exceptional education department. The researcher's role in the school district is far removed from the daily operations and interactions with elementary school principals, teachers and students.

In Phase 2, teachers of students who are gifted at the participating elementary schools were invited to participate in a survey. The survey, which was completed electronically,

garnered a deeper understanding of the support that was provided by the principals to the teachers of students who are gifted as practices, programs and instructional methods that are implemented to support learners who are gifted. The teacher survey questions were developed based on the principal interview questions and their responses. In Phase 3, the researcher selected a focus group representing teachers of students who are gifted from each participating elementary school. Each teacher was asked to share his or her individual professional development report that chronicled the professional development courses taken over the last five years. This professional development report is available from the large urban school district's Professional Development Services department. In the state of Florida, a teacher's professional educator's certificate is renewable every five years and professional development in-service points count towards recertification.

The researcher collected three types of data from this study, including elementary principals' interviews, teacher surveys, and focus group. The data was used to identify the perceptions and lived experiences of the participating principals, common themes addressed the principal interviews and how the participating elementary school principals implement programs, practices and instructional methods. It is anticipated that the results of the data analysis would build and strengthen programs to support students who are gifted.

### **Definition of Terms**

For the purpose of this study the following definitions are provided to promote understanding:

**Eligibility for students who are gifted:** According to the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE) (2013a), a student is eligible for special instructional programs for the gifted if the student meets the criteria including:

1. Need for a special program
2. A majority of characteristics of students who are gifted according to a standard scale or checklist
3. Superior intellectual development as measured by an intelligence quotient of two standard deviations or more above the mean on an individually administered standardized test of intelligence
4. The student is a member of an underrepresented group and meets the criteria specified in an approved school district plan for increasing the participation of underrepresented groups in programs for students who are gifted (FLDOE, 2013a)

The NCLB Act (2001) outlines the federal definition of gifted and talented when used in describing children, students, or youth who demonstrate the capacity for high achievement in areas such as intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership capacity, or in specific academic fields, and who need services or activities not ordinarily provided by the school in order to fully develop those capabilities.

**Instructional methods:** A systematic procedure, technique, or mode of inquiry employed by or utilized in a particular discipline or art. A systematic plan followed in presenting material for instruction (Merriam-Webster, 2014).

**Lived experiences:** Accounts of human experiences and events that are collected and analyzed (Ary et al., 2009).

**No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB):** Reauthorizes the Elementary Secondary Education Act and incorporates the principles and strategies that include increased accountability for states, school districts, and schools; greater choice for parents and students, particularly those attending low-performing schools; provides more flexibility for States and local educational agencies (LEAs) in

the use of Federal education dollars; and places a stronger emphasis on reading, especially for the nation's youngest children (United States Department of Education, 2014).

**Perception:** The way one thinks about, notices or understands someone or something (Merriam-Webster, 2014).

**Practice:** The continuous exercise of a profession (Merriam-Webster, 2014).

**Programs:** A plan of things that are done in order to achieve a specific result or a system under which action may be taken toward a goal (Merriam-Webster, 2014).

**Service delivery model:** The range of educational services for students with disabilities may vary according to the area of disability, cognitive level, processing deficits, achievement levels and strengths and weaknesses (FLDOE, 2013a).

**Students who are gifted:** The FLDOE defines a student who is gifted as, “one who has superior intellectual development and is capable of high performance” (Florida Department of Education, 2013b, p. 7).

### **Assumptions**

For the purpose of this study the researcher assumed that elementary school principals would be able to their share their perceptions on the implementation of practices, programs and instructional methods that support students who are gifted on their campus. One assumption was that the elementary school principals provided accurate information that was honest and provided thorough accounts of the practices, programs and instructional methods that support programs for students who are gifted in their schools. The researcher believed that the principals recalled and reflected on their perceptions and lived experiences with education for the gifted and its impact on the implementation of practices, programs, and instructional methods for the students who are gifted enrolled in their schools. The researcher assumed that the urban school district

targeted in the study is large enough to provide the needed number of willing and eligible elementary school principal participants. This study assumed that a representative sample of elementary school principals, who are identified as effective or highly effective on The Leadership Evaluation Model (OCPS, 2012), were willing to share their perceptions and lived experiences that led to the implementation of programs for students who are gifted. Further, the study assumed that the teachers of students who are gifted at the participating elementary schools were willing to share and be honest about the level of support for their programs provided by their principal.

### **Delimitations**

Phenomenology addresses questions about common human experiences. According to Ary et al. (2009), “participants in a phenomenological study are chosen because they have been through the experience being investigated and can share their thoughts and feelings about the experience” (p. 473). A delimitation of this study is the focus solely on elementary school principals. The urban school district selected for this research study primarily has structured service delivery models for students who are gifted in elementary schools. Once students who are gifted reach middle and high school courses with academic rigor are provided in International Baccalaureate programs, dual enrollment and advanced placement courses.

The researcher recognized that teachers come to their positions in educating students who are gifted from a variety of paths. Some were enrolled in teaching the gifted programs as part of their pre-service course of study within a college of education, while others entered the position by either professional interest or by default and have earned endorsement, certification, or are in process of doing so. For this study, teachers who are new to teaching were not included, as they do not have a history of professional development participation in this large urban school district.

Further, new teachers do not have a history of teaching the standards at the participating elementary school, which contributes to student learning gains. This research study identified the common themes of how the participating elementary schools implement programs, practices and instructional methods for students who are gifted. Results of the study are to be used to build and strengthen programs to support students who are gifted throughout the large urban school district and which will ultimately be replicated to other elementary schools.

### **Limitations**

Phenomenological research uses interviews and surveys to collect data. This type of research explores the thoughts, feelings and experiences of individuals. The knowledge produced in this study may not be generalizable to other people or settings. The participants' responses to the interviews and survey were dependent on the accuracy and truthfulness in self-reporting and the participants' disposition toward providing responses to the interview and survey questions. The researcher's presence during data collection can affect the study participant's responses. The study participants may feel reserved or hindered in expressing their thoughts, feelings and experiences because they are not familiar with the researcher. Further, the volume of data collected for this study makes analysis and interpretation time consuming.

## **CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

### **Introduction**

Students who are gifted need academic content and thinking beyond that included in the regular curriculum. An attitude exists amongst educators and policymakers that students who are gifted will be fine regardless of the learner's environment (Subotnik, Olszewski-Kubilius, & Worrell, 2011). It is important to consider the history of education for students who are gifted, and how policies and practices have evolved. When students who are gifted are able to work above grade level it is easy for the school's focus to shift to those striving to master grade level skills. The NCLB Act of 2001 was a major contributor to the current shift away from supporting students who are gifted because schools can appear insensitive if they focus resources and support on students who are gifted instead of focusing on proficiency for striving learners (VanTassel-Baska, 2006a). An indirect consequence to schools is the limited amount of time available to support students who are gifted because they come to school already proficient (Ward, 2005). Education for students who are gifted is in need of a champion at the local, state and national level to support the need to allocate scarce resources. Unfortunately, at the local level, research found that most parents of students who are gifted felt the school board and the school had very little knowledge of how to meet the needs of their students and did little to help with their students' success in school (Duquette, Orders, Fullarton, & Robertson-Grewal, 2011). This literature review will focus on the principals and the implementation of practices, programs, and instructional methods that support programs for students who are gifted.

Programs for the gifted provide students who have been identified as having high ability in intellect or creativity with a supplemental curriculum to their traditional coursework. Despite the popularity of these programs, the literature lacks a comprehensive review of students who are gifted in the United States (Bhatt, 2011). There is a void in national and state level statistics on participation rates of students in programs for gifted, funding appropriations, and policies. Review of the literature will reveal that programs and service delivery models for students who are gifted vary widely and that further research on this topic will provide valuable information to policy makers, school leaders and teachers.

### **History of Education for the Gifted**

Financial and personnel support for programs of students who are gifted in public schools remains in a constant state of ebb and flow (Jolly, 2009). Education for students who are gifted becomes a national priority when excellence is sought and a critical need is perceived. However, when it comes to allocating resources, the needs of students who are gifted are replaced by the academic priorities of students within other subpopulations. As early as 1868, St. Louis Public Schools designed a system for early grade promotions for those who displayed outstanding academic ability (Jolly, 2004), although at the time no instrument to measure intelligence existed. In the 1920s, advancements in education and psychology brought empirical and credible research to the field of education for students who are gifted (Whipple, 1924). At this time, universities began to support the research of education for the gifted, the characteristics of students identified as gifted, definitions of giftedness, and guidelines for school programming (Jolly, 2004). During the 1920s, Lewis Terman, developer of the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Test, initiated the first major study of “gifted children” (Coleman, 1999). Terman’s longitudinal study followed over 1,500 students who are gifted as they progressed to adulthood and remains



foundational in the study of the gifted. Meanwhile, Terman and his colleagues negated the beliefs that individuals with superior cognitive abilities were associated with moral and character deficits, i.e., the mad scientist. Terman's studies helped shape our current understanding of students with outstanding abilities (Terman, 1925).

During World War II, options for students who were gifted were at an all-time low. Following the war, students who were gifted were identified with the purpose of preparing these individuals to be scientists and mathematicians, essentially linking them to national security and the country's survival (Passow, 1960). For example, in 1957, the Soviet Union launched the satellite Sputnik, this satellite launch had a sobering and energizing impact on the education of students who are gifted in the United States. Suddenly, the movement to educate students who are gifted picked up speed and created nationwide interest in schools' programs for students who are gifted. Additionally, an intense scrutiny and criticism surfaced over a general lack of academic rigor that led to a call for education reforms (Jolly, 2009). A year later, in 1958, chemist, professor, and former Harvard President, James Conant coordinated a conference that focused on students who were gifted, The Academically Talented Student 1958 National Education Association (NEA) Conference. The conference focused on issues surrounding students who were academically talented and addressed the identification and education of the "most able" American students (Conant, 1958). Key proponents and supporters of education for students who are gifted attended the conference. Ruth Strang, a faculty member at Teachers College at Columbia University, addressed motivation of both parents and schools to exert "optimum degree" of pressure on students who were gifted (Conant, 1958, p. 59). Miriam Goldberg, another faculty member from Teachers College at Columbia University focused on non-specialized classes in which students who were gifted often found themselves. She

advocated for teacher training in enrichment techniques. Sidney Pressey and Gertrude Hildreth emphasized the practice of acceleration that had been in place for students in advanced courses (Conant, 1958). Further, Representative Carl Elliott (D-Alabama), proposed legislation that eventually became the National Education Defense Act, which would provide benefits to students who possessed gifts and talents. The issues addressed at The Academically Talented Student 1958 National Education Association (NEA) Conference are "eerily similar to gifted education today" (Jolly, 2014, p. 119). Soon after the Civil Rights movement occurred policymakers had to reconsider where to find students who are gifted (Imbeau, 1999).

Congress's contribution towards the education of students who are gifted has been sporadic (Imbeau, 1999). Congress's most significant contribution to support the education of the gifted came with enacting the Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Student Education Act in 1988. This legislation reestablished the Federal Office of Gifted and Talented and earmarked allocations to establish the National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented. The primary focus of the Javits Act addressed the need for professional learning and research that will better identify and serve students identified as gifted, especially from underrepresented populations.

Urban school districts have grappled with issues in the identification and education of students who are gifted. In the 1940s the city of Cleveland enrolled more than 1,200 gifted or talented students in 17 major center schools catering exclusively to their academic needs (Tannenbaum, 1983). During this same era, in parts of the nation, schools dedicated solely to educating gifted students were established. As programs for the gifted continued to develop, problems of diversity and poverty exacerbated achievement. The growth of programs for the gifted in urban school settings became marked with political problems. As the fight for scarce resources increased, politicians grew weary of retaining programs and schools for students who

were gifted and discontinued funding. For example, in San Diego and Chicago, the local budget shrank considerably over the years as other priorities, such as diversity and poverty, have pushed education for the gifted to the side (VanTassel-Baska, 2010).

In the large urban school district where the research for this study was conducted, a provision exists to reach underrepresented populations who may be gifted. In the spring and summer of 2013, the large urban school district tested students who are limited English proficient and students from low socio-economic status families in Title I schools. In total 6,133 second-grade students were screened and 345 were identified for further evaluation for identification as gifted. The results of the evaluations determined that 183 students were eligible for gifted and they are now receiving those services (OCPS, 2013). Universal screening for identification of students who are gifted did not occur in non-Title 1 schools.

### **Definition of Identification of Students Who Are Gifted**

#### *Federal*

The federal definition for the term gifted undergone several changes over the years and continues to serve as a guide for states as they develop their definitions and policies for educating students who are gifted (Stephens & Karnes, 2000). American psychologist Lewis Terman was the first to use the term “gifted” (Stephens & Karnes, 2000). Terman’s definition of gifted included the 1% level in intelligence ability as measured by the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale or a comparable instrument (1925).

One of the earliest federal definitions of gifted appeared in The Education Amendments in 1969 that stated:

The term ‘gifted and talented children’ means in accordance with objective criteria prescribed by the Commissioner, children who have outstanding intellectual ability or

creative talent, the development of which requires special activities or services not ordinarily provided by local education agencies (U.S. Congress Public Law 91-230, 1970).

From this early federal definition, modifications occurred to include identification, areas of giftedness outside of intellectual ability, and age range. The United States federal government also subscribed to a multifaceted approach to giftedness as early as 1972, when a national report was issued called the Marland Report, named after then education commissioner Sidney Marland. In preparation for his report to Congress, Sidney Marland compiled the Blue Ribbon committee, a group of the most distinguished researchers in the field of education for students who are gifted and who compiled statistics about the state of students who are gifted in American schools (Delisle, 1999). The 1972 Marland Report was shared with Congress detailed:

- only about 4% of America's students who are gifted were served in specialized programs to meet their needs;
- a majority of school administrators, 57% of those polled, stated that there were students who were gifted in attendance in their schools; and
- the identification of giftedness was hampered by three main factors: cost, apathy, and hostility on the part of some school personnel.

The Marland Report and the U.S. Department of Education's definition influenced most states' definitions of giftedness and talent (Marland, 1973).

In 1978, Joseph Renzulli, Professor of Educational Psychology at the University of Connecticut and Director of the National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented, defined three components of behaviors of students who are gifted. These behaviors reflect an interaction among three basic clusters of human traits, which are above average ability, high levels of task

commitment, and high levels of creativity. Individuals capable of developing behaviors associated with giftedness are those who possess the composite set of traits and can apply them to any potentially valuable area of human performance. “Individuals who manifest or are capable of developing an interaction among the three clusters require a wide variety of educational opportunities and services that are not ordinarily provided through regular instructional programs” (Renzulli & Reis, 1997, p. 6-8).

In 1988, Congress passed the Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Student Education Act, which once again modified the federal definition of giftedness. This updated definition eliminated any reference to performing arts, mention of preschool, and elementary and secondary levels of education.

In 1994, the U.S. Department of Education released, *National Excellence: A Case for Developing America's Talent*, which once again redefined giftedness by incorporating current knowledge and thinking towards the nation's students who are gifted (Stephens & Karnes, 2000).

Children and youth with outstanding talent perform or show the potential for performing at remarkably high levels of accomplishment when compared with others of their age, experience, or environment. These children and youth exhibit high performance capability in intellectual, creative, and/or artistic areas, possess an unusual leadership capacity, or excel in specific academic fields. They require services or activities not ordinarily provided by the schools. Outstanding talents are present in children and youth from all cultural groups, across all economic strata, and in all areas of human endeavor. (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 1993, p. 26)

Though many school districts adopted this or other broad definitions as their philosophy, others still only pay attention to "intellectual" ability when both identifying and serving students. Even though many psychologists and educators recognize broadened definitions of giftedness and intelligence, many students who are gifted are unrecognized and underserved.

### *State*

The earliest funding provision in Florida for education for students who are gifted occurred in 1956. Years later in 1968, education for students who are gifted was added to the definition of exceptional student education and services for the gifted eventually became a mandate (FLDOE, 2013b). Through time and rule revisions the state required endorsements for educators who teach students who are gifted and the state's definition of gifted evolved to specify students from underrepresented populations such as limited English proficient and low socio-economic status. The most recent definition of gifted is, "one who has superior intellectual development and is capable of high performance, and a student who is eligible for special instructional programs for the gifted and meets criteria" (Florida Department of State, 2006, section 6A-6.03019).

Until 2011, Florida relied on funding for education for students who are gifted through the Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Student Education Act. The funding for the Javits Act was superseded by the funding needed for IDEA (Ward, 2005). In 2011, Congress voted to defund the Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Student Education Act (National Association for Gifted Children, 2013) and therefore the lack of equitable resources made it necessary for a change in support for students who are gifted in Florida schools. Because of the cut in funding, many students who are gifted are underserved (U.S. Department of Education, 2009).

## *Local*

The large urban school district where the research for this study was conducted provides programs and services that meet the unique cognitive, social, and emotional needs of students who are gifted, preparing them to succeed in a global society. Since 1968, the school district abides by Florida legislation in the identification of students who are gifted as a part of the exceptional student education population. In Florida, students are eligible for exceptional education programs if they meet the criteria outlined in Florida Board of Education Rule 6A-6.03019, FAC. These criteria focus on a student's need for education for the gifted, general intellectual functioning, and various behavioral and intellectual characteristics. Students who are gifted come from all backgrounds with special abilities ranging across a wide spectrum of achievement. These students require special provisions to meet their academic needs.

### **Administrative Support of Programs for Students Who Are Gifted**

Currently, students who are gifted do not have the guaranteed federal funding that other students with disabilities have through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1997. Ward (2005) noted that the funding for the Javits Act to educate students who are gifted was dwarfed by the funds provided by IDEA and as of 2011, Congress voted to defund the Javits Act (National Association for Gifted Children, 2013). Equality of resources is necessary for change to happen in the support of students who are gifted in their schools. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination in public schools, yet many students who are gifted are underserved (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). The federal government has exhibited a trend of focusing on educational equality through such programs as NCLB at the expense of educational excellence (Quinn, 2005). With the demands of school accountability, principals as instructional leaders are charged with site based management in which they determine the

allocation of resources to support academic programming at their schools. More often than not, the funding allocations for programming for students who are gifted are minimal in order to meet the requirements of all students demonstrating adequate yearly progress (Quinn, 2005).

With the rise in site-based management, principals gain more responsibility to lead their schools toward greater learning opportunities (Lewis, Cruzeiro, & Hall, 2007). Hallinger, Bickman, and David's 1996 research indicates that "principals play a vital role in school effectiveness," (p. 544) although they have an indirect effect on student achievement. It is through improving teacher practice that the principal affects student learning (Hallinger & Heck, 1996). As a result of the shift from what teachers are doing to what students are learning (DuFour, 2002), school principals need to place an emphasis on high quality professional development opportunities (Killion, 1998) that focus on strengthening pedagogy (Lashway, 2003).

There are numerous reports throughout the literature that support the need for reform within principal preparation programs. The reform can lead to effectively managing different facets of curriculum, instruction, finance, and policy, as well as the many needs of student groups (Alvarez McHatton, et al., 2010). Principals are required to adhere to state and district policies for implementing curriculum and may feel limited by the use of mandated instructional materials to meet the state standards. However, to adequately assess what is needed for teaching students who are gifted in a variety of learning environments and service delivery models, principals must understand and identify practices that promote the effective instruction of these learners (Boscardin, 2005).

Principals' increased awareness of issues surrounding the education of students who are gifted facilitates a greater level of academic support. Wakeman, Browder, Flowers, and



Ahlgrim-Delzell (2006) determined that principals generally believe they are well-informed in issues relating to educating students who are gifted. However, the researchers found that principals seem to lack a full understanding of academic and social issues, including self-determination, assessments, and universally designed lessons. Alvarez McHatton et al.'s (2010) review of the literature indicates that administrative support of best practices in the classroom and knowledge of legislation for students with exceptionalities leads to improved outcomes for students in these programs.

### **Policy Impact on Educating Students Who Are Gifted**

Education policy reform appears to be transitioning its focus on the ways in which schools are organized and managed to the interaction that takes place among teachers, students, and the material to be learned. In the process of designing education policy reform to encourage our most promising students and to meet the needs of at-risk students, we need to examine the types of changes currently being advocated (Renzulli, 2012). Education policy reforms need to address the impact of the programs for educating students who are gifted and practices on how to teach them. Education policy and reforms must also be concerned with continued advocacy for gifted programming, including the creating and maintaining exemplary programs and practices that can serve as models of what can be accomplished for students with high abilities (Renzulli & Reis, 1991).

Under NCLB (2001), states began conducting annual assessments of student achievement for adequate yearly progress (AYP) determination. The growth model under NCLB did not hold promise for measuring the growth of students who are gifted because the model's purpose was to identify students scoring below proficiency in reading and mathematics and those as being on-track toward proficiency (Ryser & Rambo-Hernandez, 2013). Educators often run into problems

when measuring how students who are gifted are academically achieving. Most assessments are written and designed to measure typical students, and as a result, the test scores of students who are gifted are more likely to contain error (McCoach, Rambo, & Welsh, 2013). Test items are written to see how much average students know and as a result, students who are gifted might only find a few test items to be challenging. To prevent this, McCoach et al. (2013) suggested giving students above grade level tests because the performance of students who are gifted is more likely to align with the older group for whom the test was designed. Another option is to use computer-adaptive testing so that students who are gifted takes an assessment that tracks his or her progress; questions get progressively difficult until the student's performance ceiling is determined. This allows the students' score to be as accurate or contain as much error as an average student.

NCLB has created a mindset that focuses on deficits and improving students' learning weaknesses (Gentry, 2006). This focus is contradictory to motivation theory in which students need to feel empowered, efficacious, and able to self-regulate to be able to learn effectively and with confidence and motivation (Patrick, Gentry, & Owen, 2006). Educating students who are gifted has long involved educating to students' strengths and interests (U.S. Department of Education Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 1993). As previously mentioned, Renzulli suggested that the methods used in educating the gifted can benefit all students (1994). Of major concern for students who are gifted is the assumption under NCLB that all students can attain the same high standards. The NCLB assumption has led states to lower standards so they can show the desired level of proficiency (National Association for Gifted Children, 2005; Nichols & Berliner, 2005). This results in a lack of academic challenge for some students.

The Jacob Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Act (1988) was premised on the idea that students who are gifted, like all other students, should receive the services they need to develop their full potential. The purpose of the Javits Act was to facilitate a coordinated program of scientifically based research, demonstration projects, innovative strategies, and similar activities that build and enhance the ability of elementary and secondary schools to meet the special educational needs of students who are gifted. Congress first passed the Javits Act in 1988 as part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act to support the development of talent in U.S. schools. Although the Javits Act was the only federal program dedicated specifically to gifted and talented students, the Act never funded local gifted education programs. The Javits Act focused resources on identifying and serving students who are traditionally underrepresented in programs for students who are gifted, particularly economically disadvantaged, limited-English proficient, and students with disabilities, to help reduce gaps in achievement and to encourage the establishment of equal educational opportunities.

Unfortunately, with the enactment of IDEA in 2004 the Javits Act was defunded. Although the Act was defunded, funds were still allocated periodically. In 2014 the Javits Act received \$5 million, the first time it receive any funding since fiscal year (FY) 2011. As a result of the recent work of advocates for educating the gifted, Congress doubled the funding to \$10 million for the Jacob Javits Gifted & Talented Education Grant program for FY2015. The increase will enable the U.S. Department of Education to fund additional applied research initiatives in the field, to continue the work of the National Center on Research on Gifted Education and to make grant funds available, competitively, to states and districts to support their work with underserved, high-ability students.

The hallmark of Response to Intervention (RTI) according to Kratochwill, Volpiansky, Clements, and Ball (2007), is the “combination of a systematic progress monitoring and movement across tiers of intervention for decision making” (p. 619). The profile of the student’s strengths used within the RTI framework guides decisions regarding appropriate curriculum, instruction, assessment, enrichment, extension, depth, and complexity targeted to develop individual student potential (Carey, 2012). With the implementation of RTI, students identified as gifted receive services that meet their identified strengths and academic needs (Carey, 2012). By implementing RTI for students who are gifted, their academic and social needs are addressed as part of their instruction, not considered as a reward or privilege of having the label of gifted. With the implementation of RTI, services for gifted is an extension of content and standards to ensure commensurate growth for the student, as opposed to separate enrichment projects added on to the regular general education curriculum. Once a student is identified to receive services for gifted, the RTI process provides services that are to be linked to the student’s skills, interests and learning profiles. Providing specific strategies in instruction such as curriculum compacting, cluster grouping, problem-based instruction and acceleration of content can be incorporated within a comprehensive RTI framework (Johnsen, Parker, & Farah, 2015). As a policy, RTI directly links the student and her resulting educational needs thus strengthening education for students who are gifted because it begins to provide coherency in among programming aspects including identification and service delivery (Brown & Abernethy, 2009).

Another area in which RTI has implications in educating students who are gifted is progress monitoring. Progress monitoring is a key component of RTI and is a scientifically based practice of assessing students’ performance on a regular basis (Brown & Abernethy, 2009). Monitoring the progress of a student who is gifted allows school teams to make ongoing

decisions about instruction. In an era of accountability, implementing a comprehensive service delivery model cannot be understated (Brown & Abernethy, 2009). RTI serves as a valuable framework for conversations about policy development because of its potential to provide meaningful learning opportunities for all students as well as a form of early identification of students who lack an appropriate instructional and curriculum match.

Table 1 summarizes recent key policies and the impact on educating students who are gifted.

Table 1: Policy Review

Legislation	Proposed impact on the education of students who are gifted	Alignment with principal leadership standards	Current status of the legislation and how it affects the education of students who are gifted
No Child Left Behind (2001)	<p>* The definition of students who are gifted and talented is modified to include high achievement capability in areas such as intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership capacity, or in specific academic fields, and need services and activities not ordinarily provided by the school to develop those capabilities.</p>	<p>* Increase student achievement, and increased recruitment and retention among educators.</p> <p>* Inclusion of performance incentive evaluation systems</p> <p>* Provide evaluation, feedback and guidance to educators using measures that consider the area of education for students who are gifted, and the validity and reliability of the instruments used.</p> <p>* Support and encourages collaboration between professionals as well as provide avenues for consistent professional growth over time.</p>	<p>* The reauthorization of The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (formerly called No Child Left Behind) is allocating financial resources that supports gifted and talented education research, development and dissemination to ensure best practices research is available to classroom teachers, district and state personnel.</p> <p>* The Council of Exceptional Children recommends that the re-authorization of ESEA in 2015 provides intense support be provided for students with high-potential from “at risk” and traditionally underserved backgrounds to close the achievement gap between the highest performing students from traditionally underserved populations and their more advantaged peers.</p>

Legislation	Proposed impact on the education of students who are gifted	Alignment with principal leadership standards	Current status of the legislation and how it affects the education of students who are gifted
The Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Act of 1988	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Provided millions of dollars that were used for an Office of Gifted and Talented Education, for a National Center for Research and Development in the Education of Gifted and Talented Youth, and for competitive grants.</li> <li>* The programs funded by Javits have brought about ideas for students who are gifted from the “talking” stage to the “acting” stage.</li> <li>* Perceived as a watershed moment to scholars and educators in the field education for students who are gifted.</li> <li>* Put the academic needs of students who are gifted in the national spotlight and attempted to address the inequitable education many of them receive.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* The school leader provides a clear vision as to how instruction should be addressed in the school.</li> <li>* The school leader is aware of predominant instructional practices throughout the school.</li> <li>* The school leader ensures that the school curriculum and accompanying assessments adhere to state and district standards.</li> <li>* The school leader ensures that all students have the opportunity to learn the critical content of the curriculum.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* The Javits Act has been criticized for offering very low levels of financial support for the gifted and for failing to mandate state programs for the gifted.</li> <li>* Federal support for the gifted has been intermittent at its height offered very limited incentives, either financial or legal, for states to prioritize gifted education.</li> <li>* As a result of the defunding of The Javits Act, students who are gifted and their advocates have no assurance from states and school districts for funding programs for the gifted.</li> <li>* One result of the work of advocates and leadership for the education of students who are gifted, Congress allocated \$10 million to the Jacob Javits Gifted &amp; Talented Education Grant program for fiscal year 2015. The financial allocation will allow the U.S. Department of Education to fund additional research initiatives in the field, and to continue the work of the National Center on Research on Gifted Education.</li> </ul>

Legislation	Proposed impact on the education of students who are gifted	Alignment with principal leadership standards	Current status of the legislation and how it affects the education of students who are gifted
Response to Intervention/Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (RTI/MTSS)	<p>* Components of RTI/MTSS that are critical to its development and implementation, including students who are gifted include: (a) universal screening, assessments, and progress monitoring; (b) established protocols for students who need additional supports and services; (c) problem-solving that includes parental involvement to determine what the student/child needs; and d) a tiered system of intervention, based on level of need and support.</p> <p>* RTI services are fluid and flexible based on the need of the student who is gifted. This flexibility allows schools to meet the needs of students at varying levels of development ensuring that services are less dependent on a student's label and more dependent on a student's need.</p>	<p>* Professional development in strengths-based educational strategies is needed at all levels of education.</p> <p>* RTI is an allowable expense through IDEA, and services for students who are gifted are served under IDEA, many services to support students who are gifted may be allocated.</p> <p>* Existing funds under special education and educating students who are gifted can be aligned to meet varying needs incorporating some of the same curriculum and resources.</p>	<p>* The 2015 reauthorization of ESEA supports the inclusion of the RTI process based on a child's response to scientific, research-based interventions.</p> <p>* Guidance is provided to general educators on their roles in implementing RTI as a school-wide intervention process and the need for collaboration with special educators. The responsibility of the entire educational system for RTI implementation must be articulated.</p> <p>* The Council for Exceptional Children recommends that Congress direct the U.S. Secretary of Education to develop and implement pilot programs to determine effective RTI models and processes and provide technical assistance, professional development, and dissemination of these models to the field.</p>



## **Teacher Preparation for Educating Students Who Are Gifted**

As early as 1970, the Department of Health, Education and Welfare determined that teacher attitude and knowledge regarding the instructional needs for students who are gifted was a top national priority (Brody & Mills, 1997). Darling-Hammond (2000) noted that, “in all cases, teachers with full certification status are by far the most important determinant of student achievement” (p. 30). Further, Marzano (2007) identified teachers as having the greatest influence on the effectiveness of a school. Researchers have established that teachers’ attitudes towards students who are gifted become more favorable after participating in relevant professional development compared to teachers without such professional development experiences (Ciha, 1974; Gallagher, 1975). New expectations for schools include successfully teaching a broad range of students with different needs, while steadily improving achievement for all students. This means schools must be redesigned rather than merely administered differently (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson & Orr, 2007). Quality professional development is a vital contribution to student achievement (Stronge, 2002) and to meeting the academic needs of students who are gifted (Hansen & Feldhusen, 1994). Research indicates that students who have ineffective teachers for three consecutive years will never make up for the lost learning, however, instruction from effective teachers can lead to academic gains for the top 20% of students (Sanders & Horn, 1998; Sanders & Rivers, 1996). Therefore, it is important for students who are gifted to have quality teachers. To support the quality of teacher education, professional development opportunities are needed that are focused on effective methods that can be used to teach students who are gifted at all stages of development, in all settings, and in all content areas. Maximum academic achievement for students who are gifted can be accomplished when teachers are given the tools, support, and training needed to strengthen

instructional skills and develop knowledge of the social and emotional needs of the students they serve (Feldhusen & Dai, 1997).

In 1980, the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) hosted the first National Institute on Professional Training in Gifted Education. The Professional Training Institute (PTI) addressed the needs and prescribed appropriate standards for programs to prepare teachers for various roles in educating students who are gifted. The PTI eventually became the Professional Development Division (PDD) of the NAGC which continued to make recommended guidelines and standards for preparation in educating children who are gifted (Parker, 1996). A key guideline recommended by the PDD includes the right of all persons to have educational opportunities to maximize their potential and identify common elements that must be provided in all educational programs in order to realize this goal, and recognize general characteristics that are common among effective teachers. The Pre-K through Grade 12 Gifted Education Programming Standards were developed with contribution from a variety of stakeholders (NAGC, 2014d). The standards use student outcomes for goals, rather than teacher instructional practices. Since the programming standards for students who are gifted are rooted in theory, practice, research and practice paradigms, they provide an important foundation for all students who are gifted at all stages of development. The six programming standards for students who are gifted include: (a) learning and development, (b) assessment, (c) curriculum and instruction, (d) learning environments, (e) programming, and (f) professional development. The PDD is guided by the belief that there is a symbiotic relationship between general education and education for students who are gifted. The PDD's philosophy acknowledges potential giftedness in all populations. Further the NAGC PDD reveals the complexities inherent in students who are gifted and addresses elements that should be present in their educational programs in order to

achieve personal excellence and realize their contributions to self and society (Parker, 1996).

These educational elements include: (a) opportunities commensurate with their development and academic levels, (b) qualitative differentiation, and (c) guidance by competent, specially trained teachers.

The literature in education for students who are gifted suggests that teachers' use of differentiated strategies aligned to the gifted framework is the link to specialized programs and services for this population (Renzulli & National Research on the Gifted, 2005; VanTassel-Baska, 2003; VanTassel-Baska, Quek, & Feng, 2007). Yet, replicated studies have suggested that general education classrooms offer very limited differentiated activities (Westberg, Archambault, Dobyns, & Salvin, 1993; Westberg & Daoust, 2003).

In the large urban school district where the research study was conducted there are approximately 192,000 students enrolled. The urban school district has 521 school level administrators, and 13,557 instructional staff, and 180 schools. Instructional and support staff make up 95% of the school district's workforce. 39% of the teachers in the large urban school district have advanced degrees. Within the large urban school district participating in the study the years of experience of teachers vary. Figure 1 indicates the percentage of teachers' years of experience.

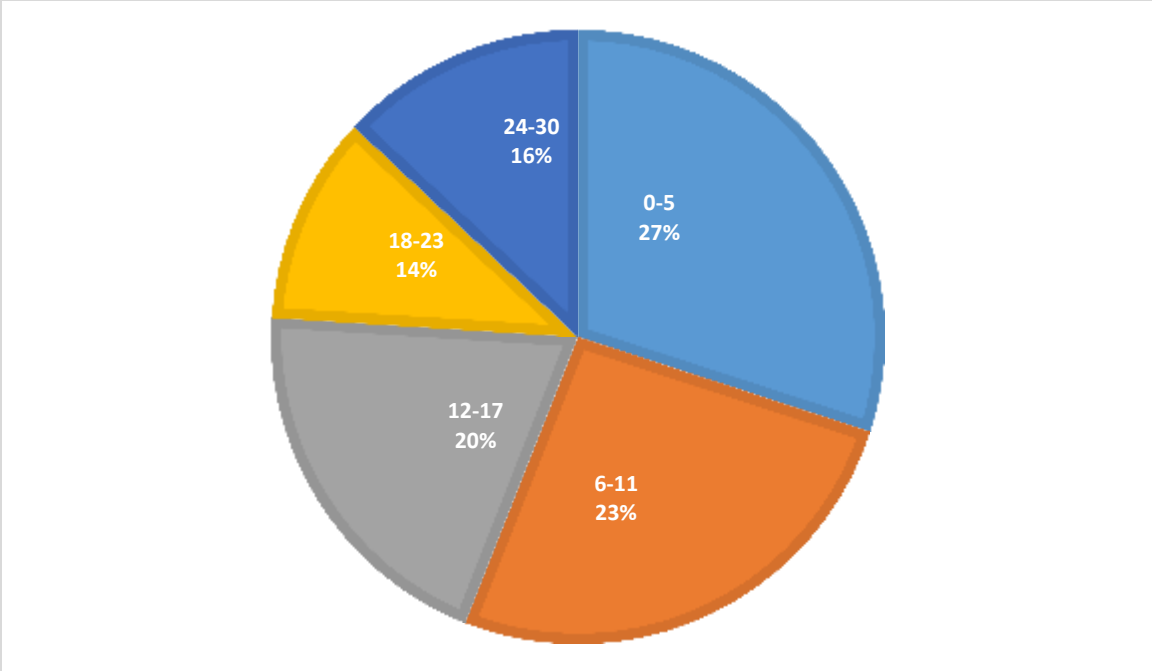


Figure 1: Instructional Years of Experience

Table 2 describes the experience profile of teachers based on the Marzano (2007) model. Both school principals and teachers are scored on a scale score consisting of Highly Effective, Effective, Needs Improvement, and Unsatisfactory; however, principals are not categorized based on years of experience.

Table 2: Teachers' Experience Profile

Teachers' category placement	Description
Category 1	New teachers who have 0-2 years of teaching experience. These teachers are in their first, second, or third year of teaching.
Category 2A	Experienced teachers who have at least 3 years of teaching experience. These teachers would be at least in their fourth year of teaching.
Category 2B	Experienced teachers who have at least 3 years of teaching experience but who are new hires to the school district, assigned to teach a new subject area or grade level that is different from their previous assignment, and/or received a low instructional practice score from the previous year.
Category 3	Teachers who have been determined to be less than effective (i.e., Needs Improvement or Unsatisfactory) in the classroom as documented through the evaluation system that may result in an unsatisfactory rating or who fail to achieve gains based upon the state's student growth model. This category is for struggling teachers in need of intensive support and feedback and who have been placed on a Professional Improvement Plan.
Category 4	A teacher originally in another category who does not have enough data to be fairly evaluated, either due to a significant leave of absence or being hired after the school mid-year point.

### **Service Delivery Model for Students Who Are Gifted**

Throughout history, individuals who are gifted have made significant contributions in a variety of cultures in our world. The Greeks and Romans recognized the importance of talent. The Chinese Dynasties and Confucius saw the importance of educating all social strata according to their talents. Cultures accepted and recognized the value of the gifted. These gifted individuals were often viewed as contributors to society, leaders, philosophers, or clerics (Toynbee, 1972). Academic rigor has long been advocated as an important component of

educational programming for students who are gifted. In 1938 John Dewey was the first to call for education that included rigorous content (Osgood, 2005). During the 1930s, honors classes, classes taught in foreign languages, and other extracurricular programs were offered to secondary school students who were gifted.

By the early 1900s, public schools began to identify the students deemed “most intelligent,” and established specialized programs to make instruction more efficient and encourage this group of students’ abilities (Osgood, 2005). For example, in Boston, the school district developed rapid advancement classes. Rapid advancement focused on acceleration, moving selected students through the curriculum standards at a faster rate in order to save money and avoid student boredom. Programs like those in Boston, for students who are gifted lead to questions and discussions about the proper nature of and setting of education for the gifted. Should the content provide an accelerated program, an enriched program, or both? Should the program take place in a heterogeneous or homogeneous setting within the general education classroom or in a specialized, segregated classroom? Stephen Daurio’s 1979 review of the literature on educating students who are gifted revealed that educators use both acceleration and enrichment in developing specialized programs in both public and private schools (Osgood, 2005).

The service delivery model for students who are gifted is currently provided in a variety of school settings. Educational programs for students who are gifted are available in traditional, charter, and virtual schools. Service delivery models for the gifted range from one day per week to classes solely for students who are gifted, to cluster groups and consultation, which is traditionally only available at the secondary level. While most school districts identified service delivery models for students who are gifted for elementary, middle, and high schools, services

tend to be limited due to a variety of reasons, including the number of students who are gifted per grade or course and the availability of teachers with gifted endorsement. For example, Florida's student funding formula, which pays teachers' salaries, is based on full-time equivalent enrollment and attendance per student (Florida Department of Education, 2014a). In order for a teacher to earn their endorsement in the State of Florida, teachers are to complete five courses including: (a) Nature and Needs of Students Who Are Gifted (b) Curriculum and Instructional Strategies for Teaching Students Who Are Gifted, (c) Guidance and Counseling of Students Who Are Gifted, (d) Educating Special Populations of Students Who Are Gifted, and (e) Theory and Development of Creativity. As indicated in VanTassel-Baska's 2007 research, principals at each school must decide upon a service delivery model based on the financial funding generated by students who are enrolled in gifted programs. Oftentimes, if an elementary school cannot financially support a program for the gifted the students are transported one day per week from their zone home school to a center-school for educating the gifted.

Serving students who are gifted continues to be a prominent role for many education professionals. Teachers expect students who are gifted to provide good examples in the classroom and to be compliant (Bain, Bliss, Choate, & Sager-Brown, 2007). Teachers may also have misconceptions about the social and emotional functioning levels of students who are gifted that can impact academic achievement (Bain, Choate, & Bliss, 2006). Students with high academic abilities assimilate new information more quickly than students who are average and often grade level curriculum does not provide enough academic challenge. Without academic challenges, these students may get good grades without working hard, however they may face challenges related to time management, have an inability to overcome academic difficulties, prioritize tasks, organize or study. Additionally, students who are not challenged early in their

educational careers may equate smart with easy. When academic tasks become more challenging, these students have limited resources or strategies and little confidence to help them cope with difficult learning experiences (Burney & Cross, 2006). Adelman's 1999 15-year analysis of longitudinal data for a national cohort of students who are gifted between 10<sup>th</sup> grade through age 30 found that rigorous academic instruction in high school was the most accurate predictor of bachelor degree attainment. The academic rigor during high school included intensity of instruction and quality of the curriculum, which emerged as more important than either test scores or grade point average in predicting college graduation (Adelman, 1999).

Renzulli (1994) researched school officials from several large urban school districts who, as a result in the reduction of resources to support programs for students who are gifted, sensed the traditional service delivery model for students who are gifted was not functioning adequately. One large urban school district began to incorporate high-level learning opportunities within the general education curriculum (Fernandez, 1993; Slatin, 1995) that included enrichment clusters and non-graded groups of students who share common interests were formed and met during specific blocks of time. Students and teachers were bound together in the development of a service or product that was linked by their similar interests. These real-world conceptions are examples of high-level learning activities (Renzulli, 1994) that provide students with ongoing opportunities to contribute to their areas of interest and specialization, therefore nurturing the talents of all students involved.

Lewis et al. (2007) conducted a study of the school principal's impact on students who are gifted. The study looked at the participating schools' service delivery models for students who are gifted. Two elementary schools from a midwestern state were selected by the state's consultant for education of students who are gifted as schools that provide strong programs.



Both principals recognized and encouraged the use of pretesting, curriculum compacting and differentiated instruction to meet the needs of students who are gifted in the general education classroom. The principals supported the teachers' use of a team approach to serve their students. Cluster grouping was used for interest but not for ability. Resources within the community were used to enhance options for students, including those who are gifted. Challenges remained in that there was very little grade acceleration, although subject acceleration was sometimes used. One principal identified student self-evaluation as an area that needed to be added and affective support was minimal. Some services, such as classes solely for students who are gifted, were limited or nonexistent in order to avoid being too visible; the purpose was to avoid being seen as providing an elitist program. Both principals were uncertain if the goals for their school's programs for students who are gifted were met, because these goals were not included in their school improvement plan.

Lunenburg and Ornstein (2004) noted that the principal serves as the link from the school to the community and recommend that services for the gifted become part of the school's mission that is clearly communicated to the public. To ensure an appropriate, rigorous education that meets the needs of students who are gifted, principals must be sure that teachers are well trained to meet the needs of all learners in their classrooms. Meanwhile principals need to nurture the climate and culture of the school and community to embrace rigorous learning and to be supportive of education of the gifted in order to minimize the stigma of elitism.

Education for students who are gifted provides programs and practices that meet the needs of both students who are gifted and their peers who are non-gifted; whereas students who are promising but economically poor require special consideration (VanTassel-Baska, 2007). Identified strategies to support these students, usually enrolled in large urban school districts,

include an identification model which acknowledges student strengths (Frasier, 1991), value-added programs which provide intensive and extensive opportunities beyond the school schedule (VanTassel-Baska, 2006b), personalized support which includes mentors (Siegle, 2005), culturally responsive curriculum (Ford, 1996), transition support which provides follow-up to program participation (Johnsen, Feuerbacher, & Witte, 2006), and working with the families while these students are in school (Olszewski-Kubilius, 2006). Through a comprehensive plan of support, students of poverty are able to develop their academic abilities to optimal levels.

In the large urban school district where the research study was conducted, 80 elementary schools provide on-campus services for students who are gifted. Approximately 3,700 of the district's 192,000 students are enrolled in the programs. Individual elementary schools are choosing to provide services for students who are gifted in different ways. Table 3 lists the more common service delivery models within the large urban district.

Table 3: Elementary Service Delivery Models

Model	Description	Curriculum/allocation of resources	Administrative
Home-school based resource room	Students attend classes for the gifted one or more days or portions of a day each week. The remainder of the time is spent in the general education classroom. Flexible groupings, including multiage are an option.	Curriculum is centered on student’s interests and abilities with a wide range of content and designed around an approved curriculum model for the gifted. Differentiated materials and technology are needed to access the content. These teachers require a gifted endorsement and elementary certification.	This model is easy to implement, as one teacher can serve more students than in cluster of full-time models. If numbers permit, resource teachers can provide additional enrichment for non-identified students during times other than with students who are gifted.
Center-school based resource room	Students attend classes for the gifted one day per week. Students spend the remainder of the time in their general education classroom. Students from multiple schools can participate.	The curriculum is centered on student interests and abilities with a wide range of content and designed around an approved curriculum model for the gifted. Differentiated materials and technology are needed to access the content. These teachers require a gifted endorsement and elementary certification. Transportation for feeder schools is required.	One teacher can serve more students than cluster or full-time models. Requires additional teacher planning time for meetings and provision of supports at feeder schools.
Subject-area academic classroom	Students who are gifted attend a subject area specific class for a portion of each day. The remainder of the day is spent in the general education classroom.	Students who are gifted receive instruction on grade level curriculum in an academic area. Depth and complexity of curriculum are differentiated. Documentation of mastery of grade-level skills can allow for a pace more suited to students who are gifted in the academic area. Teachers need access to differentiated materials and technology. These teachers require a gifted endorsement and elementary certification. For students who require academic acceleration in the subject-area classrooms, more textbooks and above grade level resources and materials are required.	Scheduling challenges can arise as general education teachers and teacher of gifted students should be teaching the same academic areas at the same time.

(Orange County Public Schools, n.d.)

With the adoption of the new Florida Standards, courses are designed to provide enrichment, in-depth learning and accelerated study of academic curriculum requirements for elementary students who are gifted (CPALMS, 2015). Under the new standards, the courses for students who are gifted are meant to be used at K-5 grade level and have been designed for teachers to select and teach only the appropriate standards corresponding to a student's individual instructional needs. Major concepts and content taught in the new Florida Standards for students who are gifted include:

- higher-order thinking skills
- independent learning
- application of acquired knowledge
- high-level communication
- career exploration
- leadership
- self-awareness

As students who are gifted progress from one grade-level course to the next, the complexity of the materials and tasks should increase as well as the student's independence in his or her application and use. Scaffolded learning opportunities are to be provided for students to develop and apply the critical skills of discourse analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (CPALMS, 2015).

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

### Introduction

In this chapter, the research design used in the study will be discussed. Qualitative research, broadly defined, means “any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 17). Those who are in a position to judge or use the findings of a qualitative inquiry must play a different type of role than those who review quantitative research. “There are no operationally defined truth tests to apply to qualitative research” (Eisner, 1991, p. 53). Instead, both researcher and readers “share a joint responsibility” for establishing the value of the qualitative research product (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 232). “Pragmatic validation of qualitative research means that the perspective presented is judged by its relevance to and use by those to whom it is presented: *their* perspective and actions are joined to the researcher's perspective and actions” (Patton, 1990, p. 485). Qualitative researchers follow the scientific method and the research sometimes is used to generate new hypotheses and theories. Qualitative research is commonly used to understand people’s experiences and to express their perspectives (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

Using a qualitative research design allowed the researcher to collect the views of a number of participants who experience the same phenomenon. This study used a qualitative phenomenological research approach. Phenomenological research aims to discover the meanings behind lived experiences, as perceived by people, or groups of people. In this

phenomenological study, the researcher sought to find a deeper understanding of a phenomenon, looking for core meanings, or the essence, of the experience. The researcher focused on the narratives provided by the principals to provide accounts of human experience by collecting and analyzing stories of events and actions that are chronologically connected. As Creswell et al. (2007) described, unlike grounded theory of theorizing views and generating a theoretical model, phenomenologists describe what all participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon. In phenomenological studies, researchers work from specific statements and experiences and not abstracting statements to construct a model from the researcher's interpretations. This research method is not designed to be a historical record; rather this method is used to design an understanding of the perspectives of the elementary school principal in context of his or her life, educational and professional experiences. In this study, the researcher used descriptive methods, such as audio recordings of interviews, field notes, and surveys as a way to collect and present the data of the lived experiences of elementary school principals who implement gifted programs in a large urban school district. In the process of collecting and analyzing data, complex meanings were identified through the analysis of the experiences of the participants (Ary et al., 2009).

### **Demographics**

**Urban School District.** The urban school district used in this study is one of the largest school districts in the state of Florida and in the United States. This school district serves over 192,000 students in 184 schools. Students in this large urban school district come from 191 countries and speak 161 different languages and dialects. The district's graduation rate was 85.6 percent in 2012. Student racial/ethnic distribution of the entire district is 62% White, 29% Black, and 36% Hispanic. This school district has an annual capital and operating budget of

\$1.86 billion, and has 22,347 employees, including 13,084 teachers (OCPS, 2014). Across the district, 81 elementary schools have programs on campus for students who are gifted.

**Learning Communities.** The large urban school district used in this study is divided into six learning communities. Each learning community is led by an area superintendent, and is supported by administrative staff that supervises areas of curriculum, exceptional student education, behavior, school accountability and budgeting. The area superintendents serve on the executive cabinet in the district's superintendent's office and report directly to the district's Deputy Superintendent. Learning communities are divided by geographic regions within the county and each community serves approximately 30 schools. For this study, elementary schools within the east and west learning communities were selected because of the availability of students who are gifted, the number of principals who met the participation criteria and recommendations from the learning community's area superintendent. Of the 81 elementary schools within the large urban school district with programs for students who are gifted on campus, 22 are located within the east learning community and 12 within the west learning communities.

### **Sample Size**

Interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) studies are conducted in small sample sizes. The detailed analysis of each transcript takes a long time, and the goal of the research study is to identify the details about the perceptions and understandings of the research participants rather than prematurely make general claims (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Smith and Osborn (2008) suggest for the novice researcher, three is a useful number for the research sample. This size allows for in-depth engagement with each participant and allows for detailed examination of the similarities, differences, convergence and divergence.

## Subject Selection

This research study involved elementary schools where programs for students who are gifted are provided on the school's campus in a self-contained program, resource, or cluster settings. The researcher accessed the district's Graduation Database to identify elementary schools with enrollments of students who are gifted and the programs that are available on the school's campus. The Graduation Database is specific to the school district participating in this research study and is used to retrieve sorting information on all students with disabilities and the gifted including school enrollment, course enrollment, course completion, assessment scores, and progress toward obtaining a high school diploma. The researcher sorted the data in the Graduation Database by searching for the enrollments of students who were gifted in elementary schools. The researcher selected elementary schools that had an enrollment of gifted that exceeded 100 students, provided services for the gifted on the schools' campus, and had several teachers of students who are gifted who participated in the study survey. The researcher contacted the learning community area superintendents and explained the research study. The researcher shared the identified elementary schools with programs for students who are gifted on their schools' campus with the learning community area superintendents. The researcher then requested the area superintendents' assistance in identifying principals to participate in the study based on the participation requirements. The researcher then requested accessibility to the elementary principals who met the participation requirements. The requirements for principal and school participation in the study are the following:

- a. A rating of at least *Effective* or *Highly Effective* on the most recent School Leadership Evaluation Model. The principal who achieves at this level is described to have leadership performance that has local impact (OCPS, 2012). This principal is adequate, necessary, and clearly makes a significant contribution to the school. The



ratings on the School Leadership Evaluation Model adopted by this large urban school district range from Highly Effective, Effective, Needs Improvement and Unsatisfactory.

- b. The principal leads programs for students who are gifted on their elementary school campus.
- c. The principal indicated a willingness to participate in the study, and give consent to engage in interviews that are to be audio-recorded.
- d. The principal was nominated by the area superintendent for inclusion in the study.

After reviewing the eligible elementary principals with programs for students who are gifted on their school's campus with the learning community area superintendents, the researcher sent an email message to each nominated principal and requested their involvement and outlined the study. The email included:

- a. Introduction of the researcher,
- b. Background information of the research study,
- c. Requirements to participate in the research study,
- d. Outline of research procedures, and
- e. Assurance of confidentiality (removal of identifiers of principal name and school).

### *Principal Interview Questions*

Prior to principal interviews, the researcher assembled an expert panel consisting of experts in the field of educating students who are gifted, and education leadership. Members of the expert panel hold degrees in education leadership or state endorsement in educating students who are gifted. Members of the expert panel were invited to participate in the review based on their experiences and expertise in either educating students who are gifted or in education

leadership (Appendix C). Using the Delphi Technique (Hsu & Sandford, 2007), the expert panel assisted the researcher in developing a set of questions to use in the elementary school principals' interviews (Appendix E). The principal interview questions were developed based on identifying the principals' perceptions and lived experiences in the implementation of programs, practices and instructional methods in supporting programs for students who are gifted. After three rounds of review of principal interview questions and prompting questions, the expert panel came to consensus (Appendix F).

Interview questions explored how elementary school principals' perceive the programs for students who are gifted and how they are implemented on their school's campus. The principals were asked questions to describe the programs for the gifted including descriptions of the service delivery model, the changes he or she made to the service delivery model, instructional practices and methods that are implemented to support students who are gifted, and professional development opportunities provided to teachers of students who are gifted.

### *Interview Planning*

In order to obtain permission to conduct research in the large, urban school district, a director from the district's Accountability, Research, and Assessment (ARA) department emailed an interest in participation survey to the 125 elementary school principals in the district; 23 elementary school principals expressed interest in participating. The researcher reviewed the principals who expressed interest in participating to determine if their elementary school provided programs for the gifted on their school's campus. The researcher identified six elementary schools that met participation criteria and requested permission to contact the principals from the area superintendent. Of the principals identified, four were recommended by the area superintendents and three principals agreed to participate in the study. Upon receipt of

favorable responses from the three elementary school principals that were recommended, the researcher reviewed date suggestions, times, and locations to set appointments for face-to-face interviews.

All interviews were structured the same. Each principal participant was asked the same questions, in the same order. Following this format ensured that the data would be complete for each participant and opportunities for bias reduced. Moustakas (1994) describes the value of Husserl's Epoche principle, in which we set aside our prejudgments, biases, and preconceived ideas about things, and which allows the researcher to examine one's biases and enhance one's openness.

All interviews were recorded and transcribed using a standard protocol (Ary et al., 2009).

The research questions for this study are as follows:

1. What are the perceptions of elementary school principals, identified as effective or highly effective on The Leadership Evaluation Model (OCPS, 2012), concerning the implementation of practices, programs, and instructional methods that support their programs for students who are gifted?
2. How do elementary principals who are identified as effective or highly effective on The Leadership Evaluation Model (OCPS, 2012) support the teachers of students who are gifted in their schools?
3. What are the lived experiences of the elementary school principals who are identified as effective or highly effective on The Leadership Evaluation Model (OCPS, 2012) and how do these experiences impact the implementation of practices, programs, and instructional methods that support their programs for students who are gifted?

The learning community area superintendents recommended four principals who met the study's criteria and three agreed to participate. Table 4 presents the demographic information of the participating principals and their elementary schools.

Table 4: Demographic Data of the Participating Principals and Their Elementary Schools

	Participating elementary schools		
	<u>ES#1</u>	<u>ES#2</u>	<u>ES#3</u>
Principal years of experience	2	4.5	4
Principal ethnicity	Caucasian	Caucasian	Afr American
School identified as Title 1	N	N	N
Total student enrollment	1,187	625	1,258
Number of students identified as gifted	175	130	125
Percentage of student population who are gifted	15	21	10
Total number of teachers on campus	76	60	80
Total number of teachers with gifted endorsement	3	4	7

### *Data Collection*

Data collected for the research study was triangulated and aligned with each of the three research study questions. Using the Delphi Technique (Hsu & Sandford, 2007), the expert panel assembled for this study assisted the researcher in developing a set of questions to use in the elementary school principals' interviews. The expert panel consisted of professionals in the area of educating students who are gifted and in education leadership. Each panel member have over 15 years of professional experience in education. After three rounds of review of principal interview questions and prompting questions, the expert panel came to consensus.

### *Securing the Confidentiality of Research Study Participants*

All research study participants were provided with instructions and forms for consent and disclosure (Appendix J). The names of all research study participants will only be known to the researcher and kept confidential. Throughout the data collection and analysis process each participant and their school was assigned an alias which was used when reporting the data. Research participants' names and aliases are maintained in a password protected computer.

#### **Phase 1: Principal Interviews**

In order to collect interview data, the researcher recorded each interview using a digital voice recorder. The recording allowed the researcher to garner all data in a complete and concise fashion. Throughout the interview, the researcher maintained a field notebook in which notes were maintained describing the tone and atmosphere of the interview, and other potential data collection components that were not apparent on the recording. The researcher maintained the transcriptions of the recordings in a personal computer that was password protected.

#### **Phase 2: Teacher Surveys**

Once principal interviews were complete, the researcher asked the principal to review a list of teachers at their school that have been identified by the Graduation database as teachers on record for teaching students who are gifted. Upon review, the principals identified the teachers who teach students who are gifted. Only teachers who were currently teaching students who are gifted were invited to participate in the online survey. Like the principal interview questions, the survey questions were vetted using the Delphi Technique using the members of the expert panel (Appendix K). The expert panel came to consensus after two rounds of survey review (Appendix M). Teachers received an email that requested his or her participation in the study

(Appendix O) by completing a survey that addressed the service delivery model for students who are gifted, participation in professional development opportunities, and their involvement and participation in developing the programs, practices, and instructional methods for students who are gifted. The survey (Appendix N) was compiled in Qualtrics, a web-based survey tool that allows users to build, distribute, and analyze online surveys. Teacher participants were asked to click on the assigned school code which was used during the principal interviews. This practice ensured that the survey participants were coded to align with the same code given to the principals' interview responses.

### **Phase 3: Focus Group**

A focus group of teachers was selected after the teacher surveys were completed. Teachers who completed the survey were invited by the researcher to participate in the focus group. The focus group's purpose was to share teacher's reports of participation in professional development available from the large urban school district's Professional Development Services department. The report is accessible online through the district's intranet. The teacher's professional development participation report indicates the professional learning the teacher's obtained in educating students who are gifted that is provided through gifted endorsement classes, district or school-wide professional development. Some professional learning opportunities are school specific and may be recommended by the principal as the instructional leader.

### **Data Analysis**

Two methods of phenomenological data analysis are presented by Hycner (1985) and by Douglass and Moustakas (1985) and were used in this study. Both approaches contain similar

analytical elements, ultimately determining the essence of the experiences. Douglass and Moustakas (1985) approach synthesizes phenomenological data through an intense introspective examination by the researcher, and interaction with the data that becomes progressively acute to finding the essence of the experience (Patton, 2002). Hycner's approach also allows for introspective examination, interaction with the data, and progressive searches for meaning within the data. Additionally, Hycner's approach increases validity by reviewing the data, and meaning found within the data, and with the research participants as the data is being analyzed.

### *Data Analysis Step 1*

In order to analyze the data for this study, the researcher used the guidelines for analyzing phenomenological interview data by Hycner (1985). The researcher recorded the principal interviews using an audio recording device in order to collect all the data in a fair and consistent fashion. Following Hycner's guidelines (1985) the researcher completed the following steps:

1. Transcription – during this step the researcher transcribed the literal statements of the principals interviewed (Appendix Q).
2. Bracketing and phenomenological reduction – the researcher listened to the recordings and read the transcripts. During this step, the researcher approached the data with an openness that elicited a general meaning. The researcher was open to understand what the principal was saying rather than what the researcher expected the principal to say.
3. Listening to the interview for the sense of the whole – Once the interviews were bracketed, the researcher listened to the recorded transcript several times to identify specific units of meaning and themes. During this step, the researcher listened for paralinguistic communication including intonations in speech, emphases of specific

- words or phrases, and pauses in thought and dialogue, which was also documented in field notes. The researcher referred to her field notes to review noted general impressions. This step allowed the researcher to minimize bias and remain true to the principal's meaning as much as possible.
4. Delineating units of general meaning – During this step, the researcher stayed very close to the literal data. The researcher reviewed every word, phrase, sentence, paragraph and noted significant nonverbal communication in the transcript to elicit the participant's meaning. All general meanings were included in this step, even those perceived as redundant or run on.
  5. Delineating units of meaning relevant to the research question – If the response aligned with the research questions, the researcher noted the statement as a unit of relevant meaning. If the researcher found ambiguity or uncertainty, she included the statement with the anticipation that clarity would emerge as more time was spent with the data. This practice allowed the researcher to identify and align the principal's responses with the research questions. During this step similar units of meaning were combined.
  6. Eliminating redundancies – The researcher reviewed the list of units of relevant meaning and eliminated those that were clearly redundant. The researcher identified the number of times a meaning was mentioned in the interview, as well as *how* it was mentioned. The number of times a unit of relevant meaning was mentioned during an interview indicated the significance or importance of the issue or topic to the principal.



7. Clustering units of relevant meaning – Once the non-redundant units of relevant meaning were identified, the researcher once again reviewed the bracketing step and remained as true to the phenomenon as possible. The researcher reviewed the data to determine if any of the units of relevant meaning could be clustered together to identify common themes or an essence that may emerge.
8. Determining themes from clusters of meaning – The researcher carefully and closely reviewed all the clusters of meaning to identify if one or more central themes emerged.
9. Writing a summary of each individual interview – Once the units of relevant meaning were clustered and themes identified, the researcher reviewed the transcriptions of the principals' interviews. Following the transcript review, the researcher wrote a summary of each interview that incorporated the identified themes that were elicited from the data.
10. Return to the participant with the summary and themes – Once the summary was written the researcher returned the transcribed interview the principal participants to conduct a validity check. At this time, email dialogue occurred between the researcher and the principals regarding the themes that were found at this stage of the study. This step allowed the principal to determine if the essence of the first interview was accurately and fully captured. If the principal desired to add additional thoughts or comments to the information she or he was able to do so.
11. Modifying themes and summary – In the event the principal added additional thoughts and comments, the previous steps were utilized. If necessary, the researcher modified or added themes due to comments made by the principals.

12. Identifying general and unique themes for all the interviews – Once all the principal interviews went through all the analyzing steps, themes common to most or all of the interviews were identified. During this step essences were elicited as well as individual differences among principals. The common themes from all principal interviews were clustered together and indicated a general theme.
13. Contextualizing of themes – Once the common and individual themes were identified the researcher placed these themes back within the overall contexts from where they emerged.
14. Composite summary – During this final step, the researcher wrote a summary of all the principal interviews that captured the essence of the phenomenon investigated. The summary captured the theme(s) as experienced by the principals and any differences among the principals were noted.

A summary of each theme was written and organized in tables to support the identification of commonalities that addressed each research question. The tables supported classifying themes considered outliers and enabled the comparison of principal interview results to teacher survey responses. Interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) revolves around the close reading and re-reading of the text (Smith, Jarman & Osborne, 1999). The researcher makes notes of any thoughts, observations and reflections that occur while reading the transcript or other text. Such notes are likely to include any recurring phrases, the researcher's questions, their own emotions, and descriptions of, or comments on, the language used. At this stage, the notes are used to document points that the researcher observes while engaging with the text. It is usual to record these initial notes in one margin of the transcript (Smith et al., 1999).

## *Data Analysis Step 2*

The survey responses from the teachers of students who are gifted were reviewed. Descriptive statistics including frequency and percentages were used to organize and interpret the survey responses. Percentage of agreement was calculated in order to identify commonalities. As suggested by Rubin and Rubin (2005), themes that are developed in the interviews address the research questions as well as the conceptual underpinning used in the study. These themes were included in a narrative that described the perceptions of elementary school principals who are identified as effective or highly effective on The Leadership Evaluation Model (OCPS, 2012) and, concerning the implementation of practices, programs, and instructional methods that support their programs for students who are gifted. The teachers' survey was used to validate the principals' responses shared in the interviews.

Once the principal interviews and teacher surveys were completed, the data collected were divided into categories, or coded, in alignment with the research questions. The researcher used the data collected from the principal interviews and the field notes to respond to research questions one and three:

1. What are the perceptions of elementary school principals, identified as effective or highly effective on The Leadership Evaluation Model (OCPS, 2012), concerning the implementation of practices, programs, and instructional methods that support their programs for students who are gifted?
3. What are the lived experiences of the elementary school principals who are identified as effective or highly effective on The Leadership Evaluation Model (OCPS, 2012) and how do those experiences impact the implementation of practices, programs, and instructional methods that support their programs for students who are gifted?

The data collected from the teacher surveys responded to research question two:

2. How do elementary principals who are identified as effective or highly effective on The Leadership Evaluation Model (OCPS, 2012) support their teachers of students who are gifted?

### *Data Analysis Step 3*

The data used in the focus group consisted of the participating teachers' reports of involvement in professional development which was obtained from the district's Professional Development Services department. The report indicated the professional development attended which supports teaching students who are gifted. The data analyzed from the focus group were used to determine support provided for the teachers surveyed.

### **Validity and Reliability**

Husserl (1970) described phenomenological principles and scientific research as valid when the knowledge sought is arrived at through descriptions that make possible an understanding of the meanings and essences of the experience. Husserl calls the freedom from suppositions the *Epoche*, Greek for "to stay away or abstain". *Epoche* allows researchers to set aside prejudgments, biases, and preconceived ideas. Further, the study's researcher(s) are to invalidate, inhibit and disqualify all commitments with reference to previous knowledge and experience (Schmitt, 1968, p. 59). Husserl (1931, p. 110) explained that the phenomenological *Epoche* does not eliminate all our previous notions, ideas, thoughts, and beliefs, does not deny the reality of everything, and does not doubt everything – "only the natural attitude, the biases of everyday knowledge as a basis for truth and reality." Husserl (1931) further explained that what is doubted are the scientific facts and, the knowing of things in advance, from an external base

rather from internal reflection and meaning. For researchers, “the Epoche is a preparation for deriving new knowledge but also as an experience in itself” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 85).

The Delphi Technique was used to establish validity of the participant surveys used in this research study. This process allowed for anonymity among the expert panel and reduced the effects of dominant individuals that is often a concern in group-based processes to collect and synthesize information (Dalkey, 1972). The data collected during the interview were presented to each elementary school principal who participated in the study for evaluation before data analysis took place. Further, the collaboration with the expert panel who reviewed the principal interview and teacher survey questions enhanced validity, as well as coding the data into themes which aligned with the research questions. Validity is further bolstered by the literature review that supports that the data analysis is based on substantial research. The research validity was enriched by the researcher’s intentional relationship with the phenomenon under investigation. Dahlberg, Drew, and Nystrom (2001) stress that validity grounded in phenomenology means “being open, susceptible, and sensitive to the phenomena in focus” (p. 231). The researcher’s intentional relationship with the phenomenon cannot be separate from any discussion of validity in the study (Vagle, 2009). The researcher is experienced in teaching twice exceptional students that are both gifted and learning disabled. The researcher is employed by the large urban school district where the study took place, however the researcher has an outside role and is not working in or supporting elementary schools. The researcher was an objective viewer of the programs for students who are gifted. The research study is an identified problem of practice by the district’s superintendent and school board chairman and of interest to the researcher. The researcher was interested in identifying the programs, practices and instruction methods that best meet the academic needs of students who are gifted.

Research reliability was organized around the adherence to the procedures used in the data collection and analysis. First, the principals who participated in the study met the same requirements which were (a) a rating of at least *Effective* or *Highly Effective* on the most recent School Leadership Evaluation Model, (b) the principal leads programs for students who are gifted on their elementary school campus, (c) the principal indicated a willingness to participate in the study, and give consent to engage in interviews that are to be audio-recorded, and (d) the principal was nominated by the area superintendent for inclusion in the study. Next, all questioning techniques, including question phrasing and question order, remained the same for each principal. Additionally, according to research from Semmelroth and Johnson (2014), to achieve acceptable levels of reliability, multiple raters and occasions must be used. To meet this requirement, inter-rater reliability was obtained by the expert panel's review of the interview and survey questions. At the end of collecting principal interview data, interviews were transcribed and themes and essences identified. A member check occurred when the researcher asked the participating principals to review the interview transcripts, themes and essences identified to clear any miscommunication, identify inaccuracies, and to obtain additional useful data.

### **Limitations**

Phenomenological research addresses questions about common human experience. According to Ary et al. (2009), participants in a phenomenological study are chosen because they have been through the experience under investigation and can share their thoughts and feelings about the experience. This type of research uses interviews and surveys as data collection methods to explore thoughts, feelings and experiences of individuals. Due to this method, the researcher assumed that the principal participants were able to comprehensively relay their perceptions and lived experiences regarding the programs for students, in terms of the monetary

and human resources, instructional materials, and service delivery model for students who are gifted at their elementary schools. Another assumption pertains to the availability of an adequate pool of eligible and willing participants for the study. The researcher realized that elementary school principals within the urban school district have high turnover and the school's current programs for students who are gifted may not be the design of the current administration. Additionally, the principals in the large urban school district selected for this research project are evaluated using The Leadership Evaluation Model (OCPS, 2012) based on the research of Dr. Robert Marzano. This principal evaluation model is in the first year of use and may present issues with inter-rater reliability. Potential principal evaluation issues may cause an inflated or low score on their evaluation in turn, this situation may respectively qualify or eliminate principals for participation in the study.

Further, the sample size of teachers participating in the study is limited by the number of teachers serving students who are gifted and the number of programs for students who are gifted on elementary school campuses.

### **Summary**

A phenomenological study was conducted to examine the perceptions and lived experiences of elementary school principals who are identified as effective or highly effective on The Leadership Evaluation Model (OCPS, 2012) in a large urban school district with programs for students who are gifted on their campus. The primary purpose of this research study was to examine elementary school principals' perceptions of best practices, service delivery models, and instructional methods that support the education of students who are gifted. Of interest to the researcher were the perceptions and lived experiences of the elementary school principals, specifically how these principals support programs for students who are gifted on the campus of

his or her elementary school. The researcher systematically conducted three interviews with the participating elementary school principals over a two month period of time and analyzed the data using Hycner's guidelines (1985). Teachers of students who are gifted at the participating elementary schools were surveyed to see if what was shared by principals during their interviews was what really occurred when implementing programs, practices and instructional methods for students who are gifted. A focus group of participating teachers provided additional data to validate the teachers' professional development participation as indicated in the principals' responses on offering professional development. The researcher identified the themes of the principals' perceptions and experiences as they aligned with the research questions in this study.



## **CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to gain insight into the perceptions and lived experiences of elementary school principals and their implementation of practices, programs, and instructional methods that support students who are gifted. Sources of data for this study came from interviews of elementary school principals, survey responses from teachers of students who are gifted from the participating elementary school, and professional development reports from teachers participating in the survey.

Initial content in this chapter contains demographic information to provide a framework for the analysis of interview and survey data. The principal interview data have been presented in tables and summaries followed by the teacher survey responses. Following the principal interview data are the teacher survey responses of the 16 teacher participants. These types of data presentation allow for a comparison of the data and a summary of the findings.

### **Qualitative Research Process**

#### *Interview Questions*

The researcher drafted a list of 27 principal interview questions and prompts for the principal interviews (Appendix G). The interview questions were designed to elicit responses from the participants that answer the three research questions for the study. The interview questions include questions that obtained demographic information from each principal

participant, as well as the principals' knowledge on educating students who are gifted on their schools' campus. To validate the principal interview questions, the researcher implemented the Delphi technique and enlisted a team of experts who served on a panel to review the principal interview questions (Appendix C). The panel included professionals in the field of gifted education in the public schools and professionals in school and district leadership. All expert panel members have served in education for a minimum of 15 years.

In the first round of the Delphi technique the expert panel received background information on the study, the research questions and instructions on how to proceed with the question review (Appendix D). The panel members were asked to evaluate the questions for content, applicability, and validity and were asked to evaluate each question as "appropriate" or "not appropriate." If a question was deemed "not appropriate" the panel member was requested to provide feedback and possible rewording (Appendix E). The results of round one were used to create round two of the principal interview questions. Like in round one, the panel reviewed the questions, provided feedback and possible rewording of questions. In the third and final round the panel were sent the original version of the principal interview questions and the reworded questions based on their feedback. The panel was asked to indicate their agreement with the reworded question and the majority of agreement from the expert panel indicated the inclusion of the original interview question or the reworded question. If a panel member did not agree with the reworded questions they were asked to provide a rationale. The results of round three reflected the majority of the expert panel agreement on each individual question, which finalized the development of the principal interview instrument (Appendix G).

### *Teacher Survey Questions*

The researcher drafted a list of 29 questions resulting from the principal interview questions. The Accountability, Research and Assessment department at the participating large, urban school district strongly recommended limiting the number of teacher survey questions to as close to twenty to increase the likelihood of teacher participation. Like the principal interview questions, the teacher survey questions included demographic information and questions pertaining to the teachers' experiences in educating students who are gifted, professional development participation, and current teaching assignment (Appendix N). Questions were provided in a multiple choice and short response format. Teachers invited to participate in the survey would be the teachers who educate students who are gifted at the study's participating elementary schools.

The Delphi technique was used to validate the teacher survey questions. The same expert panel was again invited to participate in the review of the questions. In the first round of the Delphi technique the expert panel received information that the questions were to be asked of the teachers at the participating elementary schools who teach students who are gifted. The panel was asked to evaluate the questions for content, applicability, and validity and were asked to evaluate each question as "appropriate" or "not appropriate." If a question was deemed "not appropriate" the panel member was requested to provide feedback and possible rewording (Appendix L). The results of round one were used to create round two of the teacher survey questions. During round two, the panel reviewed the reworded questions and were asked to provide feedback and possible rewording of questions. After the second round, the majority of panel members were in agreement with the teacher survey questions. The results of round two reflected the majority of the expert panel agreement on each individual question, which finalized the development of the teacher survey instrument (Appendix N).

### Analysis of Interview Data

The researcher met with three elementary school principals who agreed to participate in the research study, be recorded during the interview, and allow the teachers of students who are gifted to participate in an online survey. Table 5 provides descriptive information of the participating principals.

Table 5: Principal Descriptive Information

Principal	Gender	Ethnicity	Degree	Type of school	Years experience as principal	
					Overall	Current school
ES#1	Female	Caucasian	Masters in Ed. Leadership	PK-5	2	2
ES#2	Female	Caucasian	Doctorate in Education	PK-5	4.5	4.5
ES#3	Female	African American	Masters in Ed. Leadership	PK-5	4	4

The principal at ES#1 was once the assistant principal at her current elementary school, was transferred to another elementary school as an assistant principal over exceptional education, and was then promoted to principal and returned to her original elementary school. All of her professional experience has been in elementary schools. The current student enrollment at ES#1 is 1187 students and there are 76 classroom teachers. The school has strong community support, a foundation and involved Parent Teacher Association (PTA). There are 175 students enrolled in programs for the gifted. The majority of students who are gifted are not on free and reduced lunch and are primarily Caucasian. The principal of ES#1 described a small percentage of African American and Hispanic students enrolled in the programs for the gifted and mentioned

they are targeting these populations for further identification. The elementary school earned a grade of A in the school grades report for the 2013-2014 school year.

The interview for the principal of ES#1 occurred during a mutually agreeable time during the school day in her office. The agreed upon day happened to also be field day at ES#1. As a result, the principal had to tend to additional event related activities prior to the start of our interview. Additionally, more parent volunteers were on campus and sought out the principal. Once the interview began, the principal suggested we close the office door to limit the number of interruptions. Her office was organized and she had several bookcases with resource materials and her personal library. The principal of ES#1 was cordial, businesslike, apologetic for the delay, and ready to begin the research interview. The principal sat behind her desk while I sat in a chair in front of her desk. She remained steady and relaxed throughout the interview and answered each question with minimal hesitation. At times, she leaned forward and was excited to answer questions. She was succinct in the responses to the interview questions.

Meaningful themes derived from the interview with the principal of ES#1, including her desire to instill a team approach and to work together to benefit all students. She is dynamic in utilizing her community resources to support her teachers in the use of innovations to meet the academic needs of students. She stated that she is accessible to her teachers and enjoys the collaboration. The principal of ES#1 encourages her teachers to implement new strategies and resources to meet the unique learning needs of students who are gifted. She encourages teachers to collaborate to make changes in programming, identify students who will benefit from academic acceleration and wants to ensure that the students who are gifted are met at their level and are being challenged and achieving at high levels.

The principal of ES#1 stated that her programs for students who are gifted are perceived as an elite program by the parents in the community. She is working on dispelling that perception because all of her teachers are highly qualified. All teachers at ES#1 have the opportunity to take the five gifted endorsement classes at the encouragement of the principal and will be paid for out of the school's budget. She reports that there are currently nine teachers on campus who teach students who are gifted. During her tenure, she revamped the service delivery model for students who are gifted from resource classrooms to self-contained classes. This participant states that with this model, students who are gifted receive the support, services and acceleration throughout their school day. Teachers are able to weave in the strategies for the gifted with the grade level curriculum.

The interview with the principal of ES#2 was also held during the school day at a mutually agreeable time. There was plenty of activity on the school campus as the Kindergarten classes were putting on their end-of-year performance. Once in the principal's office, she suggested we speak at the small round table in the front of her office. This setting provided a comfortable area to engage in our interview. Shortly after the interview started, the principal's secretary interjected to remind her of the Kindergarten performance. The principal then mentioned to me that she would not have as much time as anticipated since she was expected to be present at the Kindergarten performance. Prior to beginning the interview, the principal of ES#2 asked several questions about my program of study and was genuinely interested in learning more about my research study. She further reminisced of when she was working on completing her doctorate degree assuring me "it's worth it." The principal shared with me that she was several months pregnant and will be working up to her due date.

The principal of ES#2 took pride in describing her leadership style. She described herself as a servant leader in which she spends more time listening than making decisions for her teachers. She has found this method has helped her teachers to better receive decisions made. She further described her leadership style as situational and explained that not any one decision making moment can always apply to the next big decision. She admits that she is not an expert on gifted learners, but is definitely interested and willing to learn more. She relies on the district resources to implement programs for students who are gifted on her campus. The principal, along with her teachers, recognized that there are students who are gifted who are also struggling learners. These, she described, are some of the greatest challenges, “The extremes in needs are a challenge.” She continued by stating, “Having the gifted adds beautiful diversity to our campus.” Prior to beginning her tenure as principal of ES#2, she was an assistant principal at two other elementary schools. All of her professional education experience has been in elementary school settings within this school district. She served in a teacher leadership capacity as a curriculum resource teachers. During the 2013-14 school year, ES#2 earned an A grade. Currently there are 625 students enrolled in ES#2 and 130 are identified as students who are gifted. The principal assured that the enrollment number is increasing. The principal estimated that there are 60 members on the instructional staff; 17 teachers have gifted endorsement or are in process of earning the endorsement and teach students who are gifted.

Throughout the interview, the principal frequently described the need for “out-of-the-box” thinking regarding instruction for students who are gifted. When prompted, the principal described “out-of-the-box” thinking regarding instruction as that which is beyond what is outlined by the standards and instructional materials recommended and adopted by the district. She acknowledged the students who are gifted think differently and need teachers and resources

that will tap into their interests and passions as these are, when emphasized, what propels them to the next level. The principal of ES#2 makes gifted endorsement accessible to all teachers by offering to pay for the courses and allowing the courses to be provided on the school's campus. In the event a teacher is unable to commit to the five courses required for endorsement, she provides the first course which describes the characteristics of students who are gifted and instructional strategies, as an on campus professional development.

The principal of ES#2 also made changes to the service delivery model for students who are gifted. Prior to her tenure, the students were served in limited resource classrooms. As the principal mentioned "the gifted students are gifted 24/7, not just for certain periods during the day." With the support of her teachers and the district resource teachers the elementary school transitioned to a cluster or mixed model. Students who are gifted and other high achieving, non-identified students are taught by a gifted endorsed teacher for all subject areas. The students are not necessarily with the same teacher all day long. The principal added that next school year, budget pending, she may add self-contained classes in with the cluster model. She believes this model best meets the academic needs of the students who are gifted and the data supports this theory as well as the favorable feedback she receives from the teachers, students and parents. At the conclusion of the interview, the principal invited me to join her in attending the Kindergarten performance in which I agreed to do so.

The principal of ES#3 has also served in the role of principal for less than five years. She has been the principal of ES#3 for four years and was the assistant principal at a K-8 school and an elementary school before assuming her role as a principal. All of her professional education experience occurred within this school district. She too served as an instructional leader and was a curriculum resource teacher at two elementary schools previously. ES#3 currently has 1,258



students enrolled with 80 teachers on her instructional staff. ES#3 has 11 teachers that teach students who are gifted; two are on maternity leave. The principal reports that a relief elementary school is opening in the 2015-16 school year. She is not sure of the exact number of students who are gifted, but assumes it is close to 200. Like the other elementary school principals, this principal will pay the expenses for her teachers to participate in the gifted endorsement classes. ES#3 also earned an A grade for the 2013-14 school year.

The principal of ES #3 was delayed for our scheduled interview time. The receptionist was very cordial and was also interested in learning more about the research study. The meeting with the principal of ES#3 took place in her conference room where we sat side-by-side. The conference room table was covered in stacks of papers and instructional materials. The principal shared that she is meeting with her teacher leaders to review data and materials in preparation for future professional development and to make decisions for the upcoming school year.

The principal of ES#3 is a self-described facilitative leader and not a micro manager. She makes it her mission to empower her team to problem solve and feels it is important to her to grow the leaders behind her. She wants all of her teachers to think as leader educators and to come up with solutions on their own instead of always coming to her for the problem-solving piece. "I don't have all the answers, but will help you in any way I can." Throughout our interview, the principal of ES#3 reiterated how she values out-of-the-box thinking regarding instruction. She recounted of when she was a young student and enrolled herself in school because she was bored being at home and felt ready to learn. When finally in school she remembered always feeling that she had to "fit in the box" and didn't like the feeling. She yearned to be taught differently, but her teachers weren't willing to do it. The principal shared how these feelings and memories stuck with her and she does not want that for her students who

are gifted or any student enrolled in ES#3. She is very much aware that the programs for gifted are “a hot commodity” within her school community. Parents ask regularly about what it takes to get their students in the programs. She assures parents and community stakeholders that all students at ES#3 receive a quality education.

The principal of ES#3 describes her service delivery model for students who are gifted as high achieving gifted clusters on all grade levels. Both students who are gifted and high achieving that have not been identified as gifted are enrolled in these classes. She shared that the district resource teachers for gifted say she has the best model in the district. She commented that she and her leadership team annually review which students are to be moved around because, based on experience, if all the students stay in the same classes together they become like brothers and sisters and begin to hate each other. She tries to keep the students balanced and tries to move them around to ensure the balance. To support meeting the students who are gifted academic and social needs, she encourages their participation in out of school competitions, community events and access to college and university visits. The principal believes these outside experiences helps the students “expect the unexpected” promotes thinking outside of the box. To add to this, the principal shared the recent administration of the new state standards assessment in which the students were now expected to justify their answers or there was a possibility of more than one correct answer. Several students had a “melt down” because the test required more than filling in the bubble, which is what they were used to during test administration. Most assessments are written and designed to measure typical students, and as a result, the test scores of students who are gifted are more likely to contain error (McCoach, Rambo, & Welsh, 2013). She acknowledges the importance of addressing the emotional stability

piece of students who are gifted. “I don’t want to see them crash and burn because of their perfectionistic tendencies and their personalities. I want the students to have balance.”

The principal of ES#3 perceives having students who are gifted on campus as very positive. She admits effective instruction that meets the needs of students who are gifted without putting the students in a “gifted box” is a challenge. She also shared that the gifted cluster classrooms have a continuum of learners in which some students who are gifted are achieving on a Level 1. She relies heavily on the student achievement data when making instructional decisions, but also gets a lot of her data from classroom visits where she talks with students and teachers alike. The principal of ES#3 became familiar with the NAGC standards and uses the standards when reviewing resources, instructional materials and curriculum for her cluster classrooms. She is open to suggestions for new resources and programs as long as they align with the gifted standards from her team. Toward the conclusion of our interview, the principal of ES#3 shared that teachers who do not make it at her school are the ones who need to stick to the script. She believes the willingness to explore options and different resources for her students who are gifted are what support the students and allow her teachers to flourish. The principal of ES#3 was very candid and descriptive in her service delivery model for the gifted and her need to think out-of-the-box regarding instruction and for her teachers to do the same.

All three principals who were interviewed worked at schools identified as A schools by the Florida Department of Education *State School Grades Report* (2014b). With the rise in site-based management, principals gain more responsibility to lead their schools toward greater learning opportunities (Lewis et al., 2007). It is through improved teacher practice that the principal affects student learning (Hallinger & Heck, 1996). A review of the interview transcripts revealed commonalities among the three interviewed principals. Examination of the

commonalities resulted in the identification of themes. Following is the data analysis for research question #1.

### **Data Analysis for Research Question #1**

*Research Question #1: What are the perceptions of elementary school principals, identified as effective or highly effective on The Leadership Evaluation Model (OCPS, 2012), concerning the implementation of practices, programs, and instructional methods that support their programs for students who are gifted?*

An analysis of the transcripts from the three elementary principal interviews revealed a variety of ways that the three principals implement programs for students who are gifted. Four themes that address research question #1 emerged: (a) the need for out-of-the-box thinking regarding instruction to meet the academic needs of students who are gifted, (b) recognition that students who are gifted think differently, (c) willingness to try new innovations, (d) admission of insufficient knowledge on students who are gifted, but are willing to learn. In the following section these themes are addressed.

#### *The Need for Out-of-the-Box Thinking Regarding Instruction to Meet the Needs of Students Who Are Gifted*

Each of the three principals interviewed mentioned the importance of out-of-the-box thinking regarding instruction when it comes to meeting the academic needs of the students who are gifted at their elementary schools. Out-of-the-box thinking regarding instruction was described as meeting the instructional needs of students who are gifted beyond what is outlined by the standards and instructional materials recommended and adopted by the district. Table 6 includes summaries of the principals' comments that support this theme.

Table 6: Principals' Comments Supporting Out-of-the-Box Thinking

Principal	Data
ES#1	<p>I'm supportive of any ideas and encourage teachers to share their ideas with the rest of the team.</p> <p>To meet standards you don't have to turn pages in the book to teach the standards</p> <p>Can't rely on basals.</p> <p>We had two students that grade accelerated this year.</p>
ES#2	<p>Identify interests and passions that can propel the student who is gifted to the next level.</p> <p>We need to know our students well enough that we know their learning styles, their interests, their passion, and we know with gifted learners that's even more important.</p> <p>All teachers are involved in developing the class grouping for the gifted cluster; from grade level teachers, special area teachers and resource teachers.</p>
ES#3	<p>I started asking the gifted teachers questions, especially those that will follow me outside the box, if they will try new things.</p> <p>We are getting the students out there and exposing them to more global competitions including against kids from our district.</p> <p>When the students go out and see globally how the system changes, their eyes are opened.</p> <p>I am open to anything, and my teachers know that.</p>

During the interviews, the principals described the need for out-of-the-box thinking regarding instruction to meet the academic needs of students who are gifted. They perceive the need for creative methods in the implementation of practices, programs, and instructional methods.

The principal of ES#1 stated her dislike for using basal readers to teach grade level standards. "I'm not a fan of a basal reader when you know how to read; it's not what's good for kids." The principal described how one of her grade level teachers developed an idea to put the

basals on the shelf and merge science and reading together. “She changed her whole instructional program and it’s been highly effective.”

The principal of ES#2 promotes academically taking students as far as they can go. “We have to stretch ourselves to really challenge them (students who are gifted) and take them to those levels.” To support out-of-the-box thinking regarding instruction to meet the academic needs of students who are gifted, the principal of ES#2 will research tools, resources, materials, and supplies, to put in their hands.

The principal of ES#3 encourages the students who are gifted to be able to experience and go out beyond what other expect. She recognizes that if these students are kept “in the box” for too long they will find other avenues to fill the need. She recalls as a student just “doing unnecessary, repetitive classwork” and she vehemently opposes giving students who are gifted more of the same. The principal of ES#3 likes to take her students to have learning experiences beyond the school campus, such as colleges and universities because “one of those sparks will take hold and cement itself as foundational piece and that kids can go to wherever it is they want to go.”

#### *Students Who Are Gifted Think Differently*

A commonality among the three elementary school principals interviewed revealed a theme of recognizing that *students who are gifted think differently*. Table 7 includes a brief summary of the principals’ comments that support this theme.

Table 7: Principals' Responses Supporting Thinking Differently

Principal	Data
ES#1	<p>Gifted children learn differently, just like a child with any other type of label.</p> <p>They may need a different skill set to tap into their knowledge to teach them the best way possible.</p> <p>Our teachers may say how much the gifted students are quirky, but realize they just think differently.</p> <p>It is important to meet children exactly where they are.</p> <p>It is unique how a gifted child really thinks.</p>
ES#2	<p>My experience at XXX elementary was very eye opening as to help students with different needs.</p> <p>There are so many different types of thinkers. I think the specific traits brings great diversity to our mix.</p> <p>There are extremes in needs. We have struggling students, some who are gifted learners.</p>
ES#3	<p>There are different types of giftedness that need to be pulled out of the kids.</p> <p>We started to embed instructional practices in the classroom to open the door and gear our kids away from A, B or C thinking, the Smart 7 Strategies, and to just eliminate answers.</p> <p>We had to move from the old way of thinking</p> <p>I created split classes and filled the classes with the gifted and high achieving students.</p> <p>People would tell me gifted means the student has got it all together, they're on top of the world. When in reality I had to work to keep him organized and focused.</p>

Each principal interviewed recognized that students who are gifted think differently. They recalled from their personal experiences as being a student who was gifted or high achieving how their teachers differentiated instruction to meet their learning needs. Further, the principals shared how their teachers challenged them or recounted how instructionally they were given more of the same when they recognized they needed something different to meet their learning needs.

The principal of ES#1 philosophy of educating students who are gifted it to meet them, academically, exactly where they are. She recognizes that students who are gifted have unique learning needs, as do other students who have labels. It is up to us “to tap into their knowledge to teach them the best way possible.” The principal of ES#1 recognizes that her school has a reputation for being able to meet the unique needs of students who are gifted. She shared that parents of students enrolled in a local parochial private school will withdraw their students and enroll them in her elementary school so they can receive the appropriate services for the gifted. As the school transitioned to self-contained units for the gifted some of the teachers struggled with no longer having students who are gifted in their grade level classrooms. The principal of ES#1 stated, “These children need and learn differently and we have to support their learning needs.”

The principal of ES#2 shared her positive experiences of being a high achieving student in which her academic needs were met by participating in a mixed ability, gifted and non-gifted resource classrooms where she received academic enrichment. She believes these positive experiences help her in recognize characteristics of students who are gifted and the importance of differentiated instruction to meet their needs. “My teachers looked at me as an individual child as a whole child and I think that’s what we do here.” She recognizes the varying needs of students who are gifted and shared that parents and teachers have to admit that their (the gifted) intellectual abilities can be above our own and we have to stretch ourselves to really challenge them and take them to higher levels.

ES#3’s principal shared very personal early learning experiences related to her unmet academic needs, specifically as a highly motivated, high achieving student. She finds that a shift in thinking about how to effectively instruct students who are gifted and meet their needs without



putting all of them in a gifted box is still needed. “I look at these kids as 21<sup>st</sup> century learners and need to ensure they are getting all the necessary resources.” The principal of ES#3 looks for the best resources to meet the academic and emotional needs of the students who are gifted.

#### *Willingness to Try New Innovations*

Throughout the interviews, the principals mentioned the importance of implementing innovations to meet the academic needs of students who are gifted. Table 8 contains actual data made by the principals that support this theme.

Table 8: Principals' Responses Supporting Willingness to Innovate

Principal	Data
ES#1	<p>I refer to the Cluster Grouping handbook. I refer to it often as we look at trying to redefine our gifted programs.</p> <p>We have implemented strategies and recommendations and teachers have had success.</p> <p>In the previous model the students were not being academically challenge, but rather a role model for the other students and that's not the best environment to support the gifted child.</p> <p>We have had highly gifted students, part of Mensa, and were ready for academic acceleration. I am a supporter of that.</p>
ES#2	<p>Our cluster model is the main service delivery model for gifted, but it is very much a mixed model to meet the needs of the students.</p> <p>We look at each student who is gifted and specifically look at their gifts and talents and their passions. We try to cluster them as a group that will work very well together and match them with a teacher that would be a good fit to serve their needs.</p> <p>The cluster classrooms are mixed with gifted and non-gifted.</p> <p>There is no one model that is going to fit every child perfectly, just like there is no one teacher that is the best fit for every single child.</p> <p>We had to make a change to the gifted service delivery model from a resource classroom to cluster classrooms because the gifted service time was reducing. We had grade levels that were going to maybe half a day of gifted services. And it didn't make sense.</p>
ES#3	<p>I ask my teachers if they are willing to try new things. Will you go to this training? Can you bring this back to me?</p> <p>I'm the only principal in my learning community willing to take a grade level or large groups of students to visit a college.</p> <p>Most school won't put the high achievers in gifted clusters.</p> <p>We geared our kids away from A, B or C thinking, from Smart 7 strategies, and to just eliminate answers. Students can eliminate answers, but don't know the content.</p> <p>We serve as a model school for some of the schools to see what we are doing because we did a lot of different things to help overcome that old way of thinking.</p>

The three principals who were interviewed mentioned a willingness to try new methods and strategies to meet the needs of their students who are gifted. They shared situations where

they had to abandon the norm or the current structure in place and make changes that may have been uncomfortable to the teachers, students and parents.

The principal of ES#1 transitioned the service delivery model this school year from resource classrooms to self-contained classes for students who are gifted. She explained there were several teachers who were not interested in getting their gifted endorsement. “Their concern was that they do not have any gifted students in my class. And that was a tough struggle for them that it is not just high, medium or low...that these students need and learn differently and we have to support their learning needs.” The principal of ES#1 described a situation in which a set of twins, both identified as gifted, were to be separated in two grade levels. One twin was highly gifted and the principal and school team thought the student should receive academic acceleration. “We had lots of conversations with the parents and had to ask them to look at each child individually. It has been great and there has been no effect on their bond as twins.”

For the principal at ES#2, the change in the service delivery model was needed because the amount of time students were receiving services for the gifted was reduced due to other academic demands. Several community stakeholders were not in support of the change, she met resistance, but ultimately knew the cluster model and self-contained classes would better serve the students’ academic needs. The principal at ES#2 involves all teachers on campus to participate in decision making about the services and innovations for students who are gifted. “We have all staff eyes on it.” “We are currently looking at a program by Renzulli and have a webinar scheduled and all faculty members are invited to view it.” Collectively, the administration and faculty will look to see if this is a program they want to bring in.

The principal of ES#3 recognizes that schools within her learning community are interested to learn what her school is doing to support the needs of students who are gifted. She

involves her teacher leadership team and grade level teachers to look at each child individually, not to look at the gifted students as a whole. She was implementing universal screening for gifted before it was a district requirement. “I had teachers who thought students who are gifted are supposed to be military robots.” “I’ve had to have teachers back off kids with the volume of workload and testing when I see kids going under.” The principal of ES#3 likes to open the door for new resources and to show students how fun learning is and they are the future of new innovations. She frequently reminds students that they are in charge of our futures and our well-being.

*Lack Knowledge on Students Who Are Gifted, but a Willingness to Learn*

The commonalities among the responses of the three principals interviewed suggested a theme that they are not the expert, but have a willingness to learn and build capacity. Table 9 contains brief summaries of the comments made that support this theme.

Table 9: Principals’ Responses Supporting Not an Expert but Willing to Learn

Principal	Data
ES#1	We work closely with the district's gifted resource teacher.
ES#2	I don't pretend to be an expert, but I can definitely learn more about it. We have about four gifted experts on this campus.
ES#3	I am discovering what I don't know and what I still need to know. I don't know all the answers.

The three elementary school principals interviewed reported offering all their grade level teachers opportunities to participate in the gifted endorsement classes. All the principals pay for the teachers to attend these classes and provide the endorsement classes on the school’s campus

to promote participation. The principals developed professional learning communities (PLC) for those enrolled in the endorsement classes to collaborate, and observe the implementation of strategies to support teaching students who are gifted. For teachers unable to enroll in the gifted endorsement classes the principals provide professional development to support the teachers in identifying the characteristics of students who are gifted.

The principal of ES#1 shared the support she and her teacher's received from the district's resource teacher for programs for students who are gifted. She also relies on the feedback received from teachers and parents regarding the programs for the gifted. In her office she has a personal library with a variety of resources on the characteristics, academic needs, and social needs of students who are gifted.

At ES#2, the principal expressed her personal commitment to learning by her interest and willingness to learn more about the gifted. She expressed how her disposition to increase her knowledge models to her teachers that she does not have all the answers. The principal said she relies on the knowledge and expertise of her teachers. For example, "one of our teachers who is more of a gifted expert will bring a book in and say this is a book you need to purchase for everybody." She relies on teachers who have been gifted endorsed for years to serve as leads and to provide professional development. She has benefitted from participating in the gifted endorsement classes, "A few years ago I would not have been able to make those decisions (regarding the implementation of practices, programs and instructional methods for students who are gifted). Whereas now with the training I've taken I'm better prepared for that."

The principal from ES#3 wants to increase her knowledge base about the gifted so she can provide further resources to her teachers "so they won't feel lost." "I'm very passionate about it and I really want to work on this this summer." ES#3's principal shared her personal

commitment to learning in that being collaborative helps when she doesn't know all the answers. She is always thinking about her students and other possible equations to meet their needs.

### **Data Analysis for Research Question #2:**

*Research Question #2: How do elementary principals who are identified as effective or highly effective on The Leadership Evaluation Model (OCPS, 2012) support the teachers of students who are gifted in their schools?*

A review of the interview transcripts reveal commonalities among the three interviewed principals. Examination of the commonalities resulted in the identification of themes. Presented is the data analysis for research question #2: How do elementary principals who are identified as effective or highly effective on The Leadership Evaluation Model (OCPS, 2012) support the teachers of students who are gifted in their schools? An analysis of the transcripts from the three elementary principal interviews revealed a variety of ways they implement programs for students who are gifted. Four themes that address research question #2 emerged: (a) support of gifted endorsement courses, (b) willing to acquire instructional resources for teachers, (c) encourage professional development opportunities, (d) value teacher contribution.

#### *Support of Gifted Endorsement Courses*

The commonalities among the responses of the three principals surveyed suggested a theme of *support of gifted endorsement*. Table 10 contains brief summaries of principals' comments that support this theme.

Table 10: Principals' Responses Supporting Gifted Endorsement

Principal	Data
ES#1	If any teacher want to work on their gifted endorsement I will pay for them to get the endorsement.
ES#2	I started the gifted endorsement alongside my teachers.
ES#3	I have convinced most of them to go for endorsement.

Each of the three elementary principals interviewed for the study made obtaining the gifted endorsement accessible to all the teachers. Each of principals offered all the teachers on their campus an opportunity to pursue gifted endorsement and offered to pay for the expenses associated with the courses. There are five courses to complete in order to obtain gifted endorsement in the State of Florida. The principals make the courses available on their school's campus and partner with other elementary schools within their learning communities to share the expense of the course facilitator. Darling-Hammond (2000) noted that, "in all cases, teachers with full certification status are by far the most important determinant of student achievement" (p. 30). As well, Marzano (2007) identified teachers as having the greatest influence on the effectiveness of a school.

The principal of ES#1 shared that she has put out a blanket statement that if any teacher wants to work on their gifted endorsement, she will pay for them to get the endorsement. "We have created a cohort with XXX elementary school. We have a group of teachers working together in a cohort group and will take a class there or on the other campus or here on our campus."

ES#2's principal emphasized how the gifted endorsement courses are part of their professional development: "We have done a lot of training with staff and a lot of teachers are going through full endorsement."

Principal of ES#3 shared with her teachers the value and importance of going through the gifted endorsement courses. “I have convinced most of them to go for endorsement. I have been paying for it, that’s how passionate I am. If they take it, I’ll pay for it.” Some of the teachers from ES#3 enrolled in the endorsement courses are teaching the high achieving students and are not necessarily teaching the gifted. The teachers wanted to learn the strategies for teaching students who are gifted.

*Willing to Acquire Instructional Resources for Teachers*

The commonalities among the responses of the three principals interviewed suggested a theme that they are willing to acquire instructional resources for teachers. Table 11 contains brief summaries of the comments made that support this theme.

Table 11: Principals’ Responses Supporting Acquiring Instructional Resources

Principal	Data
ES#1	Let me know what you need and we'll find a way to make it happen. I have additional resource teachers on campus to support the gifted students. Collect data to support the additional resources.
ES#2	The teachers are really looking forward to reviewing Go Quest. My teachers will come to me with suggestions for resources. I have to look at my staff and their specific strengths. Through PLC they review resources.
ES#3	Resources solely for gifted are scarce. I am finding resources this summer. Resources can come from anywhere including the community and online resources.

The principal of ES#1 encourages her teachers to approach her if they have found a resource they would like to utilize with their students. She will first look to see if her budget can



support the resource and if not, ES#1 has a PTA and foundation that are very supportive.

“Currently two of our gifted teachers wrote grants to support programs they want to implement in their classrooms.”

At ES#2 the principal and her teachers collaboratively research tools and programs that support the programs for students who are gifted. The principal at ES#2 encourages her PLC to review materials and resources to make recommendations.

The principal at ES#3 thinks there needs to be more in ensuring a variety of available resources to meet the needs of students who are gifted. She stated,

We always think gifted and high achieving are OK, but they are sitting at the same level OK, but finding those resources and aligning them with the gifted standards and what kinds of assessments and progress monitoring can we do to make sure they are making learning gains like everyone else.

“Where there is excellence in general education, education for students who are gifted will more likely flourish; where education for students who are gifted flourishes, there is increased potential for excellence in general education” (NAGC, 2014d, p. 13 ). ES#3 principal shares with her teachers of students who are gifted that finding the right resources and meaningful assessments is often where she finds gaps and needs to find a strong alignment between all these areas.

### *Encourage Professional Development Opportunities*

The commonalities among the responses of the three principals surveyed suggested a theme of *encourage professional development opportunities*. Table 12 contains brief summaries of principals’ comments that support this theme.

Table 12: Principals' Responses Supporting Professional Development Opportunities

Principal	Data
ES#1	<p>When my teachers ask to attend a professional development I always say yes. I encourage teachers to talk and collaborate with colleagues to promote their professional development.</p> <p>Teachers of the gifted have their own PLC.</p> <p>The teachers share strategies they learn for teaching the gifted.</p>
ES#2	<p>We reach out to the district resource teachers for programs for the gifted all the time.</p> <p>We have whole staff trainings on gifted.</p> <p>We use or PLC to review how we are doing in serving the students who are gifted.</p> <p>I survey the teachers to help guide our professional development.</p>
ES#3	<p>I rely on my teachers to share with and teach me what they learned in professional development.</p> <p>We use professional development to support us in making decisions about instructional materials.</p> <p>I will use professional development to grow leaders.</p> <p>We have dialog sessions in faculty meetings run by the STEM teachers.</p>

The principal at ES#1 is willing to allow her teachers to attend professional development to improve the instructional methods that are used with students who are gifted. She further encourages teachers to collaborate with colleagues and district resource teachers to support the programs for students who are gifted. These conversations and collaborations promote meeting the needs of students who are gifted.

The principal at ES#2 recognized that not all teachers are able to commit to completing the series of five courses required for gifted endorsement. However, it is important to her that all teachers have an understanding of the characteristics of students who are gifted. To support all her teachers, she provided a series of professional development opportunities including the first course of the gifted endorsement, Nature and Needs. There are the gifted lead teachers on each grade level, so they have been able to provide the professional development. Like the other

principals, the principal of ES#2 encourages her teachers to collaborate with the district resource teachers for programs for students who are gifted. “They are very responsive and have been a wonderful support.”

The principal at ES#3 has found a scarcity in materials for students who are gifted. Along with her teachers she has attended professional development, read and researched on instructional options to best meet the needs of students who are gifted. To support her teachers, the principal will conduct professional development by creating leadership academies and coordinating instructional rounds to build leadership capacity. “I want all my teachers to be able to problem solve and create solutions for what’s best for all our students.”

*Value Teacher Contributions*

The themes among the responses of the three principals surveyed suggested a theme of *value teacher contribution*. Table 13 contains brief summaries of principals’ comments that support this theme.

Table 13: Principals’ Responses Supporting Value Teacher Contribution

Principal	Data
ES#1	It's a team effort; we all work together. I am accessible.
ES#2	Teachers are surveyed for their input. All teachers take ownership in educating students who are gifted.
ES#3	I am accessible and open to new ideas and changes for what's best for kids. It is important to have teacher leaders.

The teachers of students who are gifted at ES#1 created a PLC in which they reviewed the grade level standards and incorporated instructional strategies for students who are gifted.

The principal shared, “My staffing specialist is highly skilled in the area of gifted so she is a huge support to those teachers. It is a team effort and we all work together.” The principal of ES#1 is accessible and values teacher input if they would like to try something different to reach students. “One of my second grade gifted teachers this year really wanted to find a way to merge science and reading together and she did it. I’m not a big fan of a basal reader when you know how to read. The teacher came to me and asked if I can put this (the basal) on the shelf to find a way to merge the science and reading together so she really kind of changed her whole instructional program. It has been highly effective.”

At ES#2 when the teachers do the class assignments for students who are gifted, all the grade level teachers came together and divided all students into class groupings, not with a teacher’s name attached, but with the original clusters built for all kids, not just gifted. Teachers put together the class lists first thinking of the clusters and then the principal reviewed the list with another committee, including her leadership team, resource team, and special area teachers who know all students. “We have all staff eyes on it.”

The principal at ES#3 iterated the scarcity of materials for students who are gifted. With a planning team we found that Hands On Equations is something we wanted to use with our gifted and high achieving, so we pulled together our resources and started our planning for our class teams. We looked at our core and at the standards and assessments.

### **Data Analysis for Research Question #3**

*Research Question #3: What are the lived experiences of the elementary school principals who are identified as effective or highly effective on The Leadership Evaluation Model (OCPS, 2012) and how do these experiences impact the implementation of practices, programs, and instructional methods that support their programs for students who are gifted?*

A review of the interview transcripts reveal themes among the three interviewed principals. Examination of the commonalities resulted in the identification of themes and outliers. Presented is the data analysis for research question #3: What are the lived experiences of the elementary school principals who are identified as effective or highly effective on The Leadership Evaluation Model (OCPS, 2012) and how do these experiences impact the implementation of practices, programs, and instructional methods that support their programs for students who are gifted? An analysis of the transcripts from the three elementary school principal interviews revealed a variety of ways they implement programs for students who are gifted. Four themes that address research question #3 emerged: (a) passion for learning at an early age, (b) understanding of characteristics of students who are gifted, (c) allocation of financial resources to support students who are gifted, and (d) provision of services to maximize teaching opportunities for students who are gifted.

#### *Passion for Learning at an Early Age*

The themes among the responses of the three principals surveyed suggested a theme of a *passion for learning at an early age*. Table 14 contains data that support this theme.

Table 14: Principals' Responses Supporting a Passion for Learning at an Early Age

Principal	Data
ES#1	As a student I was identified as gifted. I liked the small amount of children in my program. My true understanding of what it means to be gifted came when I was the assistant principal.
ES#2	When I was a child people recognized strengths in me. I was a high achieving student. Teachers differentiated to meet my needs. I was a people pleaser; an "A" student.
ES#3	I've had a passion for learning at a very young age. As a student I didn't like hearing from my teachers "not yet." I wanted to get out-of-the-box and onto something else, someplace else.

The principal of ES#1 told the researcher, with a broad smile, that she was identified as gifted when she was in elementary school. She was a student in the school district where she is currently a principal. She said at the time, the school had limited services and she went to a pull out model once a week and then returned to class. After the interview, she added that she was responsible for the work she missed when she went to gifted and she didn't like that. She did not feel that gifted was a big deal when she was growing up. The principal of ES#1 described that her true experiences for gifted came at her current school where she was the assistant principal and she identified with how unique a gifted child really thinks.

As a student, principal of ES#2 was a self-professed people pleaser. She liked earning the "A" grades and was considered a high achieving student. She recalls participating in a screening for the gifted and was not sure if she passed. However, her teachers recognized her gifts and would send her with the gifted cluster to a resource room. She recalls the class as being mixed ability including a gifted and non-gifted group to receive additional enrichment. Her experiences as a high achieving student influenced her decisions on how to serve students who

are gifted at ES#2. She appreciated that her teachers differentiated instruction for her and looked at her as an individual child.

At a very early age the principal of ES#3 wanted to get out and experience the world, because it could not be found in a book. She shared that at an early age she felt she was just “doing stuff,” implying her school work was not meaningful. Prior to being school age she reminisced on how she sneaked to school to try to begin a year earlier. After a few days the Kindergarten teacher realized she was not enrolled. Her experiences as a young child influenced how she provides services for student who are gifted at ES#3. Her early school experiences caused the principal to focus on out-of-the-box thinking regarding instruction and providing learning opportunities for students off campus.

#### *Understanding of Characteristics of Students Who Are Gifted*

The commonalities among the responses of the three principals surveyed suggested a theme of *understanding of characteristics of students who are gifted*. Table 15 contains brief summaries of principals’ comments that support this theme.

Table 15: Principals’ Responses Supporting Understanding of Characteristics of Students

Principal	Data
ES#1	The gifted learn and think differently. We review the characteristics of a gifted child. We discuss in depth each child.
ES#2	We do staff trainings so the characteristics of the gifted are well known. Whether you are endorsed or not you will know the characteristics and what to look for. We need to know our students.
ES#3	Students who are gifted can have a span of learning abilities. We did screenings early because we saw the talent in our students. I rely on teacher recommendations for gifted.

The three principals interviewed noted the importance for their teachers to recognize the characteristics of students who are gifted. At ES#1, the principal commented that along with the students who are gifted thinking differently, the teachers will also comment how the gifted are also “quirky.” She utilized her staffing specialists’ knowledge of the characteristics of students who are gifted to provide a whole-faculty professional development. This professional development is provided annually to serve as a refresher for all the teachers on campus. Her teachers of gifted will look at each student in depth and align their qualities to the characteristics of students who are gifted. The principal shared this is helpful to meet the needs of the individual student.

Like the principal at ES#1, ES#2’s principal also provides professional development on the characteristics of students who are gifted to her entire faculty. In ES#2’s professional development she added the identification characteristics of the gifted. The principal wants to ensure the characteristics are well-known so that all teachers, whether they are endorsed or not will know the characteristics of a student who is gifted. She also provided the initial gifted



endorsement course, Nature and Needs to all her faculty members. The principal believes that knowing the characteristics of students who are gifted and being able to help in the identification process is all part of “really knowing our students.”

Principal of ES#3 emphasized to her staff that students who are gifted can have a span of abilities. “Just because they are gifted doesn’t mean they can’t be a level 1 or 2 learner.” Like the other principals, she encourages all her teachers to participate in gifted endorsement classes. She wants her teachers to be able to identify the indicators of students who are gifted and when they may be at a “melt down” point. She cited a situation in which a teacher was too harsh on her students who are gifted and the students didn’t want to attend her program, and parents started to complain. Of the principals interviewed, the principal of ES#3 recognized the problem and worked with the teachers to recognize the social emotional needs of students who are gifted.

#### *Allocation of Financial Resources to Support Students Who Are Gifted*

The commonalities among the responses of the three principals surveyed suggested a theme of providing an *allocation of financial resource for supporting students who are gifted*.

Table 16 contains brief summaries of principals’ comments that support this theme.

Table 16: Principals' Comment Supporting Allocation of Financial Resources

Principal	Data
ES#1	<p>If I can't provide the funding we have other sources.</p> <p>I will pay for teachers to get gifted endorsement.</p> <p>No matter what you teach, let me know what you need and we'll find a way to make it happen.</p>
ES#2	<p>We look at our budget and the needs of the students and build from there.</p> <p>It's a puzzle and we try to build the best puzzle picture.</p> <p>I've been able to purchase special materials and resources that teachers have requested.</p> <p>Budget priorities are always huge.</p> <p>Gifted endorsement is covered here and I cover the cost.</p>
ES#3	<p>If my teachers want their gifted endorsement I will pay for them to attend.</p> <p>I will feed people which gives us a chance to talk about ideas on meeting the needs of the gifted.</p> <p>There's a scarcity of materials I need to pay for them to support the students.</p>

All the principals interviewed are adamant about providing opportunities for all their teachers to participate in the gifted endorsement classes. Recognizing that not all teachers will be able to commit to the five courses to obtain the endorsement the principals will either offer the initial course, Nature and Needs, as a faculty professional development or will secure a teacher of students who are gifted to provide professional development. A common theme is that each principal recognizes the need to allocate financial resources to meet the unique learning needs of their students who are gifted and rely on the contribution and input of their teachers to select the resources or instructional materials. The principal of ES#2 shared, “the budget impacts what we are able to do.” The three principals recognized that resources for students who are gifted are scarce and they have to get creative with their financial allocations without overlooking the needs of all students. Principals at each school must decide upon a service delivery model based on what can be financially generated by students who are enrolled in

gifted. As the principal of ES#1 stated, “My teachers know that no matter what you teach, you let me know what you need and we’ll find a way to make it happen.”

*The Provision of Services to Maximize Teaching Opportunities for Students Who Are Gifted*

The commonalities among the responses of the three principals surveyed suggested the theme, *provision of services to maximize teaching opportunities for students who are gifted*.

Table 17 contains brief summaries of principals’ comments that support this theme.

Table 17: Principals’ Responses Supporting Provision of Services

Principal	Data
ES#1	<p>We weave in gifted strategies with the grade level content.</p> <p>We provide full gifted classes all day, every day.</p> <p>The delivery of instruction looks different than a regular, non-gifted classroom.</p> <p>We're really taking the students' learning to a higher level.</p>
ES#2	<p>It's getting kids to the next level even if it's above grade level.</p> <p>We transitioned to the cluster model in the past two years.</p> <p>Students weren't getting what they needed.</p> <p>We would love to have all the hands and more support.</p> <p>We want our top performers to continue to be top performers.</p>
ES#3	<p>I have the best service delivery model in the district.</p> <p>Students receive gifted in all subject areas.</p> <p>Materials need to be aligned to the gifted standards.</p> <p>Students are gifted for more than the resource room.</p>

Each of the elementary school principals interviewed agreed that students who are gifted have unique learning needs. Based on their experiences, each principal, during their tenure, changed the service delivery model for gifted on their schools’ campus. All the principals acknowledge the students are gifted “24/7” and not just during their time in a resource classroom.

At ES#1, the principal has her teachers of students who are gifted in a PLC in which they collaborate in identifying instructional strategies that can be used with grade level content. Using the strategies allows the students who are gifted to meet the standard and to further shape their instruction. The principal shared that when she first came to the school, the previous school administration had a pull out model to a self-contained model for serving the gifted. Eventually she moved to a cluster model based on the review of the data. “The cluster model allows for more time for students to receive gifted services.” “In our classes for students who are gifted, teachers provide a pre-assessment on a standard and if the students indicated they have mastered the standard they are able to move on or accelerate to the standard at the next grade level.”

The principal at ES#2 also changed the service delivery at her school to the cluster model. When she arrived at the school, students who are gifted were receiving services in a resource classroom. “We transitioned to a cluster model, but it is very much a mixed model.” As the number of gifted students grew and the budget became tighter, the students were losing time in the resource room. As a result of the change, students can be service in gifted learning five days a week, all day long. The model is mixed because we also include high achieving students in the cluster. “We have some self-contained classes which are solely for gifted.”

The principal of ES#3 shared that the district resource teachers for the programs for students who are gifted identified her service delivery model for the gifted as one of the best in the district. Every year she and her teachers review which students are to be moved to another mix of students to avoid students becoming frustrated with their peers and burned out on the program. “Moving them around ensures they get the balance of learning with other students who are gifted and high ability.” Students are in subject areas specifically for gifted at each grade level. The principal shared that she has some mixed grade classes for gifted. Students who are

high achieving and not identified as gifted are also included in the gifted cluster. The principal feels this “encourages grade level acceleration and provides an academic challenge.” The principal became more familiar and encouraged her teachers to become familiar with the standards for gifted. She noted that aligning resources, assessment, and progress monitoring with the gifted standards will be a truer reflection of the gifted students’ learning gains. Test items are written to see how much average students know. The principal of ES#3 stated, “That is often where I find gaps and I need to find a strong alignment between all these areas.”

In summary, the analysis of principal interview data regarding the implementation of practices, programs and instructional methods to meet the needs of students who are gifted for the three principals interviewed resulted in several themes. These themes ranged from the need for out-of-the-box thinking regarding instruction including changing the service delivery model, to implementing innovations and creative use of budgeting allocations. An additional theme that emerged related to understanding how to meet the needs of students who are gifted. Concepts within this theme included the characteristics of students who are gifted, the provision of services for students who are gifted and methods to recognize the requisite growth mindset as it pertains to building your knowledge base on how to best serve the gifted. The third emerged theme included the provision of professional learning opportunities to support teachers that teach students who are gifted. The principals did not receive formal training in their undergraduate or graduate programs on how to meet the needs of students who are gifted. Frequently, the principals relied on their personal experiences as a student in influencing how they implement programs for the gifted at their elementary school. Upon review of the principals’ personal experiences with programs for the gifted, the principal at ES#1 served as the outlier as she did not find her participation in a program for the gifted as having an impact on how she implements

programs for students who are gifted at her elementary school, as evidenced by her comment, “When I was growing up it was no big deal.”

### **Comparative Analysis of Teacher Survey Data and Principal Interview Data**

A survey was administered to the teachers of students who are gifted at the participating elementary schools. The researcher provided the principals with a list of teachers identified as teaching students who are gifted for the principal to update and or edit. The survey items were developed based on the findings that emerged during the principals’ interviews and on the findings identified in the literature for the implementation of programs, practices and instructional techniques to support programs for students who are gifted. The survey consisted of 24 Likert and short response items. A total of 37 teachers from the three participating elementary schools were emailed an electronic survey using the online data collection survey tool Qualtrics. Of the 37 teachers of students who are gifted who received the survey, 16 responded to the survey. Table 18 provides the frequencies and percentages for the participating teachers of students who are gifted who responded to the survey.

Table 18: Teacher Survey Data: Frequencies and Percentages of Respondents (n = 16)

School	Teachers of students who are gifted <i>f</i> (%)	Total teachers <i>f</i> (%)
ES#1	5 (31.0)	5 (100.0)
ES#2	6 (38.0)	6 (100.0)
ES#3	5 (31.0)	5 (100.0)
Total Teachers	16 (100.0)	16 (100.0)

Teacher survey data were disaggregated to review the results for each participating elementary school. The disaggregated data were then compared to each participating principal's responses. The presentation of the data by item has been organized around the three research questions which guided the study. The results are presented in tabular form and discussed.

### **Comparative Analysis for Research Question 1**

*What are the perceptions of elementary school principals, who are identified as effective or highly effective on The Leadership Evaluation Model (OCPS, 2012), concerning the implementation of practices, programs, and instructional methods that support their programs for students who are gifted?*

*Theme: The Need for Out-of-the-Box Thinking Regarding Instruction to Meet the Needs of Students Who Are Gifted*

An evaluation of the data from the principal interviews and teacher survey responses regarding the use of out-of-the-box thinking regarding instruction to meet the needs of students who are gifted was conducted. An examination of the teacher survey responses indicated that the teachers of students who are gifted revealed that their principals supported out-of-the-box thinking regarding instruction. Table 19 provides select direct responses from the teachers participating in the survey regarding their principals' use of out-of-the-box thinking to meet the needs of students who are gifted.

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Survey item 18: How does your principal provide support for the practices, programs, and instructional methods for students who are gifted at your elementary school? (n = 16)

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Table 19: Principal/Teacher Comparison: Out-of-the-Box Thinking to Meet Student Needs

School (n)	Select responses to survey item 18 from teachers of students who are gifted
ES#1 (5)	<p>She started the full-time model for gifted at this school. She encourages all students to have the opportunity to participate.</p> <p>She encourages us to think out-of-the-box. She wants us to do things differently for our gifted.</p> <p>She will get us the resources we need. She will allow us time and encourages us to collaborate.</p>
ES#2 (6)	<p>She encourages us to be involved in the development of the gifted programs through collaboration, instructional development, service models and review instructional materials.</p> <p>She seeks out mentors and resources to improve our programs.</p> <p>She listens to our ideas and troubleshoots our problems. She wants it to work. Whatever it takes.</p>
ES#3 (5)	<p>She is always looking for new ways to enrich the students.</p> <p>She supports travel, Rube Goldberg competitions and Future Problem Solvers. Not many do that.</p> <p>She is supportive of our full-time model, encourages us to plan together and wants us to differentiate and provide appropriate challenges for our gifted students.</p>

All 16 teacher participants (100%) at ES#1 (n=5) shared the importance of having an encouraging principal who promotes out-of-the-box thinking regarding instruction to support the implementation of practices, programs, and instructional methods for students who are gifted. The teachers at ES#2 (n=6) all had differing responses regarding the principals use of out-of-the-box thinking regarding instruction. ES#2 teacher responses varied from the use of time, to depth of principal involvement, teacher involvement in the development of gifted programming at the school, open to new ideas, use of mentors, and encourage all teachers to obtain their gifted endorsement. At ES#3 (n=5) 60% of the participating teachers referred to the principals encouragement of off-campus opportunities, including participation in competitions.



*Theme: Students Who Are Gifted Think Differently*

A comparison of data from the elementary principal interviews and teacher survey is not applicable to this identified theme. The theme relies on the principals' perceptions regarding the qualities in which students who are gifted think differently.

*Theme: Willingness to Try New Innovations*

A review of the teacher survey responses reveal that all participating teachers (n=16) have implemented new practices, programs and/or instructional methods for students who are gifted. Table 20 provides select direct responses from the teachers participating in the survey regarding their ability to try new innovations.

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Survey item 20: What practices, programs and/or instructional methods have you implemented in educating students who are gifted at your elementary school? (n = 16)

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Table 20: Principal/Teacher Comparison: Willingness to Try New Innovations

School (n)	Data from teachers of students who are gifted
ES#1 (5)	<p>Opportunities for my students to accelerate academically.</p> <p>Cutting edge practices that allow my students to accelerate in areas of STEM, engineering projects, integrating technology.</p> <p>My principal provides opportunities for teachers to observe me in implementing strategies that support academic acceleration.</p>
ES#2 (6)	<p>I try not to rely on basals and use a variety of resources that generate student interest which is typically at a higher reading and cognitive level.</p> <p>We are encouraged to implement problem based learning, service learning, thematic learning and inquiry based learning. A lot of my class content is based on case studies.</p> <p>I use curriculum compacting, acceleration, tiered assignments and problem based learning. The students like the challenge and complexity.</p>
ES#3 (5)	<p>We are one of the first to use Hands On Equations; we attend STEM competitions. I'm always looking for different ways to teach math.</p> <p>I use the SEM-R program for reading instruction. I broke away from basals and use novel studies during reading.</p> <p>I have used the gifted frameworks and align with Florida Standards to keep my gifted challenged.</p>

The comparison of the data from the principal interview responses and the teacher survey responses indicated a majority of agreement that the principals are willing to implement innovations that support the practices, programs, and instructional methods for students who are gifted. Two of the five teachers (40%) at ES#1 stated that the availability of academic acceleration was an implemented innovation. The principal of ES#1 is a proponent for academic acceleration for her students who are gifted. All six teachers at ES#2 (100%) indicated in their responses that there is a need to differentiate instruction and assignments to meet the academic demands of their students who are gifted. As the principal of ES#2 indicated, “we look at each student who is gifted and specifically look at their gifts and talents and passions and try to group them to make a match that will best meet their needs.” ES#3 principal explained her

implementation of using a new math program, Hands On Equations, for her students who are gifted in lieu of the district adopted instructional materials. Sixty percent of the teachers at ES#3 also referred to Hands On Equations as a newly implemented innovation to support students who are gifted in math instruction.

*Theme: Lack Knowledge on Students Who Are Gifted, but a Willingness to Learn*

A comparison of data from the elementary principal interviews and teacher survey is not applicable to this identified theme. The theme relies on the principals' perceptions regarding their personal knowledge and skillsets regarding students who are gifted.

### **Comparative Analysis for Research Question 2**

*How do elementary principals who are identified as effective or highly effective on The Leadership Evaluation Model (OCPS, 2012) support the teachers of students who are gifted in their schools?*

*Theme: Support of Gifted Endorsement Courses*

The evaluation of the data collected from the teacher survey indicated the attainment of gifted endorsement. This endorsement is achieved by the successful completion of five intensive courses and is designed to be completed in 18 months. All the principals indicated their support for teachers to obtain their gifted endorsement and the willingness to cover the expense of doing so. The data in Table 21 indicated the number of teachers in the participating elementary schools that have obtained their gifted endorsement.

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Survey item 8: Do you currently have your gifted endorsement? (n = 16)

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Table 21: Teachers' Obtainment of the Gifted Endorsement

School (n)	Teacher obtained gifted endorsement		Teacher has not obtained gifted endorsement	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
ES#1 (5)	3	60	2	40
ES#2 (6)	3	50	3	50
ES#3 (5)	2	40	3	60

The teachers from the participating elementary schools took on their teaching assignment of educating students who are gifted for a variety of reasons. The data collected in teacher survey item 16: "How did you enter your current teaching assignment of educating students who are gifted?" indicated that from ES#1 40% were assigned the teaching position by their principal and had to obtain their gifted endorsement. Three of the teachers from ES#2 (50%) obtained their gifted endorsement after their principal assigned the gifted teaching assignment. At ES#3, all five (100%) of the teachers obtained their gifted endorsement after their principal assigned them to teach in the gifted program. At ES#1 a total of three teachers obtained their gifted endorsement; at ES#2 a total of four teachers obtained their gifted endorsement; and at ES#3 a total of seven teachers obtained their gifted endorsement.

In preparation for becoming a teacher, teacher colleges may prepare students with coursework or pre-service experiences with students who are gifted. Table 22 indicates the number of teachers who have and have not received coursework or internship experiences in educating students who are gifted.

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Survey item 4: While in college did you receive coursework or internship experiences in educating students who are gifted? (n = 16)

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Table 22: Teachers' Coursework or Internship Experiences in Educating Students Who Are Gifted

School (n)	Teacher received coursework or internship experiences in educating students who are gifted		Teacher did not receive coursework or internship experiences in educating students who are gifted	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
ES#1 (5)	3	60	2	40
ES#2 (6)	1	17	5	83
ES#3 (5)	2	40	3	60

A teacher respondent from ES#1 commented that she had a group of students who were gifted while she was a pre-service teacher. A teacher from ES#2 revealed that part of her coursework for her Master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction included educating students who are gifted. A teacher survey respondent from ES#3 indicated that while in college she took courses that were for instruction in exceptional education, but addressed gifted as well. Since then this teacher completed coursework solely for gifted endorsement. Data collected from the principal interviews indicated their limited experiences in coursework to prepare them to educate students who are gifted. None of the principals received formal education in educating students who are gifted, but have participated in the gifted endorsement classes. All of the principals from the participating elementary schools indicated their willingness to provide time and financial resources to support any teacher interested in obtaining their gifted endorsement. Two teachers (40%) from ES#1 (N=5) commented how their principal is very encouraging of all teachers to get their gifted endorsement. Two teachers (33%) from ES#2 (n=6) commented on

the availability of the gifted endorsement courses on their school’s campus. One teacher (20%) from ES#3 (n=5) commented on her principal’s willingness to pay her way to get the gifted endorsement.

*Theme: Willing to Acquire Instructional Resources for Teachers*

The comparison of data from the principal interview questions and the teacher survey responses indicated an agreement between the two groups. Table 23 reflects select teacher comments regarding their principals’ willingness to acquire instructional resources for teachers who educate students who are gifted.

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Survey item 18: How does your principal provide support for the practices, programs, and instructional methods for students who are gifted at your elementary school? (n = 16)

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Table 23: Principal/Teacher Comparison: Principals’ Support of Acquiring Resources

School (n)	Data from teachers of students who are gifted
ES#1 (5)	She will get us materials and supplies as needed. She gets us the materials needed for the gifted teachers to conduct our PLC. She provides us the needed books and resources so the gifted teachers can have a book study.
ES#2 (6)	She will purchase instructional materials we need to support our lesson for students who are gifted. She funds a gifted resource teacher who supports our programs. My principal will involve us in reviewing instructional materials and programs that we can use in our gifted classes.
ES#3 (5)	Our principal supports our practices and encourages us. She will get us resources we need for our students. She supports STEM programs for the gifted. She will allocate resources so we have teachers to support our full-time gifted model.

*Theme: Encourage Professional Development Opportunities*

The teacher survey data indicated agreement with the principal interview responses in which the principals’ support of teachers in professional development opportunities. Teacher survey data indicated that gifted endorsement classes and PLCs were the most frequently used methods to provide professional development to support teachers who instruct students who are gifted. Other methods mentioned by the teachers included professional development in Marzano strategies, Kagan structures, attendance at professional conferences and professional development that supports the implementation of a new instructional innovation. Table 24 shows data for teacher professional development.

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Survey item 21: In the past five years what professional development have you participated in to develop your skills in meeting the academic needs of students who are gifted? (n = 16)

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Table 24: Principal/Teacher Comparison: Involvement in Professional Development Within the Past Five Years

School (n)	Agreement with principal					
	Teachers participating in professional development					
	Gifted endorsement		PLC		Other	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
ES#1 (5)	4	80	0	0	1	20
ES#2 (6)	3	50	1	17	2	33
ES#3 (5)	4	80	0	0	1	20

Of the teacher survey respondents (n=16), 70% confirmed participation in professional development by taking the gifted endorsement classes. Participation in these classes are fully

supported by the principals of the participating elementary schools. Teachers also mentioned involvement in professional development by attending the International Reading Association conference to focus on gifted and high-achieving readers. Other professional development opportunities noted by the teachers included the implementation of new instructional innovations such as Hands On Equations, participation in Future Problem Solvers, and viewing webinars on best practices in gifted education and on new resources. A teacher from ES#1 referenced a professional development that incorporated Marzano strategies used in the teacher evaluation system.

*Theme: Value Teacher Contributions*

The comparison of data from principal interviews and teachers survey responses regarding teacher contributions to the implementation of practices, programs, and instructional methods that support educating students who are gifted was addressed to support research questions #2: How do elementary principals who are identified as effective or highly effective on The Leadership Evaluation Model (OCPS, 2012) support teachers of students who are gifted in their schools? Table 25 details how teachers contribute to the planning, practices, and instructional methods for students who are gifted. On this survey item, teachers were able to select more than one response.

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Survey item 17: How do you participate in the planning of practices, programs, and instructional methods for students who are gifted at your elementary school? (check all that apply) (n = 39)

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Table 25: Principal/Staff Comparison: Contribute and Participate in the Planning of Practices, Programs, and Instructional Methods

Item response	Data by school						Total responses (n=39)	
	ES#1 (n=12)		ES#2 (n=11)		ES#3 (n=16)			
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
I participate in developing the master schedule	1	9	0	0	0	0	1	3
I coordinate on-campus prof dev to support all teachers in meeting the academic needs of students who are gifted	0	0	0	0	1	7	1	3
Along with my administrative team I help allocate financial and human resources	1	9	1	10	0	0	2	7
I serve on a committee to review and select instructional materials and methods to meet the needs of our students who are gifted	2	17	3	27	2	13	7	18
I consult with teachers who are unsure how to meet the academic needs of students who are gifted	4	33	5	45	1	7	10	26
I make recommendations to my administrator about how to best meet the academic needs of our students who are gifted	1	9	2	18	3	19	6	15
I encourage other teachers to obtain their gifted endorsement	3	23	5	45	4	25	12	31
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

As a result of the analysis of the teacher survey responses, teachers of students who are gifted are contributing to the implementation of programs, practices, and instructional methods in a variety of ways. A third of the teachers' responses included their contribution in encouraging other teacher to obtain their gifted endorsement. Also more than a quarter of the teachers' responses included contributing to the support of other teachers in meeting the academic needs of students who are gifted.

### **Comparative Analysis for Research Question 3**

*What are the lived experiences of the elementary school principals who are identified as effective or highly effective on The Leadership Evaluation Model (OCPS, 2012) and how do these experiences impact the implementation of practices, programs, and instructional methods that support their programs for students who are gifted?*

*Theme: Passion for Learning at an Early Age*

Although this theme relies on the participating principals' perceptions and recollections of their early childhood education, data collected in the teacher survey support a passion for learning at an early age. Table 26 provides select direct responses from the teachers participating in the survey regarding their passion for learning at an early age.

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Survey item 11: Describe how your own schooling experience(s) influence the decisions you make for educating your students who are gifted. (n = 16)

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Table 26: Principal/Teacher Comparison: A Passion for Learning at an Early Age

School (n)	Data from teachers of students who are gifted
ES#1 (5)	<p>I had an excellent education as a child and maintain high expectations for my students.</p> <p>I learned from my experiences to treat each student as an individual.</p> <p>I had some friends in gifted classes and liked that they got to do more creative projects when with their gifted teacher.</p>
ES#2 (6)	<p>Making sure that their (the gifted) are met too, not just below average students.</p> <p>My own schooling experience(s) greatly influence the decision I make for educating students who are gifted because, for me, it is personal. I was a very average student who happened to also be very creative. I was continue making or building things or dreaming of things I wanted to make or build in school or when I got home. My teachers would tell my parents that I wasn't interested in school and just not a good student. It is because of this, as an educator, I have been committed to not only identifying gifted learners but intend to develop programs and curriculum for high achieving and talented learners.</p> <p>My experience makes me realize the importance of differentiating.</p>
ES#3 (5)	<p>While in school I remember thinking that some topics were too easy or that I was tired of learning something. My teachers used gifted best practices which helped me to remain engaged and interested in learning.</p> <p>I had teachers who allowed me to do independent reading and research during times they suspected I was bored. I also participated in an afterschool enrichment program which I loved.</p> <p>As a student I really enjoyed novels and project based learning during my school experiences. As a teacher I prefer to teach that way as well.</p>

Like the principals, teachers have favorable recollections of their early education experiences. A teacher from ES#2 remarked on being an average student, however she exhibited creative talents. Another teacher commented on the value of receiving differentiated instruction. The principal from ES#2 also noted that as a child people recognized strengths in her and also differentiated to meet her needs. From ES#3 a teacher recalled how she was bored after

completing her work. The principal at ES#3 also recounted boredom as a younger student and the desire for more learning. Table 27 reflects the number of teachers participating in the survey who self-reveal that while in school they were a student identified as gifted.

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Survey item 10: As a student were you identified as gifted? Did you participate in a program for students who are gifted? (n = 16)

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Table 27: Principal/Teacher Comparison: Self-Identified as Participating in a Program for Students Who Are Gifted

School (n)	Agreement with principal					
	Teachers identified as gifted when a student					
	Yes		No		Other	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
ES#1 (5)	0	0	5	100	0	0
ES#2 (6)	2	33	3	50	1	17
ES#3 (5)	2	40	3	60	0	0

Four of the teachers participating in the survey (n=16) self-revealed that they were identified as a gifted learner, whereas 11 teachers were not identified as gifted, and one teacher identified as other. The principals from ES#1 and ES#2 both self-identified as having been identified as gifted while a student. ES#3 principals stated that although she was high achieving she was not labeled as gifted.

*Theme: Understanding Characteristics of Students Who Are Gifted*

To support the identification of and implementation of best practices for educating students who are gifted, teachers were requested to respond to survey item #12: Do you belong to any associations that educate, promote, or advocate on behalf of students who are gifted? Of

the 16 responses to this survey item, one teacher responded favorably that they belong to the Florida Association for the Gifted (FLAG). The teachers participating in the survey, however, may further develop their understanding of the characteristics of students who are gifted by their participation and completion of the gifted endorsement classes as indicated in Table 20 and Table 22. The three elementary principals interviewed noted the importance for their teachers to recognize the characteristics of students who are gifted. All the principals recognized that students who are gifted think differently and may be “quirky.” The principals convey these characteristics through whole faculty professional development.

*Theme: Allocation of Financial Resources to Support Students Who Are Gifted*

A comparison of data from principal interviews and teacher survey responses is not applicable to this identified theme. The theme relies on the principals’ recalled and reported lived experiences regarding the allocation of financial resources to support students who are gifted at their elementary schools.

*Theme: Provision of Services to Maximize Teaching Opportunities for Students Who Are Gifted*

The comparison of the data from principal interviews and teacher survey regarding services provided to maximize teaching opportunities for students who are gifted was addressed in the comparison of data for research question 3. Programs for students who are gifted are provided through a school’s service delivery model (see Table 28).

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Survey item 15: What service delivery model are you currently providing for your students who are gifted? (n=16)

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Table 28: Principal/Staff Comparison: How Services Are Provided to Maximize Teaching Opportunities

Item response	Responses by school					
	ES#1 (n=5)		ES#2 (n=6)		ES#3 (n=5)	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Full-time model (gifted stay in the gifted program for reading/language arts, math, science and social studies)	2	40	0	0	3	60
Gifted Clusters (gifted learners grouped together in classrooms)	3	60	5	83	2	40
Home School-Based Resource Room (gifted learners remain on their zone home school campus to receive services)	0	0	1	17	0	0
Center School-Based Resource Room (students are bused to a center or cluster school to receive services for students who are gifted)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Subject-Area Academic Classes (gifted learners attend gifted subject area class for part of the day)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other (please describe)	0	0	0	0	0	0

The three principals interviewed all made changes to the gifted service delivery model during their tenure. The principals acknowledge the students are gifted “24/7” and not only during their time in a resource room. To meet the unique learning needs of the gifted, the principals at ES#1 and ES#2 changed their gifted service delivery from a resource “pull out” model in which students received services from a gifted endorsed teacher for enrichment or one subject area class. Both principals changed their resource model to the cluster model which allows for greater opportunities for students to receive services. At ES#1 the cluster model is provided full time for some students who are gifted and is reflected in the teachers’ split responses to the type of model provided on this school’s campus. At ES#2 the service delivery model for gifted is termed as cluster, but the principal described it as a mixed model. The principal and teachers consider student strengths and students flow in and out of classes for the gifted based on their academic needs and abilities. With this model the principal at ES#2 is able to have high achieving students in the gifted cluster. Like the other principals, the principal at ES#3 transitioned to a cluster model. However the clusters for gifted at ES#3 are multi grade levels. The teachers at ES#3 indicated in their survey responses a mix of a full time and cluster model, which are both accurate based on the service delivery model provided by the principal. This model serves both gifted and high achieving students in multi grade level, subject area classes. The principal feels this model maximizes teaching opportunities for students who are gifted because it increases opportunities for academic acceleration.

To maximize instruction, teachers were surveyed regarding their involvement in the practices, programs, and instructional methods that support the students who are gifted at their elementary school. Teachers were asked to describe their role in educating students who are gifted. Table 29 reveals select teacher statements of how they describe their role in educating

students who are gifted. The statements were compared to the identified theme from the principal interviews of maximizing teaching opportunities for students who are gifted.

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Survey item 19: How would you describe your role in educating students who gifted?  
(n = 16)

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Table 29: Principal/Teacher Comparison: Maximizing Teaching Opportunities for Students Who Are Gifted

School (n)	Data from teachers of students who are gifted
ES#1 (5)	<p>I feel I have to provide academic acceleration.</p> <p>I need to challenge them by providing appropriate learning strategies and activities to meet their EP (education plan) goals.</p> <p>I'm a classroom teacher with gifted endorsement. I work with other teachers on how to meet the needs of students who are gifted. I serve as a mentor.</p>
ES#2 (6)	<p>As the Gifted Lead, I am always involved in the development of practices, programs and instructional methods that support the students who are gifted at my elementary school.</p> <p>Some years I teach math and science to students who are gifted and then they move to another teacher, same grade level, who teaches language arts and social studies.</p> <p>I provide gifted services in the classroom for ELA (English Language Arts).</p>
ES#3 (5)	<p>I am a facilitator and questioner to encourage their learning.</p> <p>I provide accelerated curriculum and instruction to the gifted.</p> <p>I am a teacher who facilitates the curriculum while also exploration and research into fields of individual interest.</p>

The teachers identified themselves as integral to academically supporting their students who gifted. The teachers indicated in their survey responses that they implement strategies to support their gifted learners and collaborate with other teachers to help meet the academic needs of the gifted. Teachers at both ES#1 and ES#3 commented on the need to provide academic



acceleration. The principals at both of these elementary schools stated in their interviews how they are a proponent of academic acceleration.

Like the principals at the participating elementary schools, the teachers were able to identify what they perceive has been most effective in implementing programs, practices, and instructional methods for students who are gifted at their schools. Table 30 reflects select statements made by teachers regarding their perception of what has been most effective in maximizing the teaching opportunities for students who are gifted.

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Survey item 23: What do you perceive has been most effective in implementing the programs, practices, and instructional methods for students who are gifted at your school? (n = 16)

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Table 30: Principal/Teacher Comparison: Maximizing Teaching Opportunities for Students Who Are Gifted

School	Data from teachers of students who are gifted
ES#1	<p>The full-time model has allowed students to challenge themselves academically.</p> <p>Being able to collaborate with other teachers, taking the endorsement classes with other teachers and learning what teachers are doing at other elementary schools.</p> <p>Collaboration with other teachers. It is helpful to meet with grade level teachers to hear what they are implementing in their classrooms. I also like learning from gifted teachers who have been teaching for a while. They have a wealth of knowledge.</p> <p>Collaboration with peers. Each gifted student is different and you can't use a one size fits all approach.</p>
ES#2	<p>Taking the gifted endorsement classes with a few of my fellow teachers, on my grade level, and having time in class to talk about projects we would like to do with them.</p> <p>The most effective element in implementing the programs, practices, and instructional methods for students who are gifted at my school is the support of my principal, who just this year has become gifted endorsed.</p> <p>Collaboration with other gifted teachers.</p> <p>Being able to collaborate with other teachers. Also my principal is receptive to new ideas.</p>
ES#3	<p>Offering a full-time gifted model.</p> <p>The full-time gifted program.</p> <p>Collaborating with my other grade level teachers and gifted teachers.</p> <p>My principal is always open to new ideas, she seems to like it when we come with off the wall ideas to help our gifted students.</p>

A review of the principal interview and teacher survey responses indicated that the change from a resource room “pull out” service delivery model to cluster and full-time service delivery model for the gifted is perceived as most effective in implementing the programs,

practices, and instructional methods for students who are gifted at their elementary schools. Further, teacher survey responses (n=12) 75% perceived the collaboration with their colleagues and principals as most effective in implementing the programs, practices, and instructional methods for students who are gifted at their elementary schools. One teacher stated she was unsure how to answer this question.

### **Analysis of Teachers of Students Who Are Gifted Professional Development Reports**

An integral component to the implementation of programs, practices, and instructional methods for students who are gifted is teacher access to professional development. According to teacher survey item 4: While in college did you receive coursework or internship experiences in educating students who are gifted?, 39% of the teachers participating in the survey (n=16) received coursework or internship experiences in teaching students who are gifted; whereas 61% of the participating teachers (n=16) did not receive any formal coursework or internship experiences. As part of this study, principals were asked to confirm or submit names of the teachers on their schools' campus who teach students who are gifted. Table 31 includes the number of teachers the principals have confirmed as teachers for students who are gifted. Gifted endorsement was confirmed by reviewing the teacher's certification status on the Florida Department of Education certification website.

Table 31: Teachers of Students Who Are Gifted and Their Gifted Endorsement Status

School	Principal/Teacher comparison:		Total gifted endorsed
	Number of teachers with gifted endorsement as reported by the principal	Number of teachers with gifted endorsement	
	<i>f</i>	<i>f</i>	%
ES#1	9	2	22
ES#2	17	4	24
ES#3	11	7	64

During the principal interviews all principals affirmed their support of their teachers obtaining their gifted endorsement. All the principals have allocated financial resources to cover the expenses of enrollment in the five courses needed for endorsement and the allocation of time for teachers to participate.

Teachers participating in the survey were requested to provide a copy of their professional development report. The professional development report indicates the professional development attended by the teachers that will be used toward recertification (see Table 32). Of the 16 teacher participating in the survey, seven teachers submitted their professional development report. Professional development reports can be obtained online through the school district's intranet. Teachers from each of the three participating elementary schools were represented.

Table 32: Professional Development for Teachers of Students Who Are Gifted

School	Teacher	Professional development participated
ES#1 (2)	Teacher 1	Kagan Structures Marzano Instructional Model Nature and Needs Resources for Higher Student Achievement Technology Integration New to Gifted-Teacher Orientation
	Teacher 2	PEER Training for Teachers of Gifted Students Nature and Needs Marzano Instructional Model Legal Aspects of ESE Meeting the Needs of Gifted Learners Kagan Structures
ES#2 (2)	Teacher 1	Technology Integration Nature and Needs Curriculum and Instructional Strategies for Teaching Gifted Students Guidance and Counseling for the Gifted Education of Special Populations of Gifted Students Theory and Development of Creativity Legal Aspects of ESE
	Teacher 2	Meeting the Needs of Gifted Learners PEER Training for Teachers of Gifted Students Nature and Needs
ES#3 (3)	Teacher 1	Nature and Needs Curriculum and Instructional Strategies for Teaching Gifted Students Guidance and Counseling for the Gifted Education of Special Populations of Gifted Students Theory and Development of Creativity Marzano Instructional Model Exceptional Education Online - Universal Design for Learning Thinking Maps Best Instructional Practices in Math to Teach New Florida Standards

School	Teacher	Professional development participated
	Teacher 2	Nature and Needs Curriculum and Instructional Strategies for Teaching Gifted Students Guidance and Counseling for the Gifted Education of Special Populations of Gifted Students Theory and Development of Creativity PEER Training for Teachers of Gifted Students
	Teacher 3	Nature and Needs PEER Training for Teachers of Gifted Students Professional Learning Communities Technology Integration Exceptional Education Online - Universal Design for Learning Best Instructional Practices in Math to Teach New Florida Standards

In order to complete the endorsement in gifted teachers must complete five 60 hour courses including: Nature and Needs, Curriculum and Instructional Strategies for Teaching Gifted Students, Guidance and Counseling for the Gifted, Education of Special Populations of Gifted Students, and Theory and Development of Creativity. All of the principals from the participating elementary schools encourage all of their teachers, those who are and are not teaching students who are gifted, to enroll in the gifted endorsement classes. As the principal of ES#2 shared, “the courses provide strategies that are good for all students.” All the principals want to afford all students, high achieving and gifted, access to instruction that meets their unique learning needs. In addition to their principals’ support of participation in professional development the teachers are supported by district resource teachers. The district resource teachers collaborate with the schools’ principals and teachers to evaluate their program for providing services for students who are gifted. The resource teachers make recommendations for the service delivery model, instructional materials and will conduct professional development.

The participating principals referenced utilizing the support of district resource teachers for programs for the gifted.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, demographic information and an analysis of principal interview and teacher survey data have been reviewed. The principal interview data has been presented in tables and summaries followed by the teacher survey responses. For this study three principals met participation criteria and were recommended by their area superintendent and 16 teachers of students who are gifted from the participating elementary schools. The data from the three elementary school principals and 16 teachers of students who are gifted were compared and a summary of the findings with identified commonalities and themes were presented. In the following chapter, the synopsis, interpretations, and recommendations will be presented.

## **CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions and lived experiences of elementary school principals, their implementation of practices, programs and instructional methods that support students who are gifted. Data were collected from elementary school principals, teachers of students who are gifted, and the professional development reports that indicated teachers' participation in district professional development.

This chapter includes a summary of the research and an interpretation of findings for each of the three research questions. Also addressed are the implications for educational policy and practices and recommendations for future research.

### **Synopsis of Research**

To begin the study, the researcher identified elementary schools that provided on campus services for students who are gifted. The researcher then contacted the area superintendents to elicit their support in the identification of elementary school principals who scored effective or highly effective on the most recent Leadership Evaluation Model and who had programs for students who are gifted on their schools' campus. Of the nominated elementary principals who met the study criteria, three agreed to participate in the study.

The researcher used the Delphi technique (Hsu & Sandford, 2007) to develop and validate principal interview questions and the survey questions that were administered to the



teachers. Inter-rater reliability was obtained by the expert panel's review of the interview and survey questions. At the end of collecting principal interview data, interviews were transcribed and themes and essences identified. A member check occurred when the researcher asked the participating principals to review their interview transcripts, including themes and essences identified. The member check cleared any miscommunications, identified inaccuracies, and used to obtain additional data. The teacher survey was based on the data collected in the principal interviews. The professional development reports obtained from the teachers were used as a means of triangulating data. The researcher conducted three principal interviews and analyzed the interview data collected using Hycner's (1985) guidelines for phenomenological analysis. The commonalities identified in the principal interviews were used as themes addressing each of the research questions.

## **Summary and Interpretation of Findings**

### *Research Question 1*

*What are the perceptions of elementary school principals, who are identified as effective or highly effective on The Leadership Evaluation Model (OCPS, 2012), concerning the implementation of practices, programs, and instructional methods that support their programs for students who are gifted?*

School leaders who implement programs for students who are gifted typically have identified that the academic needs of these students are different from non-gifted students and that these students who are gifted benefit from a curriculum that differs from the curriculum offered in general education classes. Fullan (2005) stated that education does not suffer from too few innovations, but rather from too many ad hoc, unconnected innovations. As described by the principals interviewed in this study, incorporating new innovative strategies and methods

strategically tied to the curriculum are one of the factors that made their programs for students who are gifted a success. In addition to the concept of using strategic and innovative curriculum the principal interviews identified several common themes, including out-of-the-box thinking regarding instruction, recognizing that students who are gifted think differently, a willingness to try new innovations, and recognizing they (the principals) are not experts on students who are gifted but have a willingness to learn.

The first theme was the need for out-of-the-box thinking regarding instruction to meet the needs of students who are gifted. The principals described out-of-the-box thinking as meeting the instructional needs of students who are gifted beyond the information outlined by the standards and instructional materials recommended and adopted by the district. These students benefit from innovative and strategic instruction to tap into their gifts. To adequately assess what is needed for teaching students who are gifted and students with disabilities in a variety of learning environments and service delivery models, principals must understand and identify practices that promote the effective instruction of these learners (Boscardin, 2005).

All of the principals interviewed perceived a need for creative methods in the implementation of practices, programs, and instructional methods. Although each of the principals encouraged out-of-the box thinking regarding instruction to meet the instructional needs of students who are gifted they continued to evaluate the teachers using the district required teacher evaluation system. The principal from ES#1 expressed her dislike for basal readers and how she supports her teachers' ideas for incorporating reading in the content areas. The principal at ES#2 stressed the need for the teachers and her administrative team to stretch him or herself to challenge the students who are gifted and perform at already high levels. She and her team are always investigating resources, materials and supplies to provide the students in

programs for the gifted. Meanwhile the principal at ES#3 encourages the students who are gifted to be able to experience and go out beyond what others expect. She expressed of the consequences associated with forcing students who are gifted to stay in the box and the danger that they may seek other avenues to fill the need. She encourages the students to have opportunities to visit colleges and universities with the hope that the experience(s) will spark a student's passion for learning. The majority of the teachers who participated in the survey agreed that their principals promoted and supported out-of-the-box thinking regarding instruction for the gifted. The teachers at ES#2 had varying responses regarding out-of-the-box thinking in regards to instruction. These teachers indicated that their principal was open to new ideas, encouraged the development of the programs for students who are gifted, implemented the use of mentors and encouraged all teachers on campus to obtain their gifted endorsement. The teachers at ES#3 agreed that the principal encouraged off campus learning opportunities for students who are gifted.

The second theme was how students who are gifted think differently. The principal from ES#1 self-revealed that she was identified as gifted when a child. She is able to draw on her personal experiences as she implements the practices, programs and instructional methods for students who are gifted on her school's campus. The principal at ES#2 obtained her gifted endorsement alongside her teachers. She also maintains a resource library of current research on the gifted in her office. The principal at ES#3 shared personal accounts of when she was a student and she felt stifled. She works to prevent her students who are gifted from feeling the same. She will enroll her students in competitions and seeks ways to meet her students' emotional needs as well as academic. Providing inquiry-based instruction within the curriculum and in outside-of-school competitions helps students develop creative thinking and develop

personal talent skills, self-awareness, and resilience (Moon & Feldhusen, 1994; Moon, Kolloff, Robinson, Dixon, & Feldhusen, 2009). The principals interviewed recognized that a “one-size-fits-all” delivery of instruction could be to the detriment of students who are gifted. Students who are gifted can and do differ as much from their peers as students with disabilities, and having these differences acknowledged, identified, served, and appreciated has been an ongoing challenge that both teachers of students who are gifted and special education teachers share (Jolly & Hughes, 2015).

The third theme was the principals’ willingness to try innovations. Innovation is driven by a commitment to excellence and continuous improvement. Innovation is based on curiosity, the willingness to take risks, and experimenting to test assumptions. Innovation is based on questioning and challenging the status quo. It is also based on recognizing opportunity and taking advantage of it (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). The principals interviewed were willing to try innovations to meet the academic needs of students who are gifted on their schools campus. All the principals saw an opportunity to increase the amount of time students who are gifted should spend in classes specifically designed to meet their needs taught by a gifted endorsed teacher. As a result, the principals interviewed redesigned the service delivery model for gifted to allow additional gifted education experiences. The principal at ES#1 encouraged academic acceleration while the principal at ES#3 encouraged combined classes and opportunities for students to experience learning off campus. As stated by Assouline et al. in *A Nation Empowered* (2015), “When students are closely matched with what they’re ready to learn, the odds are they will achieve more. One of the main causes of underachievement isn’t that the work is too difficult, it’s that the work is below what the student is ready to learn

(p. 17).” The teachers surveyed concurred that the implementation of innovations allowed students to accelerate, to break away solely from the use of district adopted instructional materials, and to align the state standards to the academic frameworks for the gifted.

The fourth theme was the principals’ recognition that they are not experts on students who are gifted, but are willing to learn. All the principals interviewed are proponents for all teachers on their campuses to have access to the gifted endorsement courses. Alongside her teachers, the principal of ES#2 completed the gifted endorsement. Their viewpoint is summarized in following statement, “Where there is excellence in general education, education for students who are gifted will more likely flourish; where education for students who are gifted flourishes, there is increased potential for excellence in general education” (NAGC, 2014c, p. 13). The principals also promoted and facilitated opportunities for the teachers of students who are gifted to collaborate in professional learning communities. Further, all the principals utilized the district resource teachers for gifted in supporting the changes to the service delivery model and when seeking additional resources and instructional materials. As principals continue to learn about and grow their programs for students who are gifted it is important for them to track their students’ performance and to share that information with district and state administrators. The data and statistics will illustrate the positive results of a concerted effort to try and implement new practices, programs and instructional methods to meet the academic needs of students who are gifted (Assouline et al., 2015).

### *Research Question 2*

*How do elementary principals who are identified as effective or highly effective on The Leadership Evaluation Model (OCPS, 2012) support the teachers of students who are gifted in their schools?*

Evidence from the principal interviews clearly indicated that the principals value their teachers' support and input in meeting the academic needs of the gifted learners at their elementary schools. All the principals shared their willingness to support their teachers in obtaining gifted endorsement. They also value their teachers' knowledge and assessments of instructional materials for the gifted and provided the teachers opportunities to contribute to the implementation of practices, programs, and instructional methods for students who are gifted. The interviews of the elementary principals also revealed their willingness for teacher participation in professional development. Four themes were identified in the principal responses that included support for teachers to participate in gifted endorsement courses, willingness to acquire instructional resources for teachers, principal encouragement of professional development opportunities for teachers, and the principal placed high value on teachers' knowledgeable contributions to the program.

The first theme from the interview data revealed from the second research question the principals support of teachers to participate in the courses to earn a gifted endorsement. This theme tied directly to the work of Laczko-Kerr and Berliner (2002) that found students of teachers without proper endorsement had lower achievement scores on academic tests than students whose teachers were experienced and certified teachers of mathematics, reading, and language arts tests. As indicated in the review of literature, teachers are a key determinant of student success in the classroom. Darling-Hammond (2000) noted that, "in all cases, teachers with full certification status are by far the most important determinant of student achievement" (p. 30). As well, Marzano (2007) identified teachers as having the greatest influence on the effectiveness of a school. Each principal made and offered financial support for teachers who wished to complete the course work required to add state endorsement in gifted education to

their teaching credentials. The support was provided to all teachers, not only to those that teach students who are gifted. Having recognized that some teachers are unable to complete the endorsement courses due to personal reasons or prior commitments, the principals made the initial endorsement course, Nature and Needs, which supports teachers in the identification and characteristics of students who are gifted, available through faculty-wide professional development or through PLCs. School principals need to place an emphasis on high quality professional development (Killion, 1998) which focuses on strengthening instructional skills (Lashway, 2003).

The second theme addressed principals' willingness to acquire instructional resources for their teachers. Each of the principals interviewed stated that she encouraged her teachers to share resources that will meet the academic needs of students who are gifted. Allowing teachers to provide input regarding resources will increase their buy-in when using new resources. All three principals interviewed stated that they involve their teachers in the selection process of securing resources to meet the unique learning needs of students who are gifted. The teacher survey data indicated agreement from the teachers in which they concur that their principals will provide the materials and supplies needed to support their instructional practices. The teacher survey responses indicated that they feel their principals will not only purchase instructional materials for their students who are gifted, but also are willing to provide human resources, such as additional teachers for the gifted for a cohesive service delivery model for gifted. Teachers from ES#2 and ES#3 commented that both principals provided a resource teacher for gifted who supports the students and classroom, grade level teachers and added instructional positions to further increase the capacity of the school's programs for the gifted. The NCLB legislation established an accountability system that addressed the needs of many students who would

traditionally fall through the cracks and not succeed academically. The principals' allocation of the resource teachers can help support the academic needs of students who are gifted. The principals interviewed acknowledged the importance for providing the appropriate resources for their students who are gifted. Teachers from ES#1 also shared that their principal will provide resources for the teachers to deepen their understanding of educating students who are gifted by purchasing resources to use in their Professional Learning Communities and in book studies.

The third theme was the principals' willingness to allow teachers to participate in professional development that supports the programs, practices, and instructional methods for students who are gifted. Researchers have established that teachers' attitudes towards students who are gifted become more favorable after participating in relevant professional development, compared to teachers without such professional development experiences (Ciha, 1974; Gallagher, 1975). Principals as instructional leaders can support students who are gifted by providing access to high-quality learning opportunities that includes strategies in differentiating instruction, the pace of learning, and the assessment for students who are advanced (Greene & Cross, 2013). Effective school leaders support their teachers and staff in identifying professional development opportunities that nurtures their growth of professional practice, continuous improvement which in turn supports the vision and goals of the school (Murphy, Elliot, Goldring, & Porter, 2006). When the principal of ES#1 was asked about her support of professional development opportunities for her teachers of students who are gifted, she shared that when her teachers ask to attend a professional development she always says, "Yes." The principals of ES#2 and ES#3 sought out professional development opportunities for their teachers. The principal from ES#2 surveyed her teachers to help guide the creation/revision of



her school's professional development plan whereas the principal of ES#3 used professional development to help grow leaders.

All the principals shared how they rely on their teachers to share content and strategies learned in professional development related to best practices in meeting the academic needs of students who are gifted. Quality professional development is a vital contribution to student achievement (Stronge, 2002) and to meet the academic needs of students who are gifted (Hansen & Feldhusen, 1994). All of the teachers who participated in the survey acknowledged that they have participated in professional development that supported their instruction of students who are gifted. The professional development opportunities were presented in a variety of choices, including participation in the gifted endorsement classes, attendance in professional learning communities, instruction on a new curriculum, or by attending a conference. Teachers who responded to the survey were also invited to submit their professional development participation report that is available through the district's professional development services. Of the seven teachers, representative from each elementary school, each received professional development in teaching students who are gifted. At minimum, the teachers participated in the initial gifted endorsement course, Nature and Needs when the principal provided the course through faculty-wide professional development or in PLCs. This course addresses the identification and characteristics of students who are gifted. Of the seven teachers who submitted their professional development participation report, three have full gifted endorsement. Teachers' professional development reports also listed the professional development opportunities they attended, including Thinking Maps, Marzano Instructional Model, Kagan Structures, and Universal Design for Learning. Hattie's 2009 meta-analysis indicated the effects of professional

development on teachers of students who are gifted revealed greater student outcomes than those teachers who taught the gifted and did not participate in professional development.

The fourth theme from the principal interview data collected on research question two addressed the concept of valuing teacher contributions and input. The principals for ES#1 and ES#3 addressed their accessibility to their teachers. Each of these principals proclaimed an open door policy in which teachers are able to share their thoughts, findings, suggestions, and ideas in supporting the academic needs of students who are gifted on their schools' campus. All the principals indicated the need for collaboration and team effort in identifying students who may be gifted and the identification of resources for students who are gifted. Each of the principals talked about the importance of leadership in which they rely on teachers to provide professional development, input and guidance on educating students who are gifted. Education for students who are gifted is in need of a champion at the local, state and national level to support the need to allocate scarce resources (Duquette et al., 2011). Of the 16 teachers who responded to the survey, the majority participated in the planning of practices, programs and instructional methods for students who are gifted at their elementary schools by encouraging their teacher colleagues to obtain their gifted endorsement, followed by consulting with other teachers who are unsure how to meet the academic needs of students who are gifted. Only one teacher from ES#1 helped develop the master schedule, which would include scheduling students who are gifted in their courses. One teacher from ES#3 mentioned helping the coordination of on-campus professional development to support all teachers in meeting the academic needs of students who are gifted. One teacher from ES#1 and from ES#2 helped in allocating human and financial resources for supporting programs for students who are gifted.

### *Research Question 3*

*What are the lived experiences of the elementary school principals who are identified as effective or highly effective on The Leadership Evaluation Model (OCPS, 2012) and how do these experiences impact the implementation of practices, programs, and instructional methods that support their programs for students who are gifted?*

The principals participating in the interview drew upon their personal learning experiences and how those experiences impacted the programs for students who are gifted on their elementary school campus. Each participating principal revealed they enjoyed learning as a child. The principal of ES#1 indicated that she was identified as gifted when she was a student, whereas the principals of ES#2 and ES#3 self-revealed they were high achieving students.

The first theme from the interviews was the principals' passion for learning. When asked about their experiences as a student, the principals at ES#2 and ES#3 recalled their teachers who recognized that they needed more challenging instruction. The principals reflected on how their teachers had to differentiate to meet their academic needs and teachers recognized they had academic strengths and should be encouraged to advance. The principals draw on their school experiences when considering the implementation of practices, programs and instructional methods for the students who are gifted on their schools' campus. Teachers are encouraged through the actions, words, and attitudes of the school leader (Cherkowski, 2012). The principal of ES#1 revealed that she was identified as a gifted learner when a student, but felt her true understanding of what it means to be gifted did not occur until she became assistant principal at her school. Although this theme relies on the participating principals' perceptions and recollections of their education, like the principals, the teachers surveyed also drew upon their personal educational experiences for implementing programs for students who are gifted. From the teachers' personal experiences they identified with the importance of differentiating

instruction, and understand the need to meet the students at their level. While the school community is a collaborative effort on the part of teachers and the principal, the importance of the principals' passion for education ensures that the high levels of learning is achieved and sustained (Beck & Foster, 1999; DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Hord & Sommer, 2008; Speck, 1999).

The second theme was the principals' understanding, based on their experiences, the characteristics of students who are gifted. The principal of ES#3 shared of her teaching experience in which she learned and researched on her own how to teach the gifted. The principal of ES#1 shared she did not get an understanding on how to teach the gifted until she arrived at her current school. All of the principals interviewed emphasized the importance and accessibility of the gifted endorsement courses. Each principal made the courses available to any teacher interested and agreed to cover the expense to enroll. The principals at ES#1 and ES#2 both provide their faculty professional development opportunities in identifying the characteristics of the gifted. Further, the principal at ES#2 provided the initial gifted endorsement course, Nature and Needs, as a faculty wide professional development. The principal from ES#3 provided universal screenings of all her students because from her experiences in interacting with the students and conversations with her teachers, she saw the talent in the students. According to the National Association for Gifted Children (2014a) no student is gifted in exactly the same way, each student has his or her own unique patterns and traits. While there are many traits that students who are gifted have in common, all students who are gifted do not exhibit traits in every area. Traits for giftedness are in cognitive areas, creative affective and behavioral abilities.

Additionally, each principal identified a lead teacher for their programs for students who are gifted. This lead teacher demonstrated the ability to identify students who are gifted and is

able to recommend instructional changes to meet students the unique academic needs of students who are gifted. Although the three principals interviewed recognized the importance of understanding the characteristics of students who are gifted, only one teacher who participated in the survey responded that they belong to the professional organization, Florida Association for the Gifted (FLAG). This organization identifies the characteristics of students who are gifted and also supports educationally appropriate programs for the gifted. Of the three principals interviewed, one principal discussed being identified as a student as a person who is gifted, while the other two principals mentioned being identified as high academic achievers.

The third theme from the principal interviews was the importance of allocating financial resources to support students who are gifted. In 2011, Congress voted to defund the Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Student Education Act (National Association for Gifted Children, 2013). The lack of equitable resources made it necessary for a change in support for students who are gifted in Florida schools and as a result, many students who are gifted are underserved (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). Each principal interviewed agreed that their schools' budget is tight and revealed that, at times, they have to identify alternate sources to fund supports for students who are gifted. The principal at ES#1 mentioned that if her teachers need something for their students, she will find the financial source to make it happen. She shared that her school's PTA and Foundation have been very supportive financially of teacher initiatives. As mentioned earlier, each principal is a proponent of their teachers participating in the gifted endorsement courses and are willing to pay for any of their teachers to participate. The principal at ES#2 shared the challenge of making priorities in the budget and described the process of allocating financial resources to a puzzle in which she is trying to build the best picture. With the defunding of the Jacob Javits Act, principals gained more responsibility to lead their schools

toward greater learning opportunities (Lewis et al., 2007) and to allocate the resources for meeting the academic needs of students who are gifted. Hallinger et al.'s 1996 research revealed that "principals play a vital role in school effectiveness," (p. 544) although they have an indirect effect on student achievement. It is through improvement of teacher practice that the principal affects student learning (Hallinger & Heck, 1996). School principals are placing a greater emphasis on high quality professional development (Killion, 1998) which focus on strengthening instructional skills (Lashway, 2003).

The final theme to emerge was the principals' willingness to provide services to maximize teaching opportunities for students who are gifted. As each principal began their tenure at their school, she changed the service delivery model for students who are gifted. Each principal mentioned that the service delivery model in place upon their arrival did not allow for the maximum academic support for the students who are gifted. All the principals acknowledged that the students benefit from comprehensive service delivery models for the gifted and not just during their time in a resource classroom. Effective teachers given the maximum opportunities to instruct are able to reflect academic gains for the top 20% of students on pre/post measures (Sanders & Horn, 1998). There has been a shift from what teachers are doing to what students are learning (DuFour, 2002). Maximum academic achievement for students who are gifted can be accomplished when teachers are given the tools, support, and professional development needed to strengthen instructional skills and develop knowledge of the social and emotional needs of the students they serve (Feldhusen & Dai, 1997). The principals at ES#1 and ES#2 have changed the service delivery model at their schools to include gifted clusters in which students who are gifted are grouped together in classrooms. As a result of this change, students can be served in gifted five days a week, all day long. At ES#2, the principal scheduled high

achieving students in the a few grade level classes where the gifted cluster is offered. The principal of ES#3 scheduled her students who are gifted differently. She reviewed each student's abilities and personalities and paired them with a teacher who would best meet their academic needs. She shared that she avoids keeping students together for too long so they don't become frustrated and they maintain balance with whom and how they are learning. She described her service delivery model for gifted as mixed because she provided subject area courses specifically for the gifted at each grade level, but also has mixed grade level classes for gifted. Both the principals of ES#1 and ES#3 encouraged grade level acceleration. Acceleration occurs when students move through traditional curriculum at rates faster than typical and included skipping a grade (NAGC, 2014b). Both of these principals feel there is a need for academic acceleration to provide an academic challenge.

Upon review of the teacher survey data the 16 teachers who participated in the survey, there seemed to be consensus that the teachers agreed with the service delivery model provided by their principals. Teachers at ES#1 and ES#3 affirmed their principals provided a full time model and each teacher agreed their principals supported gifted clusters. One teacher from ES#2 noted in her survey response that the service delivery model developed by her principals is *home school based resource room*. While the principal of ES#2 does provide services for the gifted on her school's campus, which may be interpreted by the teacher as the home school, ES#2 does not offer a resource room for gifted. To maximize the opportunities available to teach students who are gifted the teachers at the three participating elementary schools shared their role in educating students who are gifted. The teachers who responded to the survey shared how they collaborate with their principal to implement instruction for students who are gifted. Teachers from ES#1 and ES#3 talked of how they provided academic acceleration. Others described their role as

facilitators that allowed students to explore and research fields of individual interest. The teachers also supported the principals in maximizing the services for students who are gifted by implementing effective programs, practices, and instructional methods. As a result of the principals' support of the programs for the gifted, teachers feel the changes their principals made to the service delivery model have been effective in maximizing services. Teachers from the three elementary schools also addressed the importance of collaborating with other teachers and peers. The teachers acknowledged that through collaboration with their principals and colleagues they identified new strategies and instructional materials and resources that have been used with success in other classrooms with students who are gifted.

### **Discussion of Findings**

This study explored the perceptions and lived experiences of effective or highly effective elementary school principals concerning the implementation of practices, programs, and instructional methods that support their programs for students who are gifted. Instructional leadership provides a framework for school principals who possess a vision for learning. Bennis and Nanus (1997) established that principals who are instructional leaders sharpen their teachers' skills and enhance their knowledge from their own experiences. Hattie's 2009 meta-analysis research on the influence of principals on student achievement outcomes supported instructional leadership as having the greatest impact on student outcomes. In his review, Hattie found instructional leadership criteria which includes commitment to and participating in teacher learning and development; evaluating and giving feedback; being committed to and participative in teacher learning and development; evaluating and giving feedback to teachers on their teaching and the curriculum being used in their classrooms; making strategic decisions involving resources with a focus on instruction; setting clear goals and expectations; and ensuring an



orderly and supportive learning environment by maintaining classroom instruction as the focus both inside and outside classrooms, as having the strongest correlations with student achievement outcomes. Principals as instructional leaders can support teachers of students who are gifted by providing access to high-quality professional development that includes strategies to differentiate instruction, the pace of learning, and the assessment for students who are advanced (Greene & Cross, 2013). In addition, these instructional leaders empower their teachers to continually develop their pedagogical skills, participate in professional development and develop their own leadership potential.

When examining the practices of the three principals who participated in the study the data suggested a positive relationship between the principals' out-of-the-box thinking regarding instruction and the innovations that have been implemented by the teachers on their elementary schools' campus. The ability to identify the need for differing methods of instruction for students who are gifted can be further developed in principal preparation programs and in the principals' experiences when serving as an assistant principal or teacher leader. The principals benefit from experiences with mentors and district leaders who support the principals' willingness to try out-of-the box thinking regarding instruction. Further, revising the service delivery model for students who are gifted supported meeting the academic needs of students who are gifted. The data also suggested a correlation between effective leadership practices and teachers' participation in professional development opportunities that support the academic needs of students who are gifted.

The themes emerging from the principals' implementation of practices, procedures, and instructional methods for students who are gifted aligned with the literature in which school principals need to place an emphasis on high quality professional development (Killion, 1998)

which focus on strengthening instructional skills (Lashway, 2003). It is through improvement of teacher practice that the principal affects student learning (Hallinger & Heck, 1996). The review of literature supported the need for reform within principal preparation programs to effectively manage different facets of curriculum, instruction, finance, and policy, as well as the many needs of student groups (Alvarez McHatton et al., 2010). To adequately assess what is needed for teaching students who are gifted in a variety of learning environments and service delivery models, principals must understand and identify practices that promote the effective instruction of these learners (Boscardin, 2005). Principals' increased awareness of issues surrounding the education of students who are gifted facilitates a greater level of academic support. Alvarez McHatton et al.'s (2010) review of the literature indicates that administrative support of best practices in the classroom and knowledge of legislation for students with exceptionalities leads to improved outcomes for students in these programs.

This study brings to light the importance of innovative approaches when implementing programs for students who are gifted. Effective and highly effective principals do not rely solely on state standards and district recommendations for curriculum and instructional materials when developing their programs and service delivery models for gifted. To implement out-of-the-box thinking regarding instruction for students who are gifted, principals must collaborate and consider the contributions of their teachers on meeting the academic needs of students who are gifted. Principals also need to allow opportunities for teachers to participate in meaningful professional development to deepen their understanding of the characteristics of students who are gifted. Further, principals need to maximize opportunities for students who are gifted to have access to instruction that meet their unique learning needs. Principals must maintain open lines of communication regarding best practices for teaching students who are gifted and value their

teachers' contributions in identifying new instructional materials, service delivery models and professional development. Principals must remain aware of their teachers' contributions, interest and needs to further their professional learning in educating students who are gifted, and fund programs that will further meet academic needs.

### **Implications for Educational Policy and Practice**

The data collected for this study provides suggestions for educational policy and practice for students who are gifted. These suggestions serve as conclusions reached in this study and are based on the increased understanding of the perceptions and lived experiences of the principals interviewed.

The principals interviewed were instructional leaders within a large, urban school district. When identifying programs and instructional methods to meet the needs of students who are gifted, collaboration and shared decision making with teachers who will be implementing the program or instructional method should be considered. As a result of this study, it is evident that a well-designed, flexible service delivery model for teaching the gifted should allow opportunities in which the instruction for students is maximized. Principals must have a knowledge of each model for educating the gifted within the service delivery model and how each best meets the academic needs of the gifted learner. While maximizing services for students who are gifted a need exists to keep the learning environment for these students inclusive to other students who are high achieving. A deeper, more nuanced understanding of giftedness is required in order to combat the misconception that standards taught in the grade level classroom will be sufficiently challenging to meet the needs of the gifted (VanTassel-Baska, 2015). Principals should also allocate financial resources and time and provide opportunities for teachers to collaborate through professional learning communities, and

participate in professional development and learning opportunities that will further improve the programs for the gifted. Principals and teachers alike benefit from understanding and deepening their knowledge of the characteristics of students who are gifted.

Since the start of this research study, additional literature has been presented regarding practices that support students who are gifted. A follow up to the 2004 breakthrough report, *A Nation Deceived*, Assouline et al. recently published *A National Empowered* (2015). In *A Nation Empowered* the researchers confirm that the benefits of academic acceleration outweighs the consequences of doing nothing (Assouline et al., 2015). As Assouline (2015) asserted, “Classrooms are the only place where age matters more than ability.” (p. 13). Their current findings reveal that more states and school districts have policies supporting the acceleration of gifted students, however the number of states with an acceleration policy remains small (currently nine). In *A Nation Empowered* (2015) the researchers shared that it easier now to identify students as gifted and engage schools in finding ways to better serve them, than it was ten years ago. However, changing attitudes toward academic acceleration continues to be a challenge. *A National Deceived* was designed to guide the conversation about acceleration, whereas *A Nation Empowered* is designed to empower educators with evidence to use in implementing the various types of acceleration.

In addition to acceleration, there also is a need to upgrade the state standards by ensuring that there are open-ended opportunities to meet the standards through multiple pathways, more complex thinking applications, and real-world, problem solving contexts (VanTassel-Baska, 2015). To accommodate this upgrade to state standards, principals need to support their teachers of students who are gifted to ensure that the standards are translated in a way that allow for differentiation to meet the learning needs.

## **Recommendations for Future Research**

Understanding the lived experiences of effective and highly effective principals as measured by The Leadership Evaluation Model (OCPS, 2012) and their perceptions of the implementation of practices, programs and instructional methods for students who are gifted was an involved process. As a result recommendations for future research address the areas of (a) principal experience, (b) principal's understanding of the characteristics of students who are gifted, (c) principal's understanding of the service delivery model for students who are gifted, (d) principal awareness of instructional resources outside of the instructional materials recommended by the school district, and (e) study participant size.

A connection between principals' effectiveness, as measured by the district's evaluation model, as a school leader and implementation of programs for students who are gifted emerged from this study. Future researchers might consider examining this connection further, specifically, investigating the impact of principals who are effective or highly effective and their service delivery models for students who are gifted. Further, future researchers should consider examining the principals' level of understanding of the characteristics of students who are gifted, the social implications of being gifted, and the implementation of the service delivery model on their school's campus.

This research identified common themes stated by the elementary school principals who were interviewed. The principals all provided programs for students who are gifted on their school campuses. Awareness of the principals' experiences may suggest programmatic adjustments that could better address the needs of students who are gifted. The principals who participated in this study were very involved in development and implementation of the programs for the gifted on their school's campus. Literature on effective instructional leadership supported teacher learning and professional development, planning, coordinating, and evaluating

teaching and curriculum, aligning resource selection and allocation to priority teaching goals, and ensuring a supportive environment that protects time for teaching. Future research may include the perceptions and lived experiences of the surveyed teachers regarding the implementation of practices, programs and instructional methods for students who are gifted. A further consideration for future research whether a larger sample size will reveal a wider range of experiences that may have a direct involvement in the implementing the programs, practices, and instructional methods for students who are gifted. Of interest for future research are the perceptions and lived experiences of principals with more years of experience in educating students who are gifted than those who participated in this study. Researching principals with more years of experience may reveal their decisions in the service delivery model for programs for students who are gifted and how they adhere to policies and funding for their programs. The demographics of the schools identified and recommended for this research were similar. Further research may include schools identified as Title 1 or in need of intensive support from the state or school district.

The focus of this study was to examine effective or highly effective elementary school principals who provided services for students who are gifted on their school's campus. The principal interviews sought to unveil the elementary principal's previous experiences with educating students who are gifted. It is anticipated that the experiences of each principal will be unique, but the analysis of their professional experiences revealed commonalities. Three elementary principals were interviewed and resulting themes were identified. Teachers of students who are gifted from the participating elementary school were surveyed and copies of their participated professional development reports obtained.

**APPENDIX A: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL**



University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board  
Office of Research & Commercialization  
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501  
Orlando, Florida 32826-3246  
Telephone: 407-823-2901 or 407-882-2276  
[www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html](http://www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html)

### Approval of Exempt Human Research

From: **UCF Institutional Review Board #1  
FWA0000351, IRB00001138**  
To: **Ingrid Karin Cumming**  
Date: **March 03, 2015**

Dear Researcher:

On 03/03/2015, the IRB approved the following activity as human participant research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review: Exempt Determination  
Project Title: PRINCIPALS' PERCEPTIONS ON EDUCATING  
ELEMENTARY STUDENTS WHO ARE GIFTED  
Investigator: Ingrid Karin Cumming  
IRB Number: SBE-15-11056  
Funding Agency:  
Grant Title:  
Research ID: n/a

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the Investigator Manual.

On behalf of Sophia Dziegielewski, Ph.D., L.C.S.W., UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

Signature applied by Joanne Muratori on 03/03/2015 11:15:06 AM EST

IRB Manager



**APPENDIX B: RESEARCH APPROVAL FROM  
ORANGE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS**



# Orange County Public Schools

445 West Amelia Street • Orlando, FL 32801-1129 • Phone 407.317.3200 • [www.ocps.net](http://www.ocps.net)

## Notice of Approval

Approval Date: 4/1/15

Approval Number: **0008**

Project Title: Requester:

Principals' Perceptions on Educating Elementary Students Who Are Gifted

**Ingrid Cumming**

Project Director/Advisor: Dr. Suzanne Martin

Sponsor Agency/Institutional Affiliation: University of Central Florida

Thank you for your request to conduct research in Orange County Public Schools. We have reviewed and approved your application. This Notice of Approval expires one year after issue, 3/31/16.

If you are interacting with OCPS staff or students, you should have submitted a Principal Notification Form with your application. You may now email the principals who have indicated interest in participating, including this Notice as an attachment. After initial contact with principals, you may then email any necessary staff.

This notice does not obligate administrators, teachers, students, or families of students to participate in your study; participation is entirely voluntary.

OCPS badges are required to enter any OCPS campus or building (see the [Security Clearance Flow Chart](#)).

You are responsible for submitting a [Change Request Form](#) to this office prior to implementing any changes to the currently approved protocol. If any problems or unexpected adverse reactions occur as a result of this study, you must notify this office immediately by emailing a completed [Adverse Event Report Form](#). On or before 2/28/16, you must complete a [Request for Renewal or Executive Summary Submission](#). Email all forms to [research@ocps.net](mailto:research@ocps.net). All forms may be found at [www.ocps.net/cs/services/accountability/Pages/Research.aspx](http://www.ocps.net/cs/services/accountability/Pages/Research.aspx).

Should you have questions or need assistance, please contact Mary Ann White at (407) 317-3201 or [mary.white@ocps.net](mailto:mary.white@ocps.net).

Best wishes for continued success,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tavy Chen".

Tavy Chen, Ed.D.  
[tavy.chen@ocpsnet](mailto:tavy.chen@ocpsnet)  
Director, Accountability and  
Research Orange County  
Public Schools

Cc: Brandon McKelvey, Senior Director, [brandon.mckelvey@ocps.net](mailto:brandon.mckelvey@ocps.net)

"The Orange County School Board is an equal opportunity agency."

**APPENDIX C: EXPERT PANEL INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN  
DELPHI TECHNIQUE FOR PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

Hello \_\_\_\_\_,

As I enter the dissertation phase of my doctoral studies, I am requesting your expertise and assistance. I hope you will kindly consider my invitation for participation.

My dissertation study focuses on elementary school principal's perceptions of the implementation of practices, programs and instructional methods that support students who are gifted. The phenomenological research study will involve interviewing identified elementary school principals, surveying the teachers of students who are gifted from the participating elementary schools, and a focus group.

Based on your expertise and experiences in the areas of educating students who are gifted and/or leadership, I would like to invite you to participate in vetting three sets of questions which will be used in the principal interview, teacher survey and focus group. The process used for vetting the sets of questions is known as the Delphi Technique.

In the first round of the process you will be asked to review the questions for errors in ambiguity, bias, syntax and vagueness. You will also be able to rate each question in terms of relevance. All responses will be submitted electronically and remain confidential.

In the second round, the process will be repeated. Depending on the level of consensus the rounds may range from two to four. Your time investment in this entire process is estimated to be less than two hours and take approximately 2-3 weeks.

Please let me know if will be willing to participate. At your earliest convenience please press reply to this message and type YES or NO. A response by Friday, March 6, 2015 is greatly appreciated.

Once I receive your affirmative reply I will send an email letter with further details of the study, instruments used for data collection for the study, and instructions.

Please email or call me at 407/375-4646 if you have any questions.

Thank you for your consideration and willingness to participate in the study.

Cordially,

Ingrid Cumming

**APPENDIX D: EXPERT PANEL DESCRIPTION OF DELPHI  
TECHNIQUE TO REVIEW PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Thank you for agreeing to serve as a member of the expert panel as I work towards completing my doctoral dissertation. Your expertise and assistance in the areas of gifted education and/or school leadership will be valuable in developing principal interview questions and teacher survey questions.

My dissertation study focuses on elementary school principals' perceptions of the implementation of practices, programs, and instructional methods that support students who are gifted. This research study will involve interviewing identified elementary school principals and surveying the teachers of students who are gifted from the participating elementary schools.

The primary purpose of this research study is to examine elementary school principals' perceptions of best practices, service delivery models, and instructional methods that support the education of students who are gifted in a large urban school district. Of interest to this research study are the lived experiences of the elementary school principals, specifically how they support the programs for students who are gifted on the campus of his or her elementary school.

A summary of the conceptual framework for the research is attached for your review.

**This is the first round of the review for the principal interview protocol.** Attached, is a list of interview questions to be asked of the participating elementary school principals. Please examine the questions and:

1. rate each for appropriateness (considering errors in ambiguity, bias, syntax and vagueness)
2. if applicable, offer possible rewording
3. if applicable, contribute additional questions that you feel should be addressed in the interview protocol
4. return the completed round one questionnaire via email to [ingrid.cumming@knights.ucf.edu](mailto:ingrid.cumming@knights.ucf.edu)

Once the first round of the review is complete, you will receive the collective results of the responses from the entire expert panel to rate once more. All identifying information of the panel members will be removed. Once this second round is complete, you will receive the collective results from the second round, which identified any existing consensus. You will be asked to make any final revisions or provide a rationale for not reaching consensus.

Thank you again for your willingness to participate in the study and serve on the expert panel.

Cordially,

Ingrid Cumming

**APPENDIX E: PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS PRESENTED TO  
EXPERT PANEL**



Initial Principal Interview Questions

Expert Panel Questionnaire Round 1

Ingrid Cumming

Principal Interview Questions	
1. What is your highest level of education attainment?	<input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate <input type="checkbox"/> Not Appropriate
Possible Rewording:	
2. How many years total have you been school principal?	<input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate <input type="checkbox"/> Not Appropriate
Possible Rewording:	
3. How many years have you been a principal at this school?	<input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate <input type="checkbox"/> Not Appropriate
Possible Rewording:	
4. Have you worked in other supervisory roles prior to becoming a principal?	<input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate <input type="checkbox"/> Not Appropriate
Possible Rewording:	
Prompts: What other leadership position(s) have you held? In what capacity? Have you worked as an assistant principal? In a high school, middle school or elementary school setting?	<input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate <input type="checkbox"/> Not Appropriate
Possible Rewording:	
5. How many classes for students who are gifted to you have at this school?	<input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate <input type="checkbox"/> Not Appropriate
Possible Rewording:	
6. How many teachers at this school are endorsed or certified to teach students who are gifted?	<input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate <input type="checkbox"/> Not Appropriate
Possible Rewording:	
7. Were you identified as a student who is gifted? Did you participate in a program for students who are gifted?	<input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate <input type="checkbox"/> Not Appropriate
Possible Rewording:	

Prompts: How has your own experience affected the choices you make for the programming and service delivery model provided for students who are gifted? What were some of the classes you recall? What did you like about them? At what age did you start attending them?	<input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate <input type="checkbox"/> Not Appropriate
Describe the classes	
Possible Rewording:	
8. Tell me about your education experiences as it relates to teaching students who are gifted.	<input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate <input type="checkbox"/> Not Appropriate
Possible Rewording:	
Prompts: Have you taught students who are gifted? In preparation for becoming a principal were you responsible for exceptional education programs? Did it include gifted?	<input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate <input type="checkbox"/> Not Appropriate
Possible Rewording:	
9. How many years have you had classes for students who are gifted at this school?	<input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate <input type="checkbox"/> Not Appropriate
Possible Rewording:	
10. How do you perceive the academic impact of having students who are gifted on your elementary school campus?	<input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate <input type="checkbox"/> Not Appropriate
Possible Rewording:	
Prompts: What are the perceptions of students who are gifted? Do you think the practices, programs and instructional methods impact all students?	<input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate <input type="checkbox"/> Not Appropriate
Possible Rewording:	
11. What do you perceive to be your greatest challenge in supporting the practices, programs and instructional methods for students who are gifted?	<input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate <input type="checkbox"/> Not Appropriate
Possible Rewording:	
Prompts: What precipitated this challenge? What do you think would help overcome this challenge(s)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate <input type="checkbox"/> Not Appropriate

Possible Rewording:	
12. What is your philosophy of education as it relates to practices, programs, and instructional methods for students who are gifted?	<input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate <input type="checkbox"/> Not Appropriate

Possible Rewording:	
Prompts: What do you consider your greatest influences in education? How do these influences impact your vision of educational services for students who are gifted?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Appropriate <input type="checkbox"/> Not Appropriate

Possible Rewording:	
13. Can you describe the population of students who are gifted on your school's campus?	<input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate <input type="checkbox"/> Not Appropriate

Possible Rewording:	
Prompts: How many students identified as gifted are enrolled in your school? On average how many students who are gifted are in each grade-level class?	<input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate <input type="checkbox"/> Not Appropriate

Possible Rewording:	
14. When thinking of the practices, programs and instruction methods on your school's campus, what is the current service delivery model for students who are gifted?	<input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate <input type="checkbox"/> Not Appropriate

Possible Rewording:	
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<p>Prompts: Full-Time Model (gifted learners stay in the gifted program for reading/language arts, math, science and social studies), Gifted Clusters (gifted learners grouped together in classrooms), Subject-Area Academic Classes (gifted learner attend gifted subject-area class for part of day), Gifted Academic Classes (gifted sections of academic classes with only gifted students), Gifted Clusters for Academic Classes (gifted learners grouped in sections for academic content), Consultative Services (monthly face-to-face meetings between gifted endorsed teachers and regular education teachers to plan and review progress toward gifted standards and educational plan goals).</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate <input type="checkbox"/> Not Appropriate
<p>Possible Rewording:</p>	

<p>15. How do you make decisions regarding the implementation of programs, practices and instructional methods for students who are gifted on your campus?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate <input type="checkbox"/> Not Appropriate
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<p>Possible Rewording:</p>	
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<p>Prompts: Site-based management, support from the district resource teachers that support programs for the gifted, district administrators, participation in professional organizations that support students who are gifted.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate <input type="checkbox"/> Not Appropriate
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<p>Possible Rewording:</p>	
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<p>16. When making decisions, what do you feel is your highest priority?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate <input type="checkbox"/> Not Appropriate
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<p>Possible Rewording:</p>	
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<p>17. Please describe your leadership style?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate <input type="checkbox"/> Not Appropriate
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Possible Rewording:	
18. What do you consider is your main focus as the principal as it relates to students who are gifted?	<input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate <input type="checkbox"/> Not Appropriate
Possible Rewording:	
19. Are there specific leadership behaviors or practices you have implemented that you feel have benefited the programs for students who are gifted enrolled at your school?	<input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate <input type="checkbox"/> Not Appropriate
Possible Rewording:	
Prompts: How do you think your teachers of students who gifted or the students themselves benefited from this/these behaviors?	<input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate <input type="checkbox"/> Not Appropriate
Possible Rewording:	
20. How do you decide on your master schedule what to offer in terms of programs, classes and resources for students who are gifted?	<input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate <input type="checkbox"/> Not Appropriate
Possible Rewording:	
Prompts: How do you manage financial allocations and human resources to support students who are gifted?	<input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate <input type="checkbox"/> Not Appropriate
Possible Rewording:	
21. How is progress measured for the programs, practices and instructional methods for students who are gifted at your elementary school?	<input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate <input type="checkbox"/> Not Appropriate

Possible Rewording:	
Prompts: What normative and summative assessments are used to measure progress in your students who are gifted? How often are these assessments given?	<input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate <input type="checkbox"/> Not Appropriate
Possible Rewording:	
22. How would you describe the programs that your elementary school provides for students who are gifted?	<input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate <input type="checkbox"/> Not Appropriate
Possible Rewording:	
Prompts: What feedback have you received from either teachers, parents or students regarding the programs for the gifted offered at your school?	<input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate <input type="checkbox"/> Not Appropriate
Possible Rewording:	
23. What practices have you implemented with your programs for gifted students that have contributed to their success? What prompted those changes?	<input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate <input type="checkbox"/> Not Appropriate
Possible Rewording:	
Prompts: What were programs for the gifted like prior to the implementation of the new practices? What was your model for making the change?	<input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate <input type="checkbox"/> Not Appropriate
Possible Rewording:	
24. How would you describe the teacher's role in educating students who are gifted?	<input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate <input type="checkbox"/> Not Appropriate

Possible Rewording:	
Prompts: Is this a shared responsibility among the teachers? How is this role communicated?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Appropriate <input type="checkbox"/> Not Appropriate
Possible Rewording:	
25. What type of support do you provide your teachers who teach the students who are gifted?	<input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate <input type="checkbox"/> Not Appropriate
Possible Rewording:	
Prompts: Are your teachers currently endorsed in gifted education? Do the teachers have a voice in the allocating human and financial resources for the programs for students who are gifted?	<input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate <input type="checkbox"/> Not Appropriate
Possible Rewording:	
26. How do you use professional development to support your teachers who teach students who are gifted?	<input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate <input type="checkbox"/> Not Appropriate
Possible Rewording:	
Prompts: Throughout the school year are teachers permitted to attend professional development specifically geared toward supporting the programs, practices and instructional methods for students who are gifted?	<input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate <input type="checkbox"/> Not Appropriate
Possible Rewording:	

<p>27. What has been most effective in supporting teachers in implementing the programs, practices and instructional methods for students who are gifted at your elementary school?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate   <input type="checkbox"/> Not Appropriate</p>
<p>Possible Rewording:</p>	
<p>Prompts: How have been able to keep your teachers of students who are gifted current in their practice? Motivated? Able to meet the learning needs of the students who are gifted?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate   <input type="checkbox"/> Not Appropriate</p>
<p>Possible Rewording:</p>	



**APPENDIX F: PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS PRESENTED TO  
EXPERT PANEL PERCENTAGE OF AGREEMENT**

Interview Questions Delphi Technique Results

PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	Percentage of Agreement
1. What is your highest level of educational attainment	100%
2. How long have you been the principal at this school?	100%
3. Have you served in other school or district administrative roles? What were they?	100%
4. How many years have you been a principal at this school? How many years total have you been a school principal?	100%
5. Have you worked in more than one school district in an administrative role?	100%
6. Please describe your leadership style.	100%
7. What is the total number of students? How many teachers are on your school's campus? How many teach students who are gifted? How many students are identified as gifted?	100%
8. Can you please describe the population of students who are gifted on your school's campus in terms of the number enrolled, grade level and demographic information?	100%
9. What is the process for identifying students as gifted?	75%
10. What is your philosophy of education as it relates to practices, programs, and instructional methods for students who are gifted?	100%
11. How many teachers at this school are endorsed or certified to teach students who are gifted? How many are pursuing endorsement?	100%
12. As a student were you enrolled in a program for students who were gifted? In what state or school district? When?	100%
13. Were the academic needs of students who are gifted provided to you in an undergraduate or graduate program? Through professional development?	100%
14. How long has this school provided services for students who are gifted?	75%

15. How do you perceive the impact of having students who are gifted on your elementary school campus?	100%
16. What do you perceive to be your greatest challenge in supporting the practices, programs and instructional methods for students who are gifted?	100%
17. When thinking of the practices, programs and instructional methods on your school's campus, what is the current service delivery model for students who are gifted?	100%
18. How many classes for students who are gifted do you have at this school?	100%
19. How do you make decisions regarding the implementation of programs, practices and instructional methods for students who are gifted on your campus?	100%
20. When making decisions for educating students who are gifted, what do you feel is your highest priority?	100%
21. Are there specific leadership behaviors or practices you model that you feel have benefited the programs for students who are gifted enrolled at your school?	100%
22. What factors (variables/priorities) influence the programs, classes, and resources for students who are gifted as you create the master schedule?	100%
23. What evidence do you gather to measure the effectiveness of implemented programs, practices, and instructional methods for students who are gifted at your school?	100%
24. What feedback have you received from teachers, parents or students regarding the programs for the gifted offered at your school?	100%
25. Since you have been principal at this school what practices or structural changes have you made or implemented with your programs for students who are gifted? What prompted those changes?	100%
26. Do all teachers have a responsibility for the education of the gifted? What evidence do you have for this response?	100%
27. What type of support do you provide your teachers who teach the students who are gifted?	100%
28. What gifted education specific professional development has been provided to teachers who teach students who are gifted at the school level?	100%
29. What professional development, district support or allocation has been most effective in supporting teachers in implementing the programs, practices and instructional methods for students who are gifted at your elementary school?	100%

## **APPENDIX G: PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

Principal Name:

Name of School:

Interview Date:

Start time:

End time:

<b>Principal Interview Questions</b>		
<b>Questions</b>	<b>Prompts</b>	<b>Field Notes</b>
1. What is your highest level of educational attainment?		
2. How long have you been the principal at this school?		
3. Have you served in other school or district administrative roles? What were they?	What other leadership position(s) have you held? In what capacity? Have you worked as an assistant principal? CRT? Instructional coach? In a high school, middle school or elementary school setting?	
4. How many years have you been a principal at this school? How many years total have you been a school principal?		
5. Have you worked in more than one school district in an administrative role?		
6. Please describe your leadership style.		
7. What is the total number of students? How many teachers are on your school's campus? How many teach students who are gifted? How many students are identified as gifted?		

## Principal Interview Questions

Questions	Prompts	Field Notes
<p><b>8.</b> Can you please describe the population of students who are gifted on your school's campus in terms of the number enrolled, grade level and demographic information?</p>	<p>Prompts: Are the demographics of the population of students who are gifted representative of the general student population (i.e., ethnically, economically, by ESOL status and gender)?</p>	
<p><b>9.</b> What is the process for identifying students as gifted?</p>		
<p><b>10.</b> What is your philosophy of education as it relates to practices, programs, and instructional methods for students who are gifted?</p>	<p>What people or resources do you consider as your greatest influences in education? How do these influences impact your vision of educational services for students who are gifted?</p>	
<p><b>11.</b> How many teachers at this school are endorsed or certified to teach students who are gifted? How many are pursuing endorsement?</p>		
<p><b>12.</b> As a student were you enrolled in a program for students who were gifted? In what state or school district? When?</p>	<p>Do you believe that your own experience(s) affected the choices you make for the programming and service delivery model provided for students who are gifted? What were some of the classes you recall? What did you like about them? At what age did you start attending them? Do you have immediate family members or children that have been identified as gifted?</p>	

## Principal Interview Questions

Questions	Prompts	Field Notes
<p><b>13.</b> Were the academic needs of students who are gifted provided to you in an undergraduate or graduate program? Through professional development?</p>	<p>Have you had experience teaching students identified as gifted? In preparation for becoming a principal were you responsible for exceptional education programs? Did the responsibility include the gifted program?</p>	
<p><b>14.</b> How long has this school provided services for students who are gifted?</p>		
<p><b>15.</b> How do you perceive the impact of having students who are gifted on your elementary school campus?</p>	<p>How are the students who are gifted perceived at this school by the teachers? By other students? By parents? By community members?</p>	
<p><b>16.</b> What do you perceive to be your greatest challenge in supporting the practices, programs and instructional methods for students who are gifted?</p>	<p>What do you think would help overcome this challenge(s)?</p>	
<p><b>17.</b> When thinking of the practices, programs and instructional methods on your school's campus, what is the current service delivery model for students who are gifted?</p>	<p>Full-Time Model (gifted learners stay in the gifted program for reading/language arts, math, science and social studies), Gifted Clusters (gifted learners grouped together in classrooms), Home School-Based Resource Room (gifted learners remain on their zone home school campus to receive services), Center School-Based Resource Room (students are bussed to a center or cluster school to receive services for learners who are gifted) or Subject-Area Academic Classes (gifted learners attend gifted subject-area class for part of day).</p>	

## Principal Interview Questions

Questions	Prompts	Field Notes
<b>18.</b> How many classes for students who are gifted do you have at this school?		
<b>19.</b> How do you make decisions regarding the implementation of programs, practices and instructional methods for students who are gifted on your campus?	Site-based management, support from the district resource teachers that support programs for the gifted, district administrators, participation in professional organizations that support students who are gifted.	
<b>20.</b> When making decisions for educating students who are gifted, what do you feel is your highest priority?		
<b>21.</b> Are there specific leadership behaviors or practices you model that you feel have benefited the programs for students who are gifted enrolled at your school?	How do you think your teachers of students who are gifted or the students themselves benefited from this/these behaviors?	
<b>22.</b> What factors (variables/priorities) influence the programs, classes, and resources for students who are gifted as you create the master schedule?	How do you manage financial allocations and human resources to support students who are gifted?	
<b>23.</b> What evidence do you gather to measure the effectiveness of implemented programs, practices, and instructional methods for students who are gifted at your school?	What normative and summative assessments are used to measure the progress of your students who are gifted? How often are these assessments given?	
<b>24.</b> What feedback have you received from teachers, parents or students regarding the programs for the gifted offered at your school?	How would you describe the programs that your elementary school provides for students who are gifted?	



## Principal Interview Questions

Questions	Prompts	Field Notes
<p><b>25.</b> Since you have been principal at this school what practices or structural changes have you made or implemented with your programs for students who are gifted? What prompted those changes?</p>	<p>What were programs for the gifted like prior to the implementation of the new practices? What was your reason or rationale for making these changes?</p>	
<p><b>26.</b> Do all teachers have a responsibility for the education of the gifted? What evidence do you have for this response?</p>	<p>Is this a shared responsibility among the teachers? How is this role communicated?</p>	
<p><b>27.</b> What type of support do you provide your teachers who teach the students who are gifted?</p>	<p>Do the teachers have a voice in the allocating of human and financial resources for the programs for students who are gifted?</p>	
<p><b>28.</b> What gifted education specific professional development has been provided to teachers who teach students who are gifted at the school level?</p>	<p>Are teachers encouraged to attend professional development specifically toward supporting the programs, practices, and instructional methods for students who are gifted?</p>	
<p><b>29.</b> What professional development, district support or allocation has been most effective in supporting teachers in implementing the programs, practices and instructional methods for students who are gifted at your elementary school?</p>	<p>How have you been able to retain teachers who are endorsed in gifted education at your school?</p>	

**APPENDIX H: RESEARCHER'S REQUEST OF AREA  
SUPERINTENDENT FOR RECOMMENDATION OF PRINCIPAL  
PARTICIPATION IN STUDY**

Good evening Dr. \_\_\_\_\_,

I am currently working on my doctoral dissertation addressing elementary school principals' perceptions on the implementation of programs, practices and instructional methods for students who are gifted. My research study has been approved by the district's Accountability, Research and Assessment (ARA) department. A study participation requirement is for the researcher to secure approval from the learning community area superintendent. Part of ARA's approval process was to seek study participation interest from the elementary school principals. Ms. \_\_\_\_\_ from ES#3 responded that she is interested in participating in the study.

In order for an elementary school principal to participate in my dissertation study the criteria is:

- Must receive a score of effective or highly effective on their last evaluation
- Must have programs for students who are gifted on their school's campus
- The principal is willing to participate in the study
- Recommended by the learning community area administrator

Ideally the elementary principal has been at the school for at least 2 years to have had an opportunity to make an impact on the programs for the gifted. After the interviews I will ask the principals if I may electronically survey their teachers of gifted students (should take less than 20 minutes to complete).

With your permission I would like to schedule an interview with Ms. \_\_\_\_\_, approximately one hour, regarding the implementation of practices, programs, and instructional methods that support the school's programs for students who are gifted. Identifying information regarding the study participants will not be shared in my dissertation.

A little about myself: I have been employed as a teacher by OCPS for 19 years, and have worked in several middle and high schools and alternative school settings. For the last eight years I have worked as an instructional coach in the district's exceptional education department, served as the UCF Educator in Residence, and the last two years have been in ESE transition services. My current position and professional responsibilities will not provide bias to the dissertation study. I am a doctoral candidate in UCF's College of Education and Human Performance and enrolled in the National Urban Special Education Leadership Initiative.

At your convenience, please advise if I may reach out to Ms. \_\_\_\_\_.

Thank you,

Ingrid Cumming

**APPENDIX I: RESEARCHER REQUEST FOR PRINCIPAL TO  
PARTICIPATE IN STUDY**

Good afternoon Ms. \_\_\_\_\_,

I am currently working on my doctoral dissertation addressing elementary school principals' perceptions on the implementation of programs for students who are gifted. My research study has been approved by the district's Accountability, Research and Assessment department. A study participation requirement is for the researcher to secure approval from the learning community area superintendent. I have been in communication with Dr. \_\_\_\_\_ who recommended your participation in the study, based on your years at \_\_\_\_\_ Elementary School and its gifted enrollment. With your permission I would like to schedule an interview with you, approximately one hour, regarding the implementation of practices, programs, and instructional methods that support your school's programs for students who are gifted. Once our interview is complete I would like to send an electronic survey to your teachers who teach students who are gifted (should not take more than 20 minutes to complete) and request a copy of their professional development participation which is accessible at [www.inservicepoints.ocps.net](http://www.inservicepoints.ocps.net). Identifying information regarding the study participants will not be shared in my dissertation.

A little about myself: I have been employed as a teacher by OCPS for 19 years, and have worked in several middle and high schools and alternative school settings. For the last eight years I have worked as an instructional coach in the district's exceptional education department, served as the UCF Educator in Residence, and the last two years have been in ESE transition services. My current position and professional responsibilities will not provide bias to the dissertation study. I am a doctoral candidate in UCF's College of Education and Human Performance and enrolled in the National Urban Special Education Leadership Initiative.

At your convenience, may I schedule a time to interview you for my dissertation study?

Thank you for your consideration.

Cordially,

Ingrid Cumming

**APPENDIX J: INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN  
RESEARCH: PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW**



## **Principals' perceptions on educating elementary students who are gifted**

### **Informed Consent**

Principal Investigator: Ingrid Cumming

Faculty Advisor: Suzanne Martin, Ph.D.  
Department Chair: Glenn Lambie, Ph.D.

Investigational Site(s): Orange County Public Schools

#### **Introduction:**

Researchers at the University of Central Florida (UCF) study many topics. To do this we need the help of people who agree to take part in a research study. You are being invited to take part in a research study which will include about 50 people from Orange County Public Schools. You have been asked to take part in this research study because you are a school administrator or teacher of elementary students who are gifted. You must be 18 years of age or older to be included in the research study.

The person doing this research is Ingrid Cumming, a Doctoral Candidate in the Department of Child, Family, and Community Sciences in the UCF College of Education and Human Performance. Because the researcher is a graduate student she is being guided by Suzanne Martin, PhD, a UCF faculty supervisor in the College of Education and Human Performance.

#### **What you should know about a research study:**

- Someone will explain this research study to you.
- A research study is something you volunteer for.
- Whether or not you take part is up to you.
- You should take part in this study only because you want to.
- You can choose not to take part in the research study.
- You can agree to take part now and later change your mind.
- Whatever you decide it will not be held against you.

- Feel free to ask all the questions you want before you decide.

**Purpose of the research study:**

The purpose of this study is to examine elementary school principals' perceptions of best practices, service delivery models, and instructional methods that support the education of students who are gifted in a large urban school district. Of interest to this research study are the lived experiences of the elementary school principals, specifically how they support programs for students who are gifted are structured on the campus of his or her elementary school.

**What you will be asked to do in the study:**

Principal participants in the study will be asked to participate in a face-to-face qualitative interview. Elementary principals participating in the interview will meet solely with the principal investigator at a time that is convenient to the principal. The principal investigator will ask the principal interview questions pertaining to the implementation of programs for students who are gifted on the elementary school's campus. Once the interview is complete, the principal investigator will transcribe the interview dialogue. The elementary school principal participating in the interview will review the transcript prior data analysis. Teachers of students who are gifted at the participating elementary schools will be invited to participate in a survey. The survey will be emailed to the teachers once the principal interviews are complete.

**Location:**

Participants will not need to leave their school site. The principal investigator will go to the school site where the principal is currently assigned. If for some reason the principal cannot meet at the school site, the researcher and principal will meet at a mutually agreed upon location and time.

**Time required:**

We expect that you will be in this research study for two to three hours for principal interviews and a follow review of transcripts. The interview will take place at a mutually agreeable time as indicated by the elementary school principal. Teacher surveys will be administered electronically and take approximately 30 minutes to complete.

**Audio or video taping:**

You will be audio taped during this study. If you do not want to be audio taped, you will not be able to be in the study. Discuss this with the researcher or a research team member. If you are audio taped, the tape will be kept in a locked, safe place. The tape will be erased or destroyed when the research study is complete, unless approval is secured by the participating principal to maintain the recorded interview.

**Risks:**

There are no reasonably foreseeable risks or discomforts involved in taking part in this study. All field notes and teacher survey responses will remain confidential and stored in a password protected computer. All audio taping will remain in possession of the principal investigator and



secured in locked and safe place. All attempts will be made to eliminate any potential risk associated with privacy during the interview and survey.

**Benefits:**

We cannot promise any benefits to you or others from your taking part in this research. However, possible benefits include identifying or making explicit practices, programs, and instructional techniques that support programs for elementary students who are gifted.

**Compensation or payment:**

There is no compensation or other payment to you for taking part in this study.

**Confidentiality:**

We will limit your personal data collected in this study to people who have a need to review this information. We cannot promise complete secrecy. Organizations that may inspect and copy your information include the IRB and other representatives of UCF. All records will be secured in a locked, safe place.

**Study contact for questions about the study or to report a problem:**

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or think the research has caused you harm, you should talk to Suzanne Martin, PhD., Professor College of Education and Human Performance at 407-823-4260 or by email at [Suzanne.martin@ucf.edu](mailto:Suzanne.martin@ucf.edu).

**IRB contact about your rights in the study or to report a complaint:**

Research at the University of Central Florida involving human participants is carried out under the oversight of the Institutional Review Board (UCF IRB). This research has been reviewed and approved by the IRB. For information about the rights of people who take part in research, please contact: Institutional Review Board, University of Central Florida, Office of Research & Commercialization, 12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501, Orlando, FL 32826-3246 or by telephone at (407) 823-2901. You may also talk to them for any of the following:

- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone besides the research team.
- You want to get information or provide input about this research.

**Withdrawing from the study:**

The participants are under no obligation to participate in this research study. It is the participants' prerogative to decline or discontinue participation at any time in this study. This will not have any effect on the relationship with Orange County Public Schools or the University of Central Florida. If a participant decides to leave the study, contact the investigator so that an alternative participant can be identified.

**Results of the research:**

Overall study results will be shared with participants, as requested, at the end of the research

study. Results may also be published in a peer reviewed journal or presented at professional conferences.

**APPENDIX K: TEACHER SURVEY PRESENTED TO EXPERT PANEL  
FOR DELPHI TECHNIQUE REVIEW**

## Introduction

The purpose of this study is to examine elementary school principals' perceptions of best practices, service delivery models, and instructional methods that support the education of students who are gifted in a large urban school district. Of interest to this research study are the lived experiences of the elementary school principals, specifically how they support programs for students who are gifted are structured on the campus of his or her elementary school.

Elementary school principals who were recommended by their area superintendents were interviewed to address the following research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of elementary school principals, who are identified as effective or highly effective on The Leadership Evaluation Model (OCPS, 2012), concerning the implementation of practices, programs, and instructional methods that support their programs for students who are gifted?
2. How do elementary principals who are identified as effective or highly effective on The Leadership Evaluation Model (OCPS, 2012) support the teachers of students who are gifted in their schools?
3. What are the lived experiences of the elementary school principals who are identified as effective or highly effective on The Leadership Evaluation Model (OCPS, 2012) and how do these experiences impact the implementation of practices, programs, and instructional methods that support their programs for students who are gifted?

Attached please find the Round 1 review of the teacher survey questions. Please rate each question for appropriateness (considering errors in ambiguity, bias, syntax and vagueness) and if applicable, offer possible rewording. The survey will be administered electronically and I have been strongly encouraged by the school district's Accountability, Research and Assessment department to keep the teacher survey as concise as possible to receive a higher rate of return. This survey will be offered to the teachers of students who are gifted at the study's participating elementary schools. Prior to the start of the survey the teachers will be informed of the purpose of the survey and key definitions. You may note similarities in the teacher survey questions to those found in the principal interview questions, as I tried to keep the language and terminology consistent.

As always I welcome your feedback and appreciate a response to Round 1 by \_\_\_\_\_.

Regards,

Ingrid Cumming

**APPENDIX L: TEACHER SURVEY PRESENTED TO EXPERT PANEL**

### Initial Teacher Survey Questions

1. Please indicate your highest degree attained:
  - Bachelor's degree
  - Master's degree
  - Education Specialist
  - Doctorate degree
  
2. While in college did you receive coursework or internship experiences in educating students who are gifted?
  - Yes
    - If yes, please explain
  - No
  
3. What grade level(s) are you currently teaching? (check all that apply)
  - Kindergarten
  - First
  - Second
  - Third
  - Fourth
  - Fifth
  
4. How many years have you been teaching?
  - 0-3
  - 4-7
  - 8-10
  - 11-15
  - 16-20
  - 20-25
  - 25+
  
5. How many years have you had your gifted endorsement? \_\_\_\_\_
  
6. How many years have you been teaching students who are gifted? \_\_\_\_\_
  
7. As a child did you receive educational services for the gifted?
  - Yes
  - No
  
8. How has your own schooling experiences influenced the decisions you make for educating your students who are gifted?

9. Do you belong to any associations that educate, promote, or advocate on behalf of students who are gifted?
- Yes
    - a. If yes, which one(s):
  - No

**Below are statements/questions regarding your current teaching assignment in the elementary school:**

10. How many years have you been teaching students who are gifted at this elementary school? \_\_\_\_\_
11. How many students do you currently teach that are identified as gifted? \_\_\_\_\_
12. What education model are you currently providing for your students who are gifted?
- Full-Time Model  
(gifted learners stay in the gifted program for reading/language arts, math, science and social studies)
  - Gifted Clusters  
(gifted learners grouped together in classrooms)
  - Home-School Based Resource Room  
(gifted learners attend gifted class one or more days at their local zoned school)
  - Center-School Based Resource Room  
(gifted learners attend gifted class one day per week at a school, transportation provided from local zoned school to center school)
  - Subject-Area Academic Classes  
(gifted learner attend gifted subject-area class for part of day)
13. How did you come about your current teaching assignment of educating students who are gifted?
- I applied for the advertised/posted position as a teacher for educating students who are gifted
  - I was assigned by my administrator because I have my gifted endorsement
  - I was assigned by my administrator and had to obtain my gifted endorsement
14. How do you participate in the planning of practices, programs, and instructional methods for students who are gifted at your elementary school? (check all that apply)
- I participate in developing the master schedule
  - I coordinate on-campus professional development to support all teachers in meeting the academic needs of students who are gifted
  - Along with my administrative team I help allocate financial and human resources
  - I serve as a liaison between our elementary school and the district regarding the programs for the gifted on our school's campus

- I serve on a committee to review and select instructional materials and methods to meet the needs of our students who are gifted
- I consult with teachers who are unsure how to meet the academic needs of students who are gifted
- I make recommendations to my administrator about how to best meet the academic needs of our students who are gifted
- I encourage other teachers to obtain their gifted endorsement

15. Do you feel the principal of your elementary school is supportive of practices, programs, and instructional methods for students who are gifted?

- Yes
- No

**The following statements/questions are regarding your involvement in the practices, programs and instructional methods that support the students who are gifted at your elementary school:**

16. How would you describe your role in educating students who are gifted?

17. What practices, programs and/or instructional methods have you implemented in educating students who are gifted at your elementary school?

18. In what professional development have you participated to develop your skills in meeting the academic needs of students who are gifted?

19. How do you use data to make instructional decisions regarding the academic needs of your students who are gifted?

20. What do you perceive has been most effective in implementing the programs, practices and instructional methods for students who are gifted?

21. What do you perceive to be your greatest challenge in implementing the practices, programs and instructional methods for students who are gifted?



**APPENDIX M: TEACHER SURVEY PRESENTED TO EXPERT PANEL**  
**PERCENTAGE OF AGREEMENT**

TEACHER SURVEY QUESTIONS	Percentage of agreement
1. Please indicate your highest level of education attainment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bachelor's degree</li> <li>• Master's degree</li> <li>• Education Specialist</li> <li>• Doctorate degree</li> </ul>	100%
2. While in college did you receive coursework or internship experiences in educating students who are gifted? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ If yes, please explain</li> </ul> </li> <li>• No</li> </ul>	100%
3. What grade level(s) are you currently teaching? (check all that apply) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kindergarten</li> <li>• First</li> <li>• Second</li> <li>• Third</li> <li>• Fourth</li> <li>• Fifth</li> </ul>	100%
4. How many years have you been teaching? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 0-3</li> <li>• 4-7</li> <li>• 8-10</li> <li>• 11-15</li> <li>• 16-20</li> <li>• 20-25</li> <li>• 25+</li> </ul>	100%
5. How many years have you had your gifted endorsement? _____	50%
6. How many years have you been teaching students who are gifted? _____	75%
7. As a child did you receive educational services for the gifted? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes</li> <li>• No</li> </ul>	50%
8. How has your own schooling experiences influenced the decisions you make for educating your students who are gifted?	100%

TEACHER SURVEY QUESTIONS	Percentage of agreement
<p>9. Do you belong to any associations that educate, promote, or advocate on behalf of students who are gifted?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. If yes, which one(s):</li> </ul> </li> <li>• No</li> </ul> <p><b>Below are statements/questions regarding your current teaching assignment in the elementary school:</b></p>	100%
<p>10. How many years have you been teaching students who are gifted at this elementary school? _____</p>	75%
<p>11. How many students do you currently teach that are identified as gifted? _____</p>	100%
<p>12. What education model are you currently providing for your students who are gifted?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full-Time Model (gifted learners stay in the gifted program for reading/language arts, math, science and social studies)</li> <li>• Gifted Clusters (gifted learners grouped together in classrooms)</li> <li>• Home-School Based Resource Room (gifted learners attend gifted class one or more days at their local zoned school)</li> <li>• Center-School Based Resource Room (gifted learners attend gifted class one day per week at a school, transportation provided from local zoned school to center school)</li> <li>• Subject-Area Academic Classes (gifted learner attend gifted subject-area class for part of day)</li> </ul>	75%
<p>13. How did you come about your current teaching assignment of educating students who are gifted?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I applied for the advertised/posted position as a teacher for educating students who are gifted</li> <li>• I was assigned by my administrator because I have my gifted endorsement</li> <li>• I was assigned by my administrator and had to obtain my gifted endorsement</li> </ul>	100%

TEACHER SURVEY QUESTIONS	Percentage of agreement
<p>14. How do you participate in the planning of practices, programs, and instructional methods for students who are gifted at your elementary school? (check all that apply)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I participate in developing the master schedule</li> <li>• I coordinate on-campus professional development to support all teachers in meeting the academic needs of students who are gifted</li> <li>• Along with my administrative team I help allocate financial and human resources</li> <li>• I serve as a liaison between our elementary school and the district regarding the programs for the gifted on our school's campus</li> <li>• I serve on a committee to review and select instructional materials and methods to meet the needs of our students who are gifted</li> <li>• I consult with teachers who are unsure how to meet the academic needs of students who are gifted</li> <li>• I make recommendations to my administrator about how to best meet the academic needs of our students who are gifted</li> <li>• I encourage other teachers to obtain their gifted endorsement</li> </ul>	100%
<p>15. Do you feel the principal of your elementary school is supportive of practices, programs, and instructional methods for students who are gifted?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes</li> <li>• No</li> </ul> <p><b>The following statements/questions are regarding your involvement in the practices, programs and instructional methods that support the students who are gifted at your elementary school:</b></p>	75%
<p>16. How would you describe your role in educating students who are gifted?</p>	100%
<p>17. What practices, programs and/or instructional methods have you implemented in educating students who are gifted at your elementary school?</p>	75%
<p>18. In what professional development have you participated to develop your skills in meeting the academic needs of students who are gifted?</p>	75%

TEACHER SURVEY QUESTIONS	Percentage of agreement
19. How do you use data to make instructional decisions regarding the academic needs of your students who are gifted?	100%
20. What do you perceive has been most effective in implementing the programs, practices and instructional methods for students who are gifted?	100%
21. What do you perceive to be your greatest challenge in implementing the practices, programs and instructional methods for students who are gifted?	100%

## **APPENDIX N: TEACHER SURVEY**

## Teacher Survey Questions

I am a teacher at:

ES#1

ES#2

ES#3

Please indicate your highest level of education attainment:

Bachelor's degree

Master's degree

Education Specialist

Doctorate degree

While in college did you receive coursework or internship experiences in educating students who are gifted?

Yes

If yes, please explain

No

What grade level(s) are you currently teaching? (check all that apply)

Kindergarten

First

Second

Third

Fourth

Fifth

How many years total have you been teaching?

0-3

4-7

8-10

11-15

16-20

20-25

25+

How many years have you been teaching at this elementary school? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you currently have your gifted endorsement?

If yes, when did you receive your gifted endorsement?

If no, are you currently working on obtaining your gifted endorsement?

How many years have you been responsible for providing services to gifted students?

As a student were you identified as gifted? Did you participate in a program for students who are gifted?

Yes

No

## Teacher Survey Questions

How has your own schooling experience influenced the decisions you make for educating your students who are gifted?

Do you belong to any associations that educate, promote, or advocate on behalf of students who are gifted?

Yes

If yes, which one(s):

No

**Below are statements/questions regarding your current teaching assignment in the elementary school:**

How many years have you been providing services to students who are gifted at this elementary school? \_\_\_\_\_

How many students do you currently teach who are identified as gifted? \_\_\_\_\_

What service delivery model are you currently providing for your students who are gifted?

Full-Time Model (gifted learners stay in the gifted program for reading/language arts, math, science and social studies), Gifted Clusters (gifted learners grouped together in classrooms), Home School-Based Resource Room (gifted learners remain on their zone home school campus to receive services), Center School-Based Resource Room (students are bussed to a center or cluster school to receive services for learners who are gifted) or Subject-Area Academic Classes (gifted learner attend gifted subject-area class for part of day).

How did you come about your current teaching assignment of educating students who are gifted?

I applied for the advertised/posted position as a teacher for educating students who are gifted

I was assigned by my administrator because I have my gifted endorsement

I was assigned by my administrator and had to obtain my gifted endorsement

How do you participate in the planning of practices, programs, and instructional methods for students who are gifted at your elementary school? (check all that apply)

I participate in developing the master schedule

I coordinate on-campus professional development to support all teachers in meeting the academic needs of students who are gifted

Along with my administrative team I help allocate financial and human resources

Along with my administrative team I help allocate financial and human resources

I serve on a committee to review and select instructional materials and methods to meet the needs of our students who are gifted

I consult with teachers who are unsure how to meet the academic needs of students who are gifted

I make recommendations to my administrator about how to best meet the academic needs of our students who are gifted

I encourage other teachers to obtain their gifted endorsement

Other \_\_\_\_\_



## Teacher Survey Questions

How does your principal provide support for the practices, programs, and instructional methods for students who are gifted at your elementary school?

Yes

No

**The following statements/questions are regarding your involvement in the practices, programs and instructional methods that support the students who are gifted at your elementary school:**

How would you describe your role in educating students who are gifted?

What practices, programs and/or instructional methods have you implemented in educating students who are gifted at your elementary school?

In the past five years what professional development have you participated to develop your skills in meeting the academic needs of students who are gifted?

How do you use data to make instructional decisions regarding the academic needs of your students who are gifted?

What do you perceive has been most effective in implementing the programs, practices and instructional methods for students who are gifted at your school?

What do you perceive to be your greatest challenge in implementing the practices, programs and instructional methods for students who are gifted?

**APPENDIX O: RESEARCHER'S INVITATION FOR TEACHERS TO  
PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY**

Good afternoon \_\_\_\_\_,

I am currently working on my doctoral dissertation study addressing elementary school principals' perceptions on the implementation of programs for students who are gifted. My research study has been approved by the district's Accountability, Research and Assessment department. I have been in communication with Ms. \_\_\_\_\_ and already conducted an interview with her regarding the programs for students who are gifted at \_\_\_\_\_ Elementary. The next step of my research study is to survey the teachers of students who are gifted. In the next few days you will receive a survey regarding the implementation of practices, programs, and instructional methods that support your school's programs for students who are gifted that should take approximately 20 minutes to complete. Prior to beginning the survey you will need to agree to the informed consent and I have attached a copy for you to preview. All identifying information regarding the study participants will not be shared in my dissertation. If you agree to participate in the study, \_\_\_\_\_ Elementary will be identified as ES#1. Your participation in the study will greatly enhance the information and research I am gathering for my dissertation study.

Another component of the study is to review the previous professional development the participating teachers attended. If agreeable can you please email me a copy of your professional development in-service report to [ingrid.cumming@ocps.net](mailto:ingrid.cumming@ocps.net)? In-service (professional development) reports are accessible at [www.inservicepoints.ocps.net](http://www.inservicepoints.ocps.net). You will be prompted to enter your personnel number and the last four digits of SSN (your SSN will not appear on the report).

A little about myself: I have been employed as a teacher by OCPS for 19 years, and have worked in several middle and high schools and alternative school settings. For the last eight years I have worked as an instructional coach in the district's exceptional education department, served as the UCF Educator in Residence, and the last two years have been in ESE transition services. My current position and professional responsibilities will not provide bias to the dissertation study. I am a doctoral candidate in UCF's College of Education and Human Performance and enrolled in the National Urban Special Education Leadership Initiative.

If you have any questions, please feel free to ask and I am thankful for your consideration to participate in my dissertation study.

Cordially,

Ingrid Cumming

**APPENDIX P: INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN  
RESEARCH: TEACHER SURVEY**

## **Informed Consent**

**Research Study Title:** Principals' Perceptions on Educating Elementary Students who are Gifted

**Principal Investigator:** Ingrid Cumming

**Faculty Advisor:** Suzanne Martin, Ph.D.

**Department Chair:** Glenn Lambie, Ph.D.

**Investigational Site(s):** Orange County Public Schools

### **Introduction:**

Researchers at the University of Central Florida (UCF) study many topics. To do this we need the help of people who agree to take part in a research study. You are being invited to take part in a research study which will include about 50 people from Orange County Public Schools. You have been asked to take part in this research study because you are a school administrator or teacher of elementary students who are gifted. You must be 18 years of age or older to be included in the research study. The person doing this research is Ingrid Cumming, a Doctoral Candidate in the Department of Child, Family, and Community Sciences in the UCF College of Education and Human Performance. Because the researcher is a graduate student she is being guided by Suzanne Martin, PhD, a UCF faculty supervisor in the College of Education and Human Performance.

### **What you should know about a research study:**

- Someone will explain this research study to you.
- A research study is something you volunteer for.
- Whether or not you take part is up to you.
- You should take part in this study only because you want to.
- You can choose not to take part in the research study.
- You can agree to take part now and later change your mind.
- Whatever you decide it will not be held against you.
- Feel free to ask all the questions you want before you decide.

### **Purpose of the research study:**

The purpose of this study is to examine elementary school principals' perceptions of best practices, service delivery models, and instructional methods that support the education of students who are gifted in a large urban school district. Of interest to this research study are the lived experiences of the elementary school principals, specifically how they support programs for students who are gifted are structured on the campus of his or her elementary school

### **What you will be asked to do in the study:**

Principal participants in the study will be asked to participate in a face-to-face qualitative interview. Elementary principals participating in the interview will meet solely with the principal investigator at a time that is convenient to the principal. The principal investigator will ask the principal interview questions pertaining to the implementation of programs for students who are gifted on the elementary school's campus. Once the interview is complete, the principal investigator will transcribe the interview dialogue. The elementary school principal participating in the interview will review the transcript prior data analysis. **Teachers of students who are gifted at the participating elementary schools will be invited to participate in a survey. The**

**survey will be emailed to the teachers once the principal interviews are complete.**

**Location:**

Participants will not need to leave their school site. The principal investigator will go to the school site where the principal is currently assigned. If for some reason the principal cannot meet at the school site, the researcher and principal will meet at a mutually agreed upon location and time. Teacher surveys will be completed electronically.

**Time required:**

We expect that you will be in this research study for two to three hours for principal interviews and a follow review of transcripts. The interview will take place at a mutually agreeable time as indicated by the elementary school principal. Teacher surveys will be administered electronically and take approximately 30 minutes to complete.

**Audio or video taping:**

Principal participants will be audio taped during this study. If you do not want to be audio taped, you will not be able to be in the study. Discuss this with the researcher or a research team member. If you are audio taped, the tape will be kept in a locked, safe place. The tape will be erased or destroyed when the research study is complete, unless approval is secured by the participating principal to maintain the recorded interview.

**Risks:**

There are no reasonably foreseeable risks or discomforts involved in taking part in this study. All field notes and teacher survey responses will remain confidential and stored in a password protected computer. All audio taping will remain in possession of the principal investigator and secured in locked and safe place. All attempts will be made to eliminate any potential risk associated with privacy during the interview and survey.

**Benefits:**

We cannot promise any benefits to you or others from your taking part in this research. However, possible benefits include identifying or making explicit practices, programs, and instructional techniques that support programs for elementary students who are gifted.

**Compensation or payment:**

There is no compensation or other payment to you for taking part in this study.

**Confidentiality:**

We will limit your personal data collected in this study to people who have a need to review this information. We cannot promise complete secrecy. Organizations that may inspect and copy your information include the IRB and other representatives of UCF. All records will be secured in a locked, safe place.

**Study contact for questions about the study or to report a problem:**

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or think the research has caused you harm, you should talk to Suzanne Martin, PhD., Professor College of Education and Human Performance at 407-823-4260 or by email at [Suzanne.martin@ucf.edu](mailto:Suzanne.martin@ucf.edu).

**IRB contact about your rights in the study or to report a complaint:**

Research at the University of Central Florida involving human participants is carried out under the oversight of the Institutional Review Board (UCF IRB). This research has been reviewed and approved by the IRB. For information about the rights of people who take part in research, please contact: Institutional Review Board, University of Central Florida, Office of Research & Commercialization, 12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501, Orlando, FL 32826-3246 or by telephone at (407) 823-2901. You may also talk to them for any of the following:

- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone besides the research team.
- You want to get information or provide input about this research.

**Withdrawing from the study:**

The participants are under no obligation to participate in this research study. It is the participants' prerogative to decline or discontinue participation at any time in this study. This will not have any effect on the relationship with Orange County Public Schools or the University of Central Florida. If a participant decides to leave the study, contact the investigator so that an alternative participant can be identified. .

**Results of the research:**

Overall study results will be shared with participants, as requested, at the end of the research study. Results may also be published in a peer reviewed journal or presented at professional conferences.

## **APPENDIX Q: TRANSCRIPTIONS OF PRINCIPAL INTERVIEWS**



Interviewer Questions (in bold)

### **Principal Interview ES#1**

**We will start our interview with Ms. XXXX from ES#1. Do I have your permission to record this interview for my doctoral dissertation?**

Yes

**We'll start off by sharing what is your highest level of educational attainment?**

I have my masters.

**How long have you been the principal here at XXX?**

This is my second year.

**Prior to that have you served at any other schools or any other district administrative roles?**

Let me get my dates right, in 2015, two years prior to coming here I was the assistant principal at XXX elementary school and prior to that I was two years the assistant principal here (ES#1) before I was able to come back.

**Oh good, then you were able to come back? Excellent. And prior to being principal here, have you been principal at any other school?**

Just the assistant principal.

**Ok, two years total. Any other leadership roles prior to becoming assistant principal?**

Before I become assistant principal I was the CRT at XX elementary school for 3 years.

**OK, your experiences have always been in elementary schools?**

Correct.

**Have you ever worked in any district administrative roles before or always schools based?**

School based.

**School based? OK. Let's talk a little bit about your leadership style. Can you describe your leadership style?**

I believe it is a team approach. That we all work together for the benefit of the children. I always keep the children in mind when making decisions and really work closely with my leadership team to do what's best for kids.

**How many students total are on campus?**

1187

**It is a K-5 school?**

PreK – 5

**How many teachers are on your campus?**

Classroom teachers? I have 76 classroom teachers.

**And you have additional resources teachers?**

Correct

**Any how many students, even if a ballpark number, are identified as gifted on this school's campus?**

175. A good percentage of our overall population.

**Do you mind describing the population of students that are gifted in terms of demographic information? Your school is in a unique situation that you draw from this tight community, yet you still draw from the XXX area. Can you talk about race, number of free and reduced lunch ...?**

Yes, we have students from outside the XXX community. The majority of our gifted children are non-free and reduced lunch. Primarily white students. We have a small pocket of African American and Hispanic in the gifted population as well.

**Gender male, female, or equally distributed?**

Equally distributed

**What is the process at ES#1 for identifying students as gifted?**

So, three times a year my staffing specialist meets with the classroom teachers and goes over the characteristics of a gifted child. And we seek out the teacher's advice to recommend students for screening. We look closely at students who may not pop out at you right away, but rather looking at the strengths and weaknesses of all our children. We discuss in depth children and what the characteristics of a gifted child are. From that we do a fall screening and we also do a spring screening which we are in the middle of right now. We also do the universal second grade gifted screening which occurs like in all XXXX schools. We also have a good number of

parents who seek private evaluations. But we really encourage parents to go through our process through XXXX schools.

**What is your philosophy of education as it relates to practices, programs, and instructional methods for students who are gifted?**

I believe it is important to meet children exactly where they are. I know that gifted children learn differently just like a child with any other type of label. They learn differently and they may need a different skill set to tap into their knowledge to teach them the best way possible.

**Do you have any specific resources that have been an influence to you in regards to guiding your decisions on how to support students who are gifted? Any materials, professional development or from your experiences.**

One that I refer to often is the Cluster Grouping handbook. I refer to it often as we look at trying to redefine our gifted programs and how we are going to meet the needs of our gifted children. There are lots of good strategies and recommendations that we have used and teachers have had success with.

**How many teachers at ES#1 are endorsed or certified to teach students who are gifted?**

Completed endorsement or certified? I have several that are working on it.

**That's a good idea, let's break it apart by the number of teachers that are currently endorsed and those that are working on it.**

Five that are fully endorsed. I have three more that will be finished this summer and seven that are working on it. I have put a blanket statement that if any teacher wants to work on their gifted

endorsement I will pay for them to get the endorsement. They don't have to financially pay for the classes.

**I'm sure they appreciate that, because I understand it is the equivalent to taking a graduate level course.**

They are expensive, yes. Also we have a cohort group from XXX elementary school, we have a group of teachers working together in a cohort group and will take a class there on the other campus or a class here on our campus. We go back and forth between the two campuses to make it easier on our teachers.

**As a student, reflecting back on your education, were you a child identified as gifted?**

I was a gifted student, yes.

**Can you tell me if that was in the State of Florida or elsewhere?**

In XXXX public schools.

**Can you tell me when that was?**

I graduated high school in 1998, so I believe in the late 1980's then.

**Do you believe your own experiences have had an impact on how you implement programs for students who are gifted here at ES#1?**

No, because, it was not a big deal when I was growing up. I was part of a gifted program and went to a pull out model once a week and came back to my class. It was small amount of children in the program. My true experiences came here as the assistant principal and seeing how unique a gifted child really thinks.

**Were meeting the academic needs of students who are gifted provided to you in a graduate or undergraduate program? Think back on your educational experiences.**

I did not take any courses on gifted in either my undergraduate or graduate courses.

**How long have services been provided to students who are gifted at this school?**

I'm sure as long as the school has been open. We have a large number of families that leave the local private schools to come here. Saint MM School has been very open about not having gifted programs. Parents see what we do here to service the gifted programs and the parents understand that their child learns differently and they want that environment for their child. They want their gifted child to come here.

**Do you have students that come to this school that are not necessarily zoned here?**

Not for gifted.

**How do you perceive the impact of having students who are gifted on your elementary school campus? Meaning, how are they perceived by the teachers, peers ....?**

Great. It is very positive. Very positive and supportive. Moving into the model we supported this year was tough on our teachers who are not interested in getting their gifted endorsement. Their philosophy changed that they do not have any high kids in my class. And that was a tough struggle for them that it is not just high, medium or low ... that these children need and learn differently and we have to support their learning needs.

**I'm glad you brought that up also. There are so many unique needs for students who are gifted.**

A lot of our gifted teachers will say how much the kids are quirky. They think differently. I think in the previous model we fell into a rut where teachers thought they were supporting the gifted children but because they were so high functioning they would match them up with lower functioning students which put them in a different role. The students were not being academically challenged, but rather a role model for the other students and that's not the best environment to support the gifted child. We had two students that accelerated this year. I had one child, from a set of twins, in which one was highly gifted and one was not. The one that is gifted is extremely intelligent, part of Mensa ... so ready for acceleration. His twin sister was not ready, but the concern was they were in the same class and grade for years. We had lots of conversations with the parents and had to ask them to look at each child individually. It was better for her son to be accelerated. It has been great. There has been no effect on their bond as twins; one is in 3<sup>rd</sup> and the other in 4<sup>th</sup> grade now and it has been great. I am a supporter of that as well. Support every child.

**Thinking about your experiences, what do you perceive as your greatest challenge in supporting the practices, programs and instructional methods for students who are gifted?**

**You touched a little on your teachers ....**

A big challenge is the parents perceive the gifted program as a group of elite kids. They want nothing more than to have that label for their child. Whether they are truly gifted or not, the parents want that label. They think the only way for their students to get the good teachers is if their child is in gifted. That is a challenge we are working on. As more teachers are working on or become gifted endorsed this will help. This is a *thinking* I realize is there, but will take a couple of years to get there. In the ideal world I wish that all teachers are gifted endorsed and then that every teacher can meet the unique needs of the gifted children. But that has been a

huge challenge and a lot of our parents are seeking private evaluations, whether their child passed our screening or not. Even if their child went through the process here at the school, they will seek a private evaluation. It has been a challenge on our teachers at staffing meetings if a parent comes back with a private student evaluation as gifted. We need the teachers to be honest with their feedback. The teacher checklist weighs heavily and if the teacher feels the student is not an appropriate candidate we have had those hard conversations with parents. There is one particular private psychologist that comes back with every child as gifted. So that has also been a challenge. All of our teachers are great and it has been hard on some teachers who are not gifted endorsed and do not want to pursue it. They feel they are not being recognized. We are working on that also.

**What is your current service delivery model on this school's campus for students who are gifted?**

Right now it is self-contained models. So it's full gifted classes all day, every day. And the teachers weave in the gifted strategies with the grade level curriculum and it's been amazing.

**And how many classes for students who are gifted do you have?**

In first grade we have one. In second we have two. Third grade we have two and a half classes. Fourth grade we have two and fifth grade we have two.

**How do you make decisions regarding the implementation of the programs, practices and instructional methods for students who are gifted on your schools' campus?**

We weave in gifted strategies with the grade level content. And the teachers use pre and post assessments with the content before they start the unit. They give a pretest before they start a



unit and they use the pretest to determine where the children are in the unit and teachers are able to shape their instruction from there. Their delivery of instruction would look very different than a regular non gifted classroom. They may not have to spend so much time on any given lesson because all their children in the pretest may have shown mastery. At that point it's not acceleration when they're working on 5<sup>th</sup> grade curriculum in 4<sup>th</sup> grade. They're weaving in those gifted strategies incorporating projects and hands on learning and really taking their student's learning to the next level.

**Do you ever pull in district resources that are available?**

All the time! I have one gifted teacher who is like the gifted team leader and so she meets with each other of the gifted teachers. They are kind of like their own PLC and they work together and plan. It's really a unique environment for them.

**Are the teachers involved in any professional organizations for gifted?**

Not to my knowledge. Some who are teaching the classes are still working on their gifted endorsement so they share strategies they learned in their classes. They work closely with XX the district gifted resources teacher.

**When making decisions for educating students who gifted, what do you feel is your highest priority?**

Meeting them where they are and making sure the students are being challenged and that they are achieving at high levels as well. This really all stemmed from last year when I was a principal and we had a pull out model for one day a week. The feedback that I got from a lot of parents of 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade students is when their students went to the gifted programs they were great. But

when they returned to their classrooms they did not have their work and they did feel behind and so they have to spend the time to make up their work. When I really looked at the hard data our gifted children were not our 4s and 5s on FCAT. Actually some are our level 2s. I asked, “Where are we missing the boat here?” These children, for whatever reason, were not mastering the grade level curriculum where they need to be. They are not being challenged in that curriculum but they are doing great things in their gifted programs. I realized we need to mesh this all together. So that’s where it really all stemmed from.

**Are there any specific leadership behaviors or practices that you feel you model to your team of teachers that you feel have benefited students who are gifted?**

Yes, especially with data meetings and PLC meetings with our grade levels. We include the gifted class’s data when we compare overall grade level data. But then we will talk about the individual teachers’ strengths and weaknesses because when you break things down by the standards there are some standards that a gifted child is not mastering. So we would tap into what teacher A did with all her children who did great on mastering this standard and teacher B who did not do so great. So maybe teacher A needs to model teaching that standard to teacher B’s kids. So we really looked at teachers’ strengths and weaknesses along with individual standards and strands.

**What factors and variables or priorities have influenced the programs that are available to students who are gifted? Was it looking at the data? Meeting student needs?**

Looking at the data. Hearing what the parents perceived as strengths and weaknesses of the program. Also the sheer number. I would need more than two full time gifted teachers in a pull out model. But, as we are growing in our gifted population I need more teachers to support a

gifted pull out model. I also don't have the classrooms to make that happen, so all those things came into mind as to how do we best service our gifted children.

**How about the financial allocations and human resources? How do you manage those financial allocations for buying additional resources or materials that might be needed?**

My teachers know that no matter what you teach, you let me know what you need and we'll find a way to make it happen. Whether it's from the school budget or not. We have PTA that is super supportive and we also have a foundation that is super supportive. Lots of our teachers, in fact two of our gifted teachers wrote grants to them to support programs they want to implement in their classrooms. If we can't make it happen through school based budget we can make it happen through the PTA or foundation budget. Both organizations are 100% supportive for everything we do.

**What evidence do you gather that measure the effectiveness of the implemented programs and instructional methods for students who are gifted? What normative or summative assessments?**

We would look at school based benchmark exams. We would look at their weekly assessments and unit assessments and pre and posttests. I would also look at classroom observations of teachers teaching in gifted classrooms. Any kind of information that I can get my hands on I will look at. There is no shortcoming of opportunities to collect data.

**What feedback have you received from teachers, parents or students regarding the programs for the gifted?**

All three very positive. They have really enjoyed the change in our program and it really has given the gifted children more opportunities to expand their learning. Also a lot of the social aspects of the gifted child have really been met with this model. Some of gifted children are “quirky” and they may not be understood by all children, and often felt left out. Now they are with like peers that all has gone away.

**The students feel good about that?**

Yes

**Since you have been the principal at this school what practices or instructional changes have you made or implemented with your programs for the gifted.**

We went from a pull out model to a self-contained model. Eventually and ideally I would like to move into a cluster model, but that requires more gifted endorsed teachers too and we’re working on it.

**What prompted those changes? Data decisions? Academic needs of students?**

All of the above. Doing what’s right for kids.

**Would you say you noticed any changes from a pull out to a self-contained model for gifted? Has there been changes in their data and student performance.**

Of course, huge changes. Great changes in both data and student performance.

**Do all the teachers have a responsibility for educating students who are gifted on your school’s campus?**

Well, if you don't have a gifted child in your classroom than you would not have to do anything different with your instruction in terms of gifted. But we have high achieving students in all class groups. It's like ESOL strategies, they are good strategies for all students. The strategies for gifted are good practices for all students.

**What type of support do you provide your teachers who teach students who are gifted?**

I'm accessible. They have their own PLC. They are kind of part of two different PLCs. They are part of the gifted PLC and their grade level PLC. Because the expectation is that they will teach the grade level standards so they have to have an understanding of the gifted strategies which they will incorporate in the grade level standards. My staffing specialist is highly skilled in the area of gifted so she is a huge support to those teachers. It is a team effort and we all work together.

**Do the teachers have input in to how the programs for the gifted will be modeled or shaped or instructional techniques if they want to try something different.**

Yes. One of my second grade gifted teachers this year really wanted to find a way to merge science and reading together and she did it. I'm not a big fan of a basal reader when you know how to read. I believe when we teach the standards you don't have to turn pages in the book to teach standards. It's not what's good for kids. She came to me and asked if I can put this on the shelf to find a way to merge the science and reading together so she really kind of changed her whole instructional program. It has been highly effective.

**Excellent – how innovative.**

She is a great teacher. I'm super supportive of any ideas they have and I encourage them to go back and share their ideas with the rest of the gifted teachers to talk about how to continue to improve in meeting the needs of these students.

**Thinking about professional development for your teachers .... Other than gifted endorsement is there any other professional development they attend that support the teaching of their students who are gifted?**

They have not, but if anybody were to come to me and ask I always say yes.

**OK, good. And any professional development that you have attended? Or any other professional conference that you would support.**

Not so much, but I encourage talking to colleagues.

**How have you been able to retain your teachers for students who are gifted?**

I think they are happy and enjoy the collaboration.

**Thank you, I appreciate your time. I will give you a copy of the informed consent from UCF and that I have research approval from the district.**

No, this was great. Thank you.

## **Principal Interview ES#2**

**I want to introduce myself that I am Ingrid Cumming and I'm a doctoral student at UCF and I also work for XXXX. Thank you for having me here today. Some of the questions that I will be asking you this morning are regarding your perceptions of the services for the gifted at ES#2. As I write my dissertation all identifying information will be removed. I will not use any specific names or any identifying information regarding you as the administrator or teacher.**

**Can you share with me your highest level of educational attainment?**

I have my doctorate in education leadership.

**How long have you been the principal here at ES#2?**

Four years, just over four years.

**Have you served in any other school or district administrative roles?**

With XXXX has been my whole experience. I was an AP at XXX elementary and then at XXX elementary.

**Got it, and how many years have you been principal at this school?**

4 years.

**And has that been your total of years as a school principal?**

Yes.

**Very good. What other leadership positions have you held and in what capacity? Thinking in your school experiences, have you been an instructional coach or CRT?**

I was the assistant principal at XXX elementary and XXX elementary and prior I was the curriculum resource teacher at XXX elementary and before that an intermediate grade level teacher.

**Have you worked in more than one school district in an administrative role?**

No, just in XXXX (school district).

**Thinking about your leadership style, do you mind describing your leadership style?**

Sure. I guess it's mainly described as situational. And servant leadership as well. I guess if you had to put two main titles on it. I feel I always have an open door policy and I listen much more than I necessarily make decisions. So the decisions can be received well. And situational because I am not sure that any one decision making moment is how you can always do things.

**Very good. At your school, what is the total number of students?**

625 right now.

**And how many teachers are on your school's campus?**

Total overall I would estimate 60 instructional staff members.

**How many students are identified as gifted?**

About 130 and that number is increasing.



**Can you please describe the population of students that are gifted on your schools campus in terms of demographics, including grade level, is there one grade that seems to have the largest population of students that are gifted?**

Our top grades are usually 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade. I think we do a really good job identifying students early. So we do have students in all grade levels identified as gifted. But in Kindergarten we typically don't have many because of the identification time. Even in 1<sup>st</sup> grade we see the number growing. Even our screenings at the end of Kindergarten this year suddenly shown 6-8 children. There are quite a few going into first grade for evaluation. The highest numbers are always in 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade. Around 35 students in the grade level for those two grades.

**Would you say the demographic of the students in the gifted programs at ES#2 are reflective of the overall population of students enrolled that attend this school?**

We find that it is not. We look specifically at the start of the year. Our black subgroup is not representative in gifted as it is in the total population. But as far as identifying and screening, like our universal screening in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, we are identifying well. We have not found the discrepancy yet, if we are under identifying at certain subgroups or not. But we are looking very closely into it.

**And currently what is the process for identifying students who are gifted?**

Mainly we do trainings with all staff so the characteristics are well known. So whether you are endorsed or not you will kind of know what characteristics to look for. But we also have done a lot of training with staff and a lot of teachers going through full endorsement, so we should be very aware of what a gifted learner looks like; the many profiles not just the high performing or the stereotypical. We did include two years ago the start of universal screening in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade.

What we found each year is one child has passed that screening. So we feel like we are identifying very well before that. But recommendation from teachers, parent or anyone to look further, we do.

**And what is your philosophy of education as it relates to the practices, programs and instructional methods for students who are gifted?**

Can you repeat the question please?

**Sure, what is your philosophy of education as it relates to the practices, programs and instructional methods for students who are gifted? Think about if you have any resources that you consider have greatly influenced your decision making regarding the implementation of gifted programs here. Maybe a vision that you have for educational services for students who are gifted. Your philosophy for serving students who are gifted.**

It fits with the philosophy we have for every child. We need to take them as far as they can go. We need to know our students well enough that we know their learning styles, their interests, their passion, and we know with gifted learners that's even more important. With gifted learners those interests, those passions can be what propels them to the next level if we emphasize them. So, I think it is getting kids to the next level even its above grade level, if it's out-of-the-box thinking because they are just different learners.

**Thinking of your teachers, how many at this time how many teachers are endorsed or certified to teach students who are gifted?**

I want to say 17.

**OK, 17 are endorsed?**

Or on their way to being endorsed.

**That was going to be the next half of my question, or are pursuing their endorsement?**

Can I take a look at your teacher list again? I can give you a count of both (reviews teacher list).

It looks like 11, well 12 including myself as well that are fully endorsed and five are partially and working on endorsement.

**Thinking back to when you were a student, were you identified or in any programs for students who are gifted?**

I was. I was a high achieving student. I was that people pleaser “A” student in school. And I remember some screening, but am not sure if they went full evaluation or not at that time. But I don’t think, I’m not sure, if I passed those. But I do remember my teachers would send me with the gifted cluster to what must have been a resource room or something like that. Or a mixed ability, mixed gifted non gifted group to receive additional enrichment of some kind.

**Was that in Florida?**

It was.

**Was it here in XXXX (school district?)**

It was at XXXX elementary.

**Oh, wow, OK. When did that occur?**

Gosh, I mean third, fourth grade. I don’t know when that would be. I graduated high school in ’95, so I guess in the late 1980’s.

**Do you believe your experiences as a child when you were identified with high achieving abilities or potential gifts and talents that that has influenced you in your role as administrator and your decision on how you serve your students who are gifted?**

Definitely. And my reason for being so strong on this is because they recognized some strengths in me and I may not have had a gifted mind, I may not have whatever pieces of gifts and talents that would have qualified me for those services, but my teachers definitely differentiated for me. My teachers looked at me as an individual child, as a whole child and I think that's what we do here.

**Were the academic needs of students who are gifted provided to you in an undergraduate or graduate programs? Think about your training to become a teacher and then on to an administrator.**

Not as much as I would have liked. I think they were in the way differentiation for any lesson and activity prepared me to teach.

**How about through professional development?**

Within the district there were definitely opportunities to pursue more as I became a teacher.

**And how long has ES#2 provided services for students who are gifted.**

Definitely as long as I've been here. I think it goes way back, I don't even know the starting point. When I first started here we had a resource room model and that model has changed some.

**I would like to go back to a previous question. Thinking about to your preparation in becoming a principal were you ever over an exceptional education program as an AP and do you feel that has helped you in how to run programs for students who are gifted.**

I think so. At XX elementary we had an InD program. It was TMH/PMH there, but a very large unit. So being over that helped me to learn the world of ESE. At XXX elementary it was a bilingual center so that was very eye opening as well as to help students with different needs.

**I remember that XXX elementary had a very large ESE program**

**And how to you perceive the impact of having students who are gifted on your elementary school campus? Think about how the students are perceived by the teachers, by other students or other stakeholders or community members.**

It adds beautiful diversity to our campus. There are so many different types of thinkers. That is on any campus, but I think the specific traits brings great diversity to our mix.

**And what do you perceive to be your greatest challenge in supporting the practices, programs and instructional methods for students who are gifted?**

I think the extremes in needs. We have struggling students, some who are gifted learners. We, as parents and teachers have to admit that their intellectual abilities can be above our own and we have to stretch ourselves to really challenge them and take them to those levels. And there's extremes serving all those populations, it can be very challenging.

**How have you helped your teachers to overcome some of those challenges? You are right, it is easy for an adult to feel the student is challenging a teachers' intellectual ability or their authority as the teacher.**

Mainly by researching what tools I can put in their hands, what tools, time and support.

Probably the biggest challenge is not having enough hands, or the staff to pull groups and give every child what they need. But researching the tools to put in teacher's hand to make that a bit easier.

**When thinking of the practices, programs, and instructional methods on your school's campus what is the current services delivery model for students who are gifted? For example do you have students that are coming and it's a cluster model, do you have students come from other schools' come her for gifted services, is it self-contained?**

Our main model is cluster model, but it is very much a mixed model. We just transitioned to that in the past two years. We were solely a resource classroom model but as our numbers grew and budget became tighter they were losing time in the resource room. Students were not getting enough of that so we really increased our training. So across campus students can be served in gifted learning five days a week all day long. So the cluster model provides that. We have had over the past years self-contained units and we may again next year, so there may be self-contained mixed in with our cluster model.

**Can you describe the cluster model?**

In each grade level there are gifted endorsed teachers and students when we are doing class assignments, I cluster all classrooms, whatever the needs might be. So my gifted students we look at them specifically and look at their gifts and talents and their passions. We try to cluster them as a group that will work very well together. In that the tops we would want it to be is eight students, but sometimes it gets a little bigger when it needs to or smaller. And then I try to match them to the teacher that would be a good fit to serve their needs. So in a grade level we

have three or four cluster classrooms. Like I said last year we had two grade levels that had self-contained units on a grade level and some other classrooms that had those clusters. So it all depends on class assignments when we're looking at those student's names and groupings and what would work best for the students.

**Within that cluster model is it solely for students who are gifted or do you have other students that in those specific classes as well.**

Other students are in there as well. The cluster classrooms are mixed with gifted and non-gifted. Self-contained are all gifted.

**How many classes for students who are gifted do you have at ES#2?**

Gosh, that's a tough one .... I'll have to count.

**Take your time.**

Can I look at your list again?

**Of course.**

(counting) 12 classrooms right now.

**OK. How do you make decisions regarding the implementation of practices, programs and instruct methods for students who are gifted? Is it strictly a site based decision, do you confer with district support people, pull in your teachers?**

All variables. It is a site based decision, but when we reach outside to get some guidance, especially as we've been building our training on campus. A few years ago I would not have

been able to make those decisions. Whereas now with the training I've taken I'm better prepared for that.

**What were those trainings?**

I did the gifted endorsement trainings. I started in the past two years alongside my teachers. So when we were looking at changing our model, when we needed to, we start with what's best for kids. So when we got to the point when we realized they're not getting enough time for this, their gifted thinkers all day long, every day so reducing the time in a resource room does not feel like the best thing for them. We reached out to our district resource teachers XX and XX. They gave us a lot of guidance on different models and we did a lot of researching. We reached out to different stakeholders as well, parents have very strong perceptions on this, teachers as well and the impact that it had on those because teachers really had to stretch themselves to learn to provide those services in the classroom and couple that with some resource time.

**Reflecting on your decisions that you to make regarding the gifted programs what do you feel is the highest priority?**

Individual student need. There is no one model that is going to fit every child perfectly, just like there is no one teacher that is the best fit for every single child. It starts there.

**Are there specific leadership behaviors or practices you model that you have benefited the programs for students who are gifted here at ES#2?**

I think going through the endorsement is one way of modeling that because I don't pretend to be an expert, but I can definitely learn more about it. It models to teachers too, for example, even teachers who don't want to go through the endorsement or for some reason can't right now, we



offer the very first endorsement course. The Nature and Needs class is for great professional growth if you can't do the entire professional endorsement or just get a better understanding of gifted learners. Most of my teachers are committed to doing the first Nature and Needs class, just for their own growth.

**That is the introductory endorsement class?**

Hmm hmm.

**What factors, variables or priorities influence the programs, classes or resources for students who are gifted as you create the master schedule?**

Budget is always huge. We would always love to have all the hands and more support. So that's a big one. There are so many variables. Even down to the specific staff you have and their strengths.

**That leads to the next part, how do you manage the financial allocations and human resources to support students who are gifted?**

It is quite a puzzle. You look at the strengths and weaknesses and needs of the children and the budget you have. You build from there. You try to put the puzzle pieces together and try to find the best puzzle picture.

**What evidence do you gather to measure the effectiveness of implemented programs, practices and instructional methods for students who are gifted at your ES#2?**

Student achievement data for sure. We want to see that all students are moving forward all the time. We are keeping an eye on all of our students. We want our top performers to continue to be top performers. We use surveys, staff surveys, and parent surveys. Our staff do a lot of in-

house conversations and workshops. We put a lot of time in workshops specifically in PLCs is a better way to say it, on gifted and reviewing how it's going. As we transitioned to the cluster model we ask, "How's that going?" "Are we providing everything?" "What more can we put in place?"

**Are these assessments ongoing throughout the school year or given at specific times.**

The PLC throughout the year. Our surveys, we did staff and parent survey in March and that is the one that the district puts out. We get a lot of feedback on that. And conversations with parents through SAC. We have done a lot of presentations at SAC and we have gotten a lot of feedback.

**That's great because it will lead me to my next question, what feedback have you received from your teachers, parents or students regarding the programs for students who are gifted.**

Well teachers feel they are better equipped than they ever been to provide services, but are also very honest about how difficult it is. Adding on the EPs and the documentation and the data collection that goes along with being solely responsible for gifted services. That is added on to their plate. Parents have given some feedback too, it is mixed depending on the child. The feedback from some is that gifted clusters has been the perfect thing. For others they miss the resource rooms at times, so we are looking to add in more resource, which would not be the sole provider of services, but would definitely be a great addition.

**Oh, I see. Since you have been principal at ES#2, what practices or structural changes have you made or implemented for students who are gifted and what prompted those changes?**

The biggest has been model change. From going just resource room to the cluster model. And really communicating that, that has been the toughest part and really communicating what those models look like and why a mixed model approach can work.

**What was the rationale for making those changes?**

The gifted service time was reducing. We had grade levels that were going to maybe half a day of gifted services. And it just didn't make sense.

**I like what you said earlier that the students are gifted all day long, not just for part of the day.**

Right! So we knew we needed to increase our training and that service time. And then budgetary restrictions, we just couldn't keep it a full day at least, we would need at least three resources teachers and we just couldn't do that.

**Do all teachers have responsibility for educating the students who are gifted?**

They do.

**What evidence do you have for this response? Thinking of your teachers, is this a shared responsibility for educating the students who are gifted, so it's not solely by the teachers who have the gifted endorsement or in process of getting the endorsement.**

All teachers take ownership.

**What type of support do you provide to your teachers who teach student who are gifted.**

**For example, do you teachers have voice in allocating human and financial resources?**

When we do class assignments, we did this last week actually, the grade levels come together and they divide all students into class groupings, not with a teacher's name attached, but with the original clusters we built for all kids, not just gifted. Teachers put together those class lists first thinking of those clusters and I take a look at the list with another committee, with my leadership team, resource team, special area teachers that would know all students. So we look at that.

That's how we start the process. We have all staff eyes on it. I then look again at it, so we look to make all clusters that will work. That is the class assignment part of it. The other part that we are doing and are looking at right now is *Go Quest* by Renzulli. It came in our direction to look in to. We have a webinar this coming Monday and all teachers are invited to take a look at it.

They are really excited and I'm sure we will have a full media center and we'll look at it to see if this is a program we want to bring in. The research we're doing on the tools and programs that I can bring in for them to make it easier, we have done that research together, not just me collecting it. They are involved in the start on any programs and resources. The PLCs that we did throughout the year or at the times they are able to recommend to me, for example one of our teachers who is more of a gifted expert will bring a book in and say this is a book you got to purchase for everybody. Teachers have gotten those this year. The endorsement classes too, even the training pieces, we continue to bring to our campus so they are free for teachers. It makes it more convenient.

**What gifted education professional development have been provided to teachers who teach students who are gifted?**

Those endorsement courses that have come here are the biggest and strongest piece of that. We also have four, about four, really gifted experts on this campus. They have been endorsed for years and years. They taught resource room models, self-contained. They are the gifted leads on their grade level, so they have been able to provide training.

**And what you shared before with Go Quest and the webinars.**

Yes, we've had whole staff trainings and we have teachers who will not pursue the endorsement, but they have received the basic training on the characteristics and the identification of the gifted.

**What professional development, district support or allocation has been most effective in supporting teachers who teach students who are gifted here at ES**

I would say the key department resources were XX and XX (district resource teacher names). We reach out to them all the time. They are very responsive. They have been a wonderful support.

**How have you been able to retain your teachers of the gifted to stay here at ES#2?**

At ES#2 we have not had a lot of mobility over the years. Each summer we have lost a teacher or two and gifted endorsement comes and goes with that. In the hiring process we are seeking that out. That is one of those things in our profile for most teacher positions. Because we want to know if someone has had the gifted training because it is very important to our gifted population.

**Thank you so much for your time. I appreciate your responses. I will be transcribing our conversation and before I apply anything to my dissertation I will send it to you for your review in case there is something I overlooked or missed. I will welcome your feedback.**

### **Principal Interview ES#3**

**Thank you for having me here at ES#3 today, all identifying information will be eliminated and remove from my research study and dissertation. A copy of the informed consent and XXXX permission to conduct research in the district has been provided to you.**

**What is your highest level of education attainment?**

Mine?

**Yes**

I have attained my master's in education

**You have shared earlier that you are working on your doctorate.**

Yes, I am. I am currently working on that also.

**How long have you been the principal at this school?**

4 years

**Have you served in any other school or district administrative roles?**

Assistant Principal at XX K-8 school and XX elementary.

**You have been principal at this school for 4 years. Is this your total number of years as principal?**

Yes

**Any other leadership positions that you have held besides the AP positions? Were you a CRT? Instructional Coach?**

Yes, CRT at XX and XX elementary schools.

**Sounds like all of your experiences have been in elementary.**

Yes, that's correct.

**Have you worked in any other school districts besides XXX?**

No

**Thinking about your leadership style, will you please describe your leadership style?**

I would say, facilitative. I really am not a micromanager. I like to empower people to problem solve and it is important for me to grow leaders behind me. It takes all of us to do it together. So I really pay attention to who has potential or to who doesn't think they have the potential, but they do. I use the facilitative model most of the time in coaching and mentoring by doing certain things like in the professional development that I'll present. I do leadership academies, and instructional rounds to build leadership capacity. In working with teachers, it's funny, they're coming from a point where they say "tell me what you want principal and I'll do it." I don't like that, but I kind of get the "well, you tell me what you think the issue is first and then come up with some solutions. Not what I would tell you to do, because I want you to think as a leader educator and come up with your own solutions and not every time have to come to me to for the problem solving piece." I really like the facilitative model to be able to do that.

**What is the total number of students enrolled here at ES#3?**



1,258 students.

**You have a relief school coming?**

Yes, a relief school is coming

**How many teachers are on your school's campus?**

About 80. We have tutors as well that work with my MTS kids.

**How many teach students who are gifted?**

I have one on 1<sup>st</sup> grade, two on second grade, two on third, two on fourth, two on fifth. (counting aloud). So, nine total.

**Do you know how many students are identified as gifted?**

Not the exact number. I can get that number. I split my classes in half and divide them among two teachers and then fill up the rest with the high achieving students.

**Can you please describe the population of students who are gifted on your school's campus in terms of the number enrolled, which we'll find out later, if there is a specific grade level with a higher population, any demographic information such as distribution, race, male, female?**

My third grade has the largest population, I can confirm that as well. There was a movement of kids that I had and usually from first to second they start to grow. We were doing the universal second grade screening before the district started it and we screened everybody. So movement from first to second it starts to double in size. Then going to third it expands out from there.

Then it pretty much stays at a constant rate in fourth and fifth grades. Second and third grades are my two largest gifted populations.

**Would you say the population of students who are gifted demographically represent the overall population of the school?**

Basically yes. There are some tweaks that need to be put in place with looking at some kids that we really need to focus on within the minority populations, my ELL students, and other minority at risk kids. We are not quite representative in all classes. In some classes “yes” there are a various mix of ethnic groups. Within the subgroups, such as free and reduced lunch, there needs some work to be done in that area to make sure that we are catching all students.

**Thank you.**

**What is the process at this school for identifying students as gifted?**

In spring we do the universal screening.

**Is that for just second grade?**

For all of second and those that are new transfers. Mostly from out of state.

**And teacher recommendations?**

Yes

**What is your philosophy in education as it relates to practices, programs and instructional methods for students who are gifted?**

No basals! I am hands on, critical thinking, project based learning type of person. As far as resources, they can come from anywhere .... The community, online resources, pretty much anywhere. I really don't like being in the textbook because I think it blocks the kids in to one way of thinking about education and what they attain. I think it limits their thinking in more ways. I like novel studies. I purchased tons of novels so that my kids can do novel studies and engage with text in a different way than the basal requires. We do Hands On Equations, where the kids are learning about algebra. I don't like to stay in the box territory of education. I really like them to be able to experience and go out beyond what others expect.

**Is there any particular person or resource that you consider as a great influence in guiding how the programs for students who are gifted are delivered? Or materials provided?**

I'm an avid reader. I read a lot and I got interested in gifted because of what I was seeing as nobody responding. I started to do a lot of reading on what it meant to be gifted. What does gifted look like? I started asking the gifted teachers questions, especially those who will follow me outside of the box. I will ask them questions, if they will try new things? Will you go to this training? Can you bring this back to me? They were eager to go and that sort of opened up the door a little bit more. Even looking at the gifted standards ... who is actually implementing the standards and at what level are they doing that? With their guidance I didn't see much. As the principal of a school, knowing what those standards are, even though I knew the Sunshine State Standards which has now changed to Florida Standards. I have not really sat down and dug in to what the gifted standards are. So I started reading and tapping into resources and the district resource teachers XX and XX, who retired. I started asking questions and she gave me some different suggestions of what I can do. The door was being forced open because there is so much more that had to be considered. The people, the resources, teachers that I could get out-of-the-

box and my reading. My finding out what I need to add, discovering what I don't know and what I still need to know. That is what has been guiding me. I want to know everything about what I do here. I'm very passionate about it and that is something that I really want to work on this summer; to get those resources so teachers won't feel lost.

**How many teachers at this school are endorsed or certified to teach students who are gifted?**

I have convinced most of them most to go for endorsement. I have three teachers I convinced. The rest are to start the endorsement process. I have been paying for it, that's how passionate I am. If they take it, I'll pay for it.

**So, at this time you have three teachers with endorsement?**

Yes.

**And you have others that are working towards it?**

Yes

**Approximately how many are working towards endorsement?**

Six. There are some others as well that are working with my high achieving kids. So maybe eight, but not all teaching gifted students.

**As a student were you enrolled in programs for students who are gifted?**

No. Amazingly, no!

**You described earlier that you had a passion to learn at a very young age?**

Oh yes.

**Do you believe your experiences as a young child in which you were very passionate about going to school and being in school influenced you and how you provide services for students who are gifted?**

It has. For me sitting in the traditional classroom, in the 1960's and 70's, the traditions were much more entrenched than how they are now. I would always try to get out-of-the-box, but would also get beat back in the box. I'd think "this is boring" and I wanted to find something else to do. To me, when I look at kids and how they learn we can beat them back in the box only so many times before they will create something else for themselves. I saw that in myself. I kept hearing "not yet", but I knew I couldn't stay in that box for long. I wanted to get out-of-the-box and go on to something else, someplace else. That is what I internalized, how I felt as a learner who wanted to go out there and experience the world and learn about it because most of it was not found in a book. Most of it was me "doing stuff." That is how I approach kids and try to reach them. I think of what do they need. That's why I take my kids to so many places, so they can get the spark wherever. I take them to UF, University of South Florida and UCF. I take them everywhere, wherever, because one of those sparks will take hold and cement itself as a foundational piece and that kids can go to wherever it is they want to go.

**Were the academic needs of students who are gifted provided to you in an undergraduate or graduate program?**

**Any of your education experiences to get to a leadership position now, were there any foundational courses that helped you in how to best teach or support students who are gifted?**

No. No. Mainly when in the grad program the focus was on leadership.

**In preparation for becoming a principal, have you taught students who are gifted? Have you served as the AP over exceptional education in which gifted fell under that umbrella?**

Yes, I worked in an inner city school where I had one student who was gifted in my classroom. He was a special boy. I would tell people that they think gifted means “I got it all together and am on top of the world.” Actually I had to work at keeping him organized and focused. I was always by his side to make sure he didn’t stuff his papers in his desk. His way of thinking really caused me to reflect as a teacher. Now we have universal screening and we can catch the inner city students who need the gifted services. While at XXX and XX elementary schools those were good experiences for me. Coming to XXX K-8 the gifted students were already there. Going into the classrooms I would try to find the hidden ones, where you really had to have a strong belief to understand that even though a student may throw a chair, they may still be gifted. A student may go off the deep end, but may also be gifted. There are different types of giftedness that need to be pulled out of the kids.

**How long ES#3 provided services for students who are gifted?**

I believe since the opening of the school in 2010-11. I don’t think the first year it was open we had a strong model – it was a different model. They didn’t have the high achieving gifted clusters.

**How do you perceive the impact of having students who are gifted on your elementary school’s campus? How are students who are gifted perceived by their peers, teachers or community?**

In a positive way. I think sometimes I have to be careful of the types of pressures that my teachers put on gifted kids because some of them will crash and burn because of their perfectionist tendencies and their personalities. I really make sure that we have a balance with the projects that are fun. I did have a teacher once that was like a hammer. I had students in her second grade that are gifted, you would think should be organized and know where their homework is, but these kids had a meltdown every time they went into the gifted setting. I was like “Oh my gosh! What can I do for these students who don’t want to be gifted anymore?” I had to look at the hammer. Gifted should be fun. Parents were begging me, my gifted programs are a hot item in this community, and when the parents said they wanted their kid out because their child was having a daily meltdown I knew I had to try to change the hammer and her program. When it didn’t change I had to push and try to have the teacher move because I couldn’t have 18 students’ lives destroyed because you think students who are gifted are supposed to be military robots. That doesn’t exist in education. Once the teacher eventually left, the students settled back in and the students became who they are with the new program and they really loved the program.

**What do you perceive to be the greatest challenge in supporting the practices, programs and instructional methods for students who are gifted?**

The greatest challenge is allowing the paradigm or the pendulum to shift in people’s minds about how do I instruct effectively for my gifted students and meet their needs and not put all of them in a gifted box. Knowing that the teacher has a span from here to here (fingers indicating) within the gifted classroom. Some people may think they have a regular classroom with level one students through level five, but within a gifted classroom you can have the same span. You can’t let that piece get by because if you do you will let something get by with a student.

**When thinking of the practices, programs and instructional methods on your school's campus what is the current service delivery model for students who are gifted?**

I have heard the district resource teachers say I have the best model in the district. I have the high achieving gifted cluster on my grade levels. It is important for me to review every year which students are to be moved around because if all the students stay in the same classes together they become like sisters and brothers and begin to hate each other. So I try to keep them balanced and I try to move them around to make sure they get the balance.

**Within the gifted cluster is the four content, four subject areas?**

Yes

**How many classes for students who are gifted do you have here at ES#3?**

(counting) Within the clusters I have, I have 9 classes. Yes nine because of the splits.

**How do you make decisions regarding the implementation of practices, programs, and instructional methods for students who are gifted? Think about site based management, input for district resource teachers, district administrators?**

I start it off and I appoint a team leader over gifted. I think it is important to have a teacher leader that in the circle, that informal circle, to come back with ideas of what needs to be implemented and rely on them for getting ideas from the district or from professional developments or whatever is out there. I think of some planning in October and I plan in advance because I want my team to sit down and reflect on what we need. This is a big year for me because of the shift in standards and what does that look like, what does that mean for our kids who are high achieving and gifted? I can remember the first day we created the FSA



practice test with the writing components, my kids boo-hooed and cried the first day because nobody had asked them to write or asked them for two different answers to a question before. That was a shock to me! That's when we went out and asked how did your kids respond when they took the Performance Matters? That became a big discussion among the cluster of schools and we had to decide what to do about it. It was a requirement for our kids to be able to answer differently. We started to embed instructional practices in the classroom to open the door and gear our kids away from A, B, or C thinking, the Smart 7 strategies, and to just eliminate answers. I can pass the GRE doing that! But I may not know the meaning of it. Students can eliminate answers, but don't know the content. That caused me to think that we need to change the way we do things. We can't have gifted and high achieving kids moving on to middle and high school thinking they are smart kids when all we've done is A, B, C, D of answers and the student thinks they're smart. So we really started shifting around the writing, the content and the context base. We served as a model school for some of the schools to see what we are doing because we did a lot of different things to help overcome that old way of thinking.

**When making decisions in educating students who are gifted what do feel is your highest priority?**

I have to go with the emotional stability piece, because if I don't have that then I can't get the academics. I'm a perfectionist and I don't want students to go crazy if they don't get a 100% all the time. I've seen kids shut totally down if they don't have the emotional stability. I've had to have teachers back off kids with the volume of workload and testing if I see kids going under. To go beyond that, opening the door for resources and I like to go where no man has gone before, to show kids how fun learning is and to show them that 25 years ago we didn't have (holds up iPhone) one of these. So who is going to create one of these? I tell the students they

are in charge of our futures, our well-being. I look at these kids as 21<sup>st</sup> century learners and need to ensure they are getting all the necessary resources. And it doesn't always have to be techie resources. I look closely at resources and review how it will impact our students. To pick the best resources for my students I make sure it meets both emotional and academic needs.

**Are there specific leadership behaviors or practices you model that you feel have benefited the programs for students who are gifted?**

Yes

**I've heard a lot about outside of the box.**

Yes, being collaborative and I don't know all the answers. If someone tells me we then have to figure out another equation to do it. I'm always thinking about what I'm doing with kids and all the different levels of my students from gifted all the way to my ESE & ELL kids. How do I meet the needs of every single kid on the campus?

**What factors, such as variables or priorities influence the programs, classes and resources for students who are gifted as you create the master schedule?**

We look at the screening and whether a student qualified for gifted already is where we start. From there those who were screened and who did not make it in, we consider if they are still candidates for the high achieving program. I also look at the ethnicity, subgroups, whether they are on free and reduced lunch. Variables I consider are teacher matches with the students – ensuring I have a good match with students, no hammers at all! Resources solely for gifted are scarce. It also helps to know if the child, and even the parent, is needy. We consider the home situation and if we have parents who are antsy that their students have the right teacher – they

want to know before school starts. There can be a complex mix to meet student needs and we try by all means (emphasized) to meet all students and keep their parents happy.

**What evidence do you gather to measure the effectiveness of implemented programs or practices for students who are gifted at ES#3?**

Class visits. I'll go into various components of instructional practices and look at the Hands On Equations, I'll sit through a lesson, even sit with the kids and they'll keep me involved in the lesson, I'll look at student data to identify learning gains. It was very difficult this year with the standard changes so I used SRI, I'm a data person – very concrete, to quantify information that I use. I also talk a lot with kids. I would like to do surveys with the kids; usually my kids seem to be pretty happy. Parents will tell me if they feel their child is under pressure, because sometimes gifted and high achieving students will retreat.

**What feedback have you received from students, teachers and parents regarding the programs for the gifted?**

I have received a lot of great feedback because they looked at the way I set up the programs. From when I got here the gifted students were isolated, they were together too long. With the split that helped. With the split and having only one class per grade level I was letting some high achieving kids in, but with class size amendment, I split the gifted kids in different classes and filled the class with high achieving kids. I have a lot of high achieving students and decided to create more high achieving classes in which the students can rotate. They are doing the same activities as well.

**Since you have been principal at ES#3 what practices or instructional changes have you made or implemented with your programs for students who are gifted?**

From when I first got here I changed the students from being isolated, to gifted only, to being split into high achieving and gifted classrooms and really included various programs such as Hands On Equations. I really opened the door to a lot of competitions. I sent the kids to the Future Problem Solving competition in which they can participate every year. This year we went on to the district, state and international levels. We are getting the students out there and exposing them to that more global competition including against kids from our district. When the students go out and see globally how the system changes, just like a basketball player who goes from a small basketball town team, to college, their eyes are opened. I want our kids to be able to compete, to know and understand and it's not too hard if you keep going. It's nice when they win the trophy and bring it home. I want to create a mindset that here at ES#3 I want them to go out in the community and compete on a more global and collaborative level. That is a big change for this school.

**Do all teachers have responsibility for educating the students who are gifted?**

Not all teachers have students who are gifted in their classes.

**What type of support do you provide your teachers who teach the students who are gifted?**

**For example do the teachers have a voice in allocating human and financial resources?**

Yes

**Maybe in making instructional materials decisions?**

Also in professional development. They come and tell me where they want to go. With the endorsement classes, I will support and pay for teachers to attend. Pretty much I am open to anything, and my teachers know that. I will feed people, and we've eaten at many community

places so we can feel like a team and can talk about our ideas. We lost two very good gifted teachers and will need two people to fill in those holes for me. That is what I'm building now at this point so I continue to build strong teachers who have been teaching for a while. I need stability for the newer teachers who are coming in because my expectations are still high, that will never change. I know kids only have one chance to this way (gestures) and I want to make sure the path is always clear for the student to get there.

**What gifted education specific professional development has been provided to teachers who teach students who are gifted?**

They attended the endorsement classes, the Hands On Equations, we've done dialog sessions with the STEM teachers to get the enrichment because they are both gifted certified, and all the kids go to them on a daily basis.

**What professional development or district support or allocation has been most effective in supporting your teachers in implementing the programs or instructional practices for students who are gifted?**

Finding resources is where I am looking this summer. There is a scarcity in materials. The Hands On Equations is something we have found and I want to pull together our resources and start our planning for our teams and look at our core and I look at the standards and assessments. I think there needs to be more in ensuring that the same type of resources, we always think gifted and high achieving are OK, but they are sitting at the same level OK, but finding those resources and aligning them with the gifted standards and what kinds of assessments and progress monitoring can we do to make sure they are making learning gains like everyone else. That is often where I find gaps and I need to find a strong alignment between all these areas.

**How have you been able to retain your teachers of the gifted to stay here at ES#3?**

We've had few changes, but my teachers know I'm accessible and open to new ideas and changes for what's best for kids.

**Thank you for your time in answering my questions. With your permission I would like to survey your teachers of students who are gifted. I have a list of the teachers and please let me know if there are additional that I may have left off the list or there is someone you would like to add.**

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