

**Gifted Education Advisory Committee
Comprehensive Review Report
Submitted October 2011**

COMMITTEE

<i>Brandie Arnold</i>	<i>Laurie McCloskey</i>
<i>Tina Brennan</i>	<i>Kathy Melnyk</i>
<i>Angela Chmielewski</i>	<i>Maureen Miller</i>
<i>Mike Edelman</i>	<i>Diana Rappleye</i>
<i>Steven Gerhard</i>	<i>Kelly Raser</i>
<i>Stacey Hughes</i>	<i>Stephanie Rogers</i>
<i>Becky Kaag</i>	<i>Dr. Michelle Saylor</i>
<i>Joanne Kay</i>	<i>Laura Shepler</i>
<i>Cynthia Kohl</i>	<i>Connie Skipper</i>
<i>Dr. George McCloskey</i>	<i>Dr. Dina Wert</i>

Introduction

In August 2010, an ad hoc committee of various stakeholders in the district community was assembled for the expressed purpose of conducting a one year comprehensive review of the Wilson School District's Gifted Program. The framework for the committee's review included the following.

1. Conduct a thorough review of the district's current gifted education program through the lens of Chapter 16 requirements (see Appendix A).
2. Participate in a comprehensive review of best practice research and models in gifted education.
3. Seek input from the various constituent groups that comprise the committee.
4. Develop a district K-12 gifted education program.
5. Define the operational means for articulation of the main points of the program.

The members of the committee were selected based upon the interest of having a representation of parents, teachers, counselors, psychologists, intermediate unit liaison, and administrators. In addition to the stakeholder group they represented, members of the committee were invited to participate based upon the value of experiences in Gifted Education that they were able to contribute to the conversation. The committee is listed below and on behalf of the Wilson School District, the time and work they contributed throughout the year is greatly appreciated.

Constituent Group	Name	Role in the District
District Administration	Steve Gerhard	Assistant Superintendent
District Administration	Maureen Miller	Lead Supervisor of Special Education
Building Administration (HS)	Laura Shepler	Assistant Principal – HS, Grade 12
Building Administration (MS)	Mike Edelman	Principal – Southern Middle School
Building Administration (EL)	Dina Wert	Principal – Green Valley
Teacher of the Gifted	Kathy Melnyk	K – 8
Teacher of the Gifted	Stacey Miller	K – 8
Regular Education Teacher (MS)	Kelly Raser	Wilson West MS Social Studies Teacher
Regular Education Teacher (MS)	Tina Brennan	Wilson Southern MS English Teacher
Regular Education Teacher (EL)	Cynthia Kohl	Green Valley, Grade 4
School Counselor	Becky Kaag	HS School Counselor
Special Education Teacher	Stephanie Rogers	Wilson Southern MS Special Education
Curriculum Representative	Michelle Saylor	Director of Curriculum
School Psychologist	Brandie Arnold	CT and Wilson Southern Psychologist
Parent	Dr. George & Laurie McCloskey	
Parent	Diana Rappleye	
Parent	Angela Chmielewski	
Parent	Joanne Kay	
BCIU Representative	Connie Skipper	Gifted Education Consultant

The committee met once a month starting in August 2010 and concluded their regular meeting schedule on June 6, 2011. Additionally, subcommittees met in between the regular monthly meetings to deliberate on their specifically assigned committee tasks. The committee agreed in the last meeting to meet periodically to review where the district is in implementation of the various recommendations found in the report. A meeting for this purpose is scheduled for January 9, 2012.

Preliminary Findings

In the initial committee meetings the work began around questions of current status of the district's gifted education program, a study of Chapter 16 guidelines(Appendix A), and a review of a "White Paper" published in April 2010 by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (Appendix B). The overarching question that framed the solicitation of feedback was; "what do you think we need to know in order to build a best practice gifted education model in the Wilson School District?" As a result of this initial exercise, the committee identified seven common threads that were used by the committee to guide the direction of the committee's work through the year. The seven common threads are described below.

1. Screening and Assessing
 - Finding assessments that give us real information about a child's strengths.
 - Measuring nonacademic gifts.
 - What is gifted?
 - Where students are "currently" performing/outdated tests & results.
2. Teacher Training
 - Professional development.
 - Differentiation of Instruction.
 - Systemic approach district wide, everyone included and aware.
 - Teacher awareness/needs.
3. Parent & Community
 - Available resources.
 - Parent education.
 - How to build a working relationship with the school.
 - Parent network.
4. Best Practice – Program Structure
 - How does the gifted program support regular education.
 - What do other programs look like?
 - Current research.
5. Models – Components of a Gifted Education Program
 - Acceleration.
 - Compaction.
 - Enrichment.
 - Competitive academics.
 - The Arts.
 - Homogeneous vs. heterogeneous groups.
6. State and Federal Guidelines
 - GIEP requirements.
 - GIEP meetings.
 - Role of GIEP team members (LEA, regular education teacher, parent, gifted support teacher).
 - Individualized and Measureable goals.
 - Progress Monitoring.
 - Accountability.
 - Goals based upon student strengths.

7. Students

- Leadership.
- Self awareness.
- Underachievers.
- Girls.
- Developing giftedness.
- Emotional needs.
- Mindset: Growth vs. Fixed.

In addition to the committee identifying the aforementioned common threads, a survey was constructed and administered to the district's professional staff and parents of gifted children. The Likert-scale survey consisted of questions that were designed around the threads (See appendix A). Each survey was designed specifically for the target audience (parent or staff). However, there were some common questions asked of both parties. The comparative responses to those similar questions can be found below. The survey was administered in November 2010 via an online instrument that was sent through an email communication to district professional staff and parents. The participants in the survey included 202 teachers and 107 parents. The results of the survey questions not found directly below can be found in the subcommittee reports.

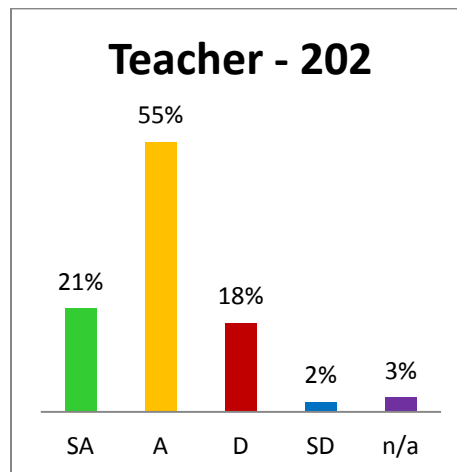
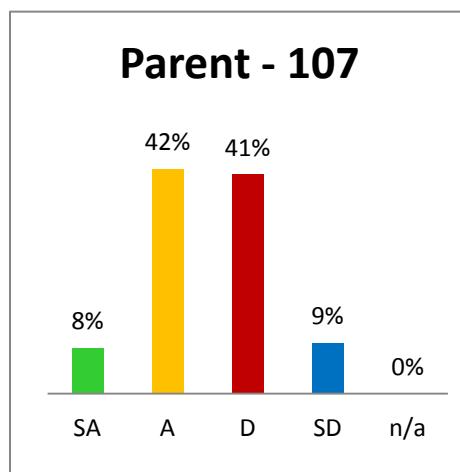
Comparative Survey Results

Legend

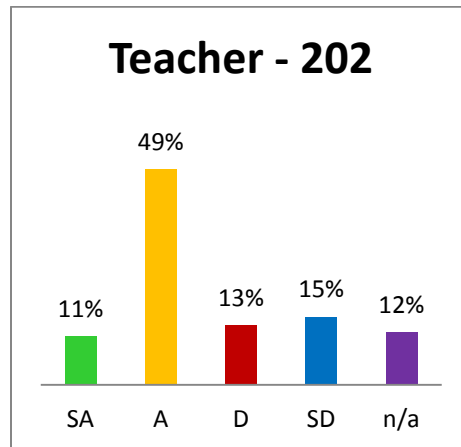
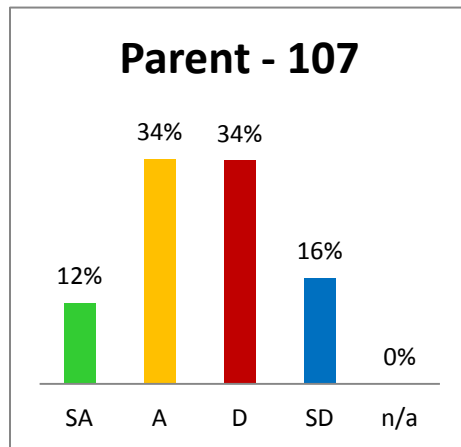
SA	=	Strongly Agree
A	=	Agree
D	=	Disagree
SD	=	Strongly Disagree
N/A	=	Not applicable

Gifted Education Parent/Teacher Responses ~ October 2010

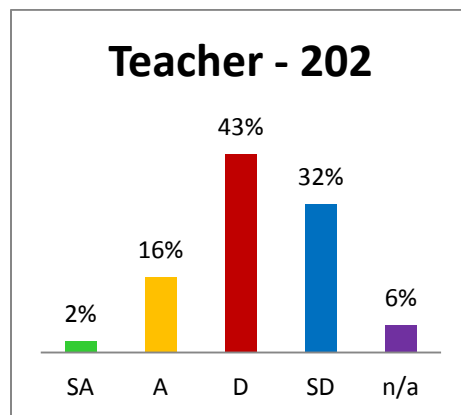
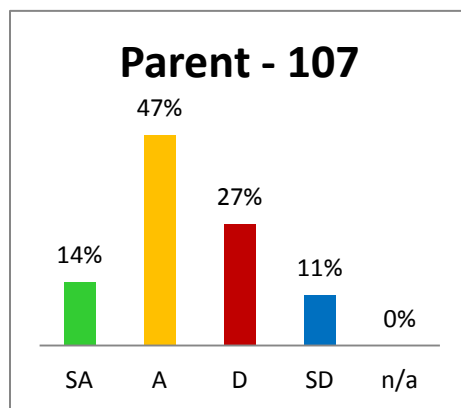
- Knowledgeable/Aware of social, emotional, and academic needs of student/child.



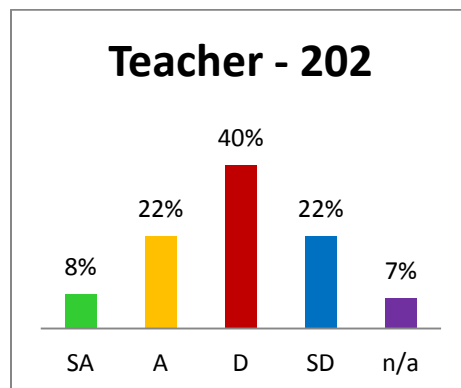
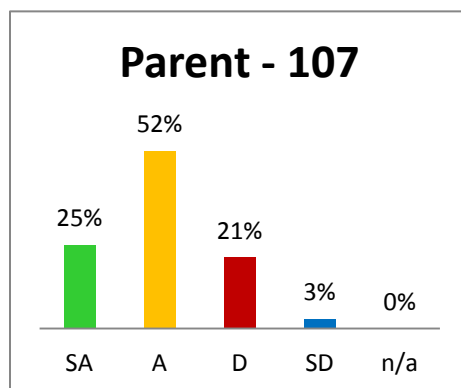
- The needs of gifted students are being met by regular education teachers.



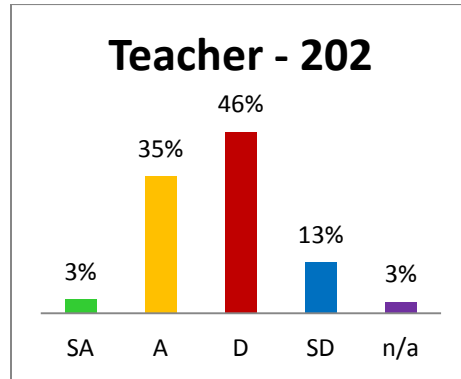
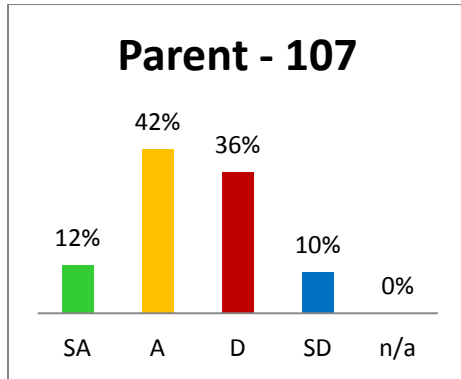
- Gifted and regular education teachers work collaboratively to meet the needs of students to ensure challenging curriculum.



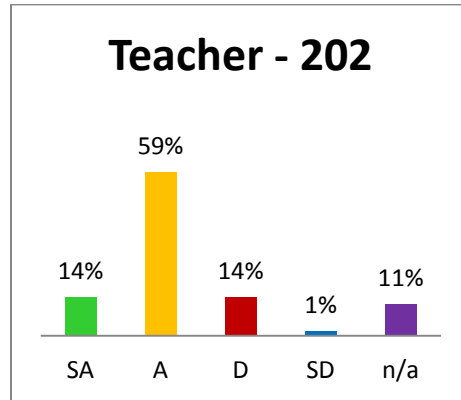
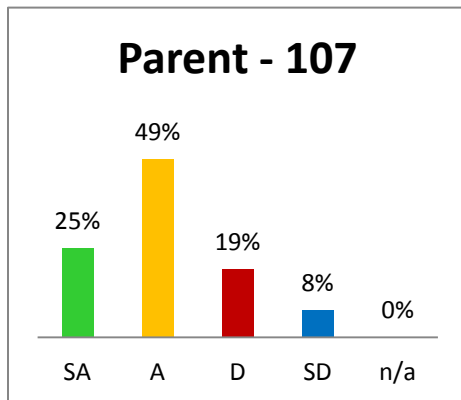
- Parent/Teacher is familiar/aware of legislative requirements under Pennsylvania Department of Education Chapter 16.



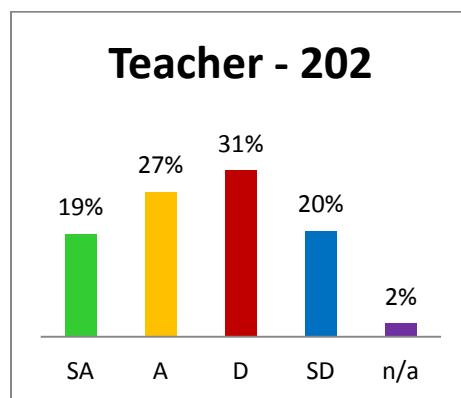
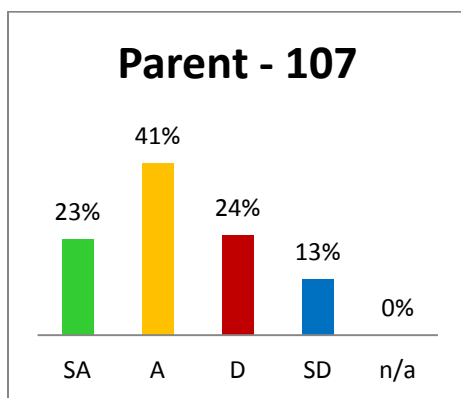
- Existing services and programs, flexible schedule, and alternative opportunities challenge or meet the needs of students.



- Parent feels GIEP is individualized enough to meet learning needs vs. Teacher consistently following and supporting student GIEP.



- Parents who feel they have been adequately informed of the screening process vs. Teachers who are knowledgeable about the screening process.



Subcommittee Report and Recommendations

The collection and identification of areas for further study that was gained from both committee feedback and the survey results formed the basis of five subcommittees. Each member of the ad hoc committee was assigned a subcommittee and each group was charged with reviewing current feedback results, researching the literature base, and developing key recommendations to guide the future work of the district. The subcommittees included the following.

1. Pennsylvania Department of Education Chapter 16 Requirements and Guidelines
2. Screening and Identification of Gifted Learners
3. Best Practices of Gifted Education
4. Professional Development
5. Parent and Community

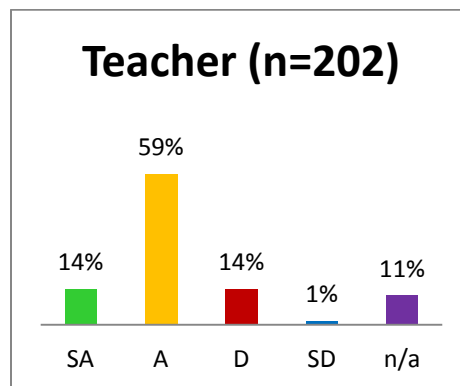
The report and recommendations from each subcommittee may be found subsequently in this section.

1. Pennsylvania Department of Education Chapter 16 Requirements and Guidelines

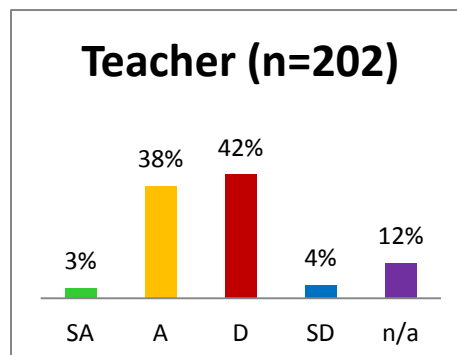
Subcommittee members: Maureen Miller
Michael Edelman

Relevant Survey Responses:

- I consistently follow and support my gifted learners' GIEPs.



- I am able to meet the needs of my gifted learners according to Chapter 16 with enrichment and acceleration.



The sub-committee met and reviewed the results of the Gifted Education Compliance Monitoring visit conducted on April 30 and May 1, 2009. The sub-committee focused their efforts on researching GIEP requirements, the role of the GIEP team members, individualized and measurable GIEP goals, GIEP Goals based on student's strengths, Specifically Designed Instruction, Progress Monitoring, Accountability, and the interpretation of Chapter 16 General Provisions at the District level.

Recommendations:

1. Develop a Procedural Manual outlining District procedures in order to align with Chapter 16 regulations. The following topics are recommended for inclusion:
 - a. Identification and Evaluation Procedures.
 - b. GIEP Requirements.
 - c. GIEP Meeting Procedures including the roles of participants.
 - d. Annual Goals and Short-term Learning Goals which are responsive to the learning needs identified in the evaluation report
 - e. Specifically Designed Instruction and Support Services
 - f. Steps for Progress Monitoring
 - g. Exiting a student from the Gifted Program
 - h. District interpretations of Chapter 16
 - i. Glossary and Forms
2. Professional Development in the areas of:
 - a. The development of statements of the present levels of educational performance, SDIs, and individualized and measurable goals.
 - b. The development of goals aligned to student strength.
3. Articulation of the following:
 - a. The District's vision for gifted education.
 - b. Steps taken by the District to comply with Chapter 16.

2. Screening and Identification of Gifted Learners.

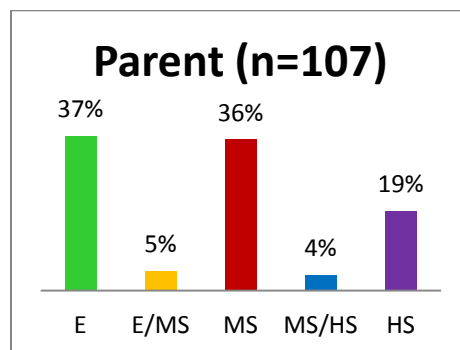
Subcommittee members: Dr. George McCloskey

Dr. Dina Wert

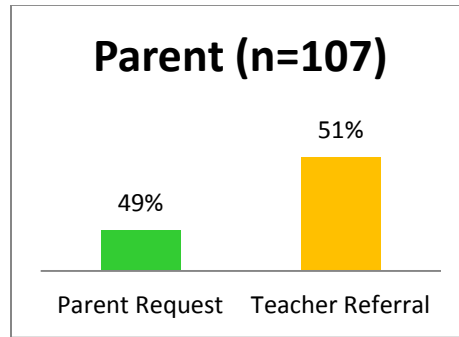
Brandie Tallman Arnold, NCSP

Relevant Survey Responses:

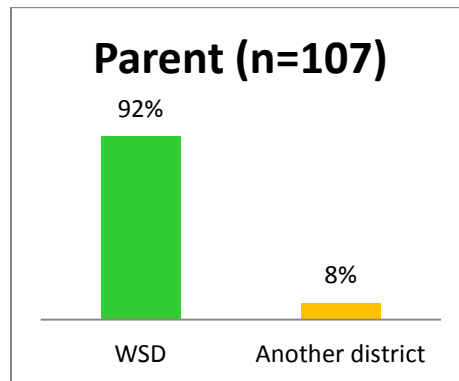
- My gifted student is in:



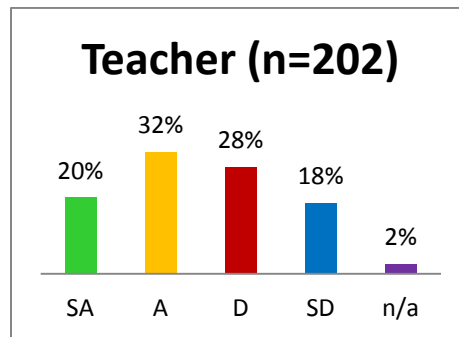
- The evaluation for giftedness of my student was started through:



- My gifted student was identify by:



- I understand the procedures for recommending students for the gifted program.



170 gifted referrals, spanning the course of four school years, were examined within this study. Approximately 76 of the total referrals involved a student who had a Full Scale IQ of 125 and above. All 76 of these students had an outcome decision rendering them eligible for and in need of gifted support programming. On the other hand, approximately 59 of the total referrals involved a student who had a Full Scale IQ at or below 119. All 59 of these students had an outcome decision rendering them *not* eligible for and *not* in need of gifted support programming. In these aforementioned cases, it appears that a Full Scale IQ at or above 125 facilitated the decision-making process and resulted in a positive identification of mentally gifted, while a Full Scale IQ at or below 119 also facilitated the decision-making process and resulted in a non-exceptional outcome. However, there were approximately 35 referrals wherein the student's Full Scale IQ and/or General Ability Index ranged from 120 to 124; 16 of the 35 were identified as mentally gifted while 19 were found non-exceptional. Upon further analysis of the data specific

to these 35 cases, the identification practices utilized in order to render a decision outcome appear to be arbitrary and hence, highly problematic. Analysis of this aforementioned data confirms the need to make the identification process more systematic and fair. Ultimately, the process should include a standardized set of assessment procedures, regardless of the school building and/or the school psychologist completing the evaluation.

Recommendations:

1. Fairly weigh factors including but not limited to, Full Scale IQ and/or General Ability Index, especially for cases when the global score of ability is 124 or lower.
2. Include other factors such as other composite scores from the intelligence tests, scores from achievement tests, rating scale data, and input from parents and teachers about the student's intellectual capabilities.
3. Fairly consider students who may have a disability and therefore, whose giftedness may be masked to some extent by their disability.

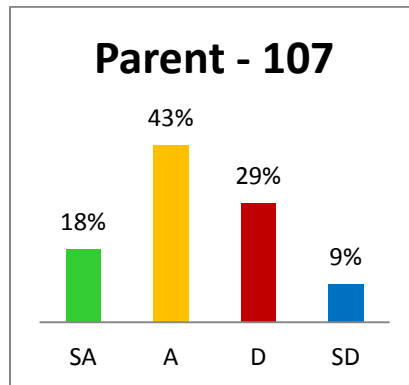
Ultimately, the work of this sub-committee will be influenced largely by the model/philosophy of gifted education that the Committee as a whole decides to embrace. The dimensions of the identification process within the matrix, including but not limited to an intellectual assessment, will need to be based on this model/philosophy. Moreover, selecting and specifying the means through which to assess these dimensions must be based on this model/philosophy. For example, has the Gifted Education Advisory Committee's work produced data that embodies a "growth mindset" or a "fixed mindset?" Clearly, the 'mindset' or philosophy will impact the identification process and steer it toward either an increasingly inclusive identification process or a more exclusive, (i.e., more stringent) one. Finally, our sub-committee also discussed the idea of differentiating or tiering program options based on student needs identified in the assessment process (for example, providing a different level of gifted programming for a student with an IQ of 140 versus a student with an IQ of 120).

3. Best Practices in Gifted Education.

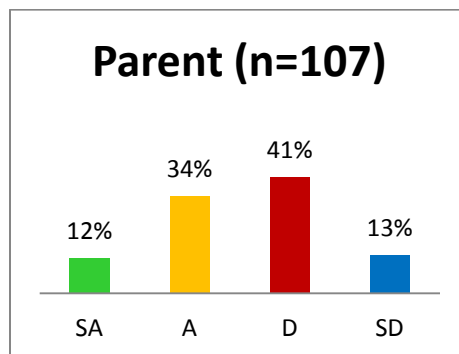
Subcommittee Members: Angela Chmielewski	Kelly Raser
Cynthia Kohl	Laura Shepler
Laurie McCloskey	Connie Skipper
Kathy Melnyk	

Relevant Survey Responses:

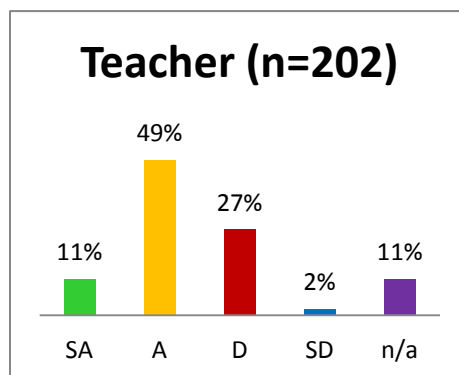
- I am kept informed of my child's participation and progress in the gifted support program.



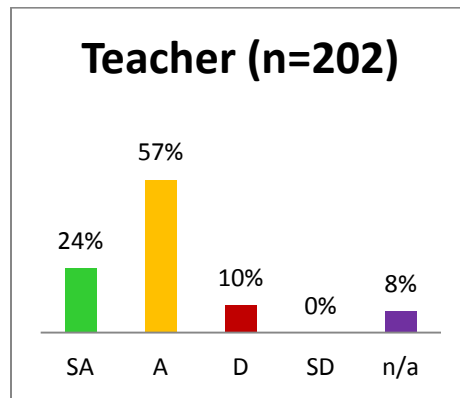
- My gifted child is aware of and participates in academic challenges and/or competitions outside the regular classroom setting.



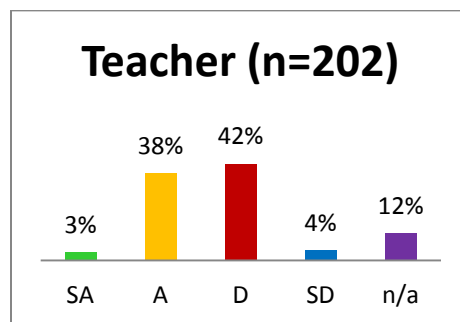
- Gifted students are significantly challenged in my class.



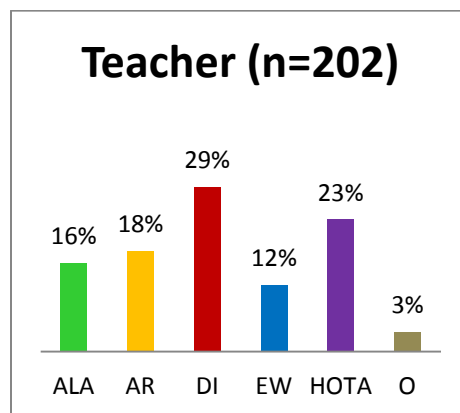
- Differentiated instruction is an integral part of my daily lessons



- I am able to meet the needs of my gifted learners according to Chapter 16 with enrichment and acceleration.



- Types of provisions currently offered to your gifted learner:

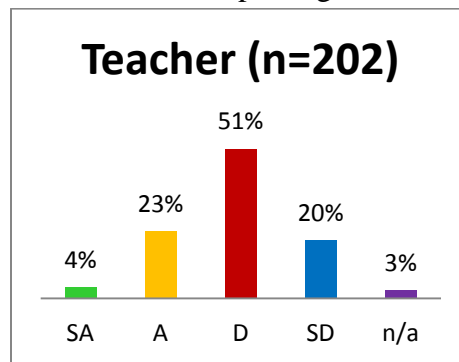


ALA – Advanced Level Assignments
 AR – Advanced Reading
 DI – Differentiated Instruction
 EW – Enrichment Worksheets
 HOTA = Higher Order Thinking Activities
 O = Other

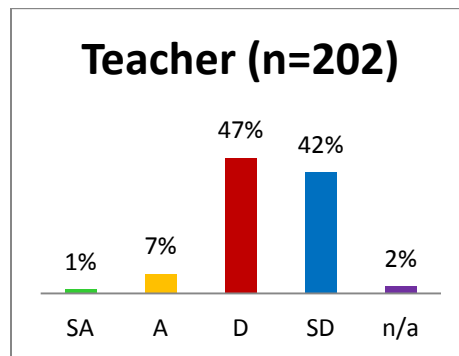
Recommendations:

1. Mission statement should be developed, encompassing the philosophy of gifted education at Wilson School District.
2. Program considerations.
 - a. Core academic areas – Math, Science, Social Studies, English.
 - b. Non-core areas – Music, Art, Drama, Dance, Technology, World Languages etc.
 - c. Social and emotional needs – underachievers, overachievers, self-awareness, fixed vs. growth mindset, stress management, time management.
3. Methods to address considerations.

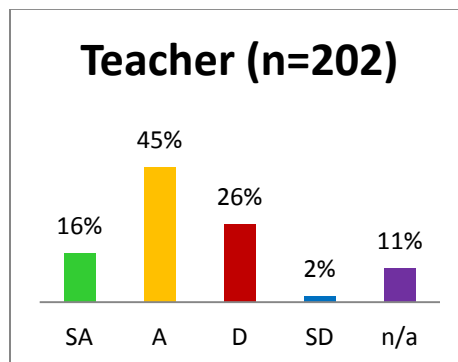
- I am knowledgeable about curriculum compacting.



- There are sufficient in-service opportunities available for teachers in the area of gifted education.



- I use assessments to determine the strengths and needs of my gifted students.



Our philosophy and professional development recommendations are supported by research published by the National Association for Gifted Children.

Recommendations:

1. This model recognizes the GIEP teacher as an expert consultant to regular education teachers. This model emphasizes inclusion and co-teaching instead of a pull out program. The GIEP teacher would carefully balance his or her professional responsibilities to include the following:
 - a. Gathering and sifting through resources
 - b. Consulting with regular education teachers

- c. Observing and/or co-teaching in regular education classrooms
 - d. Meeting with regular education teachers (i.e. Honors, AP, academy teachers)
 - e. Meeting with gifted students in a “resource room” setting
 - f. Meeting with students as “itinerant services” teachers to resolve problems in the regular education classroom
2. Our model emphasizes that Professional Development would be phased in starting with GIEP teachers and then regular education teachers.

Professional Development for GIEP Teacher

- a. GIEP teachers become members in National Association for Gifted Children
- b. Attend conferences provided by NAGS, BCIU, National Conference, and others listed in resources below
- c. Subscribe to professional journals
- d. Develop library of books and journals for parents and teachers
- e. GIEP teachers should use in-service time to have book/journal review and discussion. They need to identify in-service webinars, books and conferences for regular education teachers.
- f. Develop a file of extracurricular programs available to gifted students including but not limited to
 - i. John Hopkins Center for Talented Youth Programs
 - ii. Dual enrollment at local colleges
 - iii. Art institute in Wyomissing/Goggleworks
 - iv. College programs and summer camps nationwide

Professional Development for Regular Education Teacher

- a. Reading selected by GIEP teachers to include books and articles from professional journals. Highly recommend discussion groups based on readings
 - b. Watch selected webinars on gifted education
 - c. August 2011: GIEP teachers collaborate with regular education teachers prior to the start of school to discuss:
 - i. Unique characteristics of and needs of individual identified students
 - ii. SDI of identified students
 - iii. Identifying the gifted students for evaluation and possible inclusions in program
 - d. In August 2012: District wide meetings by grade level (Elementary, Middle School, High School) prior to the start of school to focus on
 - i. Identifying the gifted (elementary and middle)
 - ii. Differentiated instruction for gifted students in the regular education classroom and SDI's.
 - iii. The social and emotional needs of gifted students
 - iv. The grading of the gifted students in regular education classrooms
 - v. Collaborating with parents
3. Resources
- a. Workshops/Conferences.

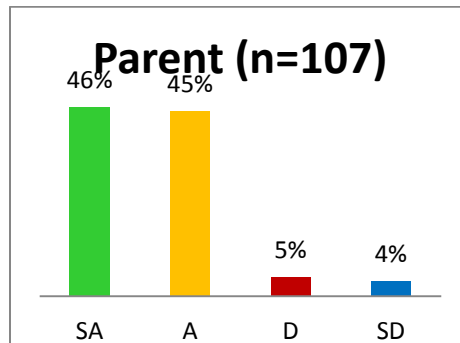
- b. Ber.org: This Bureau of Education and Research website contains opportunities to attend workshops for differentiated instruction and general information on gifted and gifted education as well as general. The titles below are possible workshops teachers can attend:
- c. Strengthening Instruction for Gifted Students Through Differentiated Teaching Strategies
- d. Using Advanced Differentiation Strategies to Maximize Learning for Your Gifted Students
- e. Current, Best Strategies for Challenging and Motivating Your Gifted Students
- f. Practical Strategies to Enhance Gifted Student's Social and Emotional Skill
- g. Enhancing Instruction for Gifted Students Through Project-Based Learning
- h. Strategies, Activities, Tips, and Tools for Teaching GIFTED STUDENTS the Critical Skills They Need to Succeed.
- i. Franny McAleer: For differentiated instruction workshops
- j. Books
 - i. Best Practice in Gifted Education
 - ii. Parenting Gifted Children
 - iii. Using the National Gifted Education Standards for Pre K-12 Professional Development
 - iv. P-12 Gifted Education Programming Standards
 - v. Knowledge and Skill Standards in Gifted and Talented Education for All Teachers

5. Parent and Community

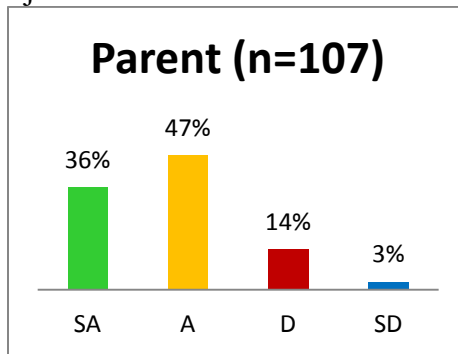
Subcommittee Members: Joanne Kay
 Stacey Miller
 Diana Rappleye

Relevant Survey Responses:

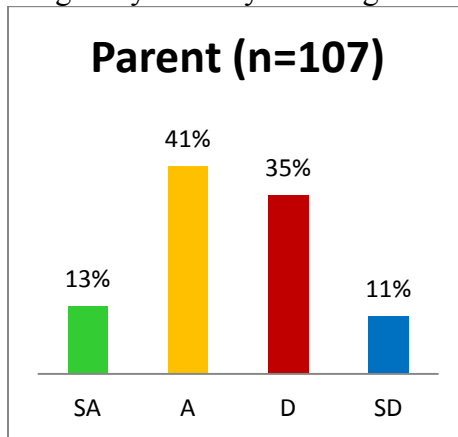
- I have a direct contact at my child's school if I have questions or concerns related to my child's GIEP.



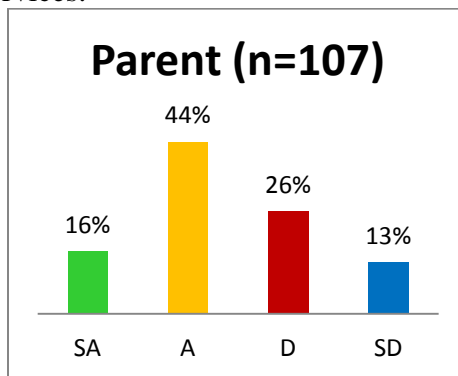
- I am aware of my gifted child's specific achievement and ability levels in math, language arts, and other academic subject areas.



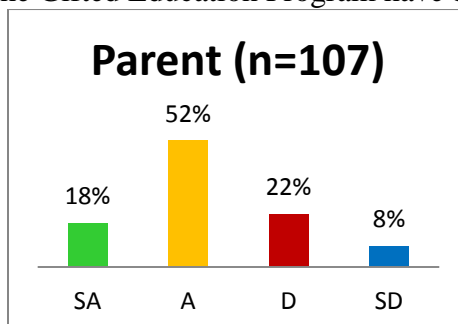
- I meet with or communicate regularly with my child's gifted education teacher.



- I have been satisfied with my experience as a parent in working with the Wilson School District's gifted support services.



- ❖ The mission and goals of the Gifted Education Program have been communicated to me.



Recommendations:

1. Develop a data base of community members, parents and professionals that will be contacted for interviews, job shadowing and speakers in schools.

Through an increase of community involvement, our students will be able to explore professions of interest to determine the likes and dislikes of the career. Professionals will be able to provide a small group of students the opportunity to expand their minds and thinking in reference to a given profession as well. Our students will be able to learn about different and new professions and experience first-hand what the career position entails. This will help guide them towards college majors and minors.

2. Develop a gifted education website to promote public awareness of the program.

A gifted website has been implemented and can be accessed on all elementary, middle and high school web pages. The website will serve as a communication tool for current gifted students and parents and future gifted students and parents. Resources for subjects and extracurricular opportunities will be updated to provide students with enrichment experiences. We recommend that this website continue and improve. The gifted teachers will be updating this website as they all have access to the site and are being familiarized with the technology.

3. Develop district awareness through the use of technology.

After contacting Public Relations, we agreed that we will place a short piece in the Bulldog Blitz, Wilson Pride and/or the Wilson Facebook page about the screening processes, the gifted support program and other valuable information for our students. The increase in public communication will bring about interest in gifted education. It will also provide parents with the information and answers to questions that they may have as they may be contemplating having their child(ren) tested for the program. Any announcements for the August Bulldog Blitz are due to Tracy in July.

4. Develop teacher and staff awareness.

In reference to the teacher surveys completed in the beginning of the school year, an area of improvement stemmed from teacher and staff development and awareness. Most teachers and staff members are not familiar with gifted education, the documents, the procedures or the ways in which one should go about meeting the students' needs. It is our recommendation that the gifted support teachers send out weekly, monthly or quarterly announcements to the specific teachers to keep them on par with what the students are doing. We also recommend attending team meetings on a monthly basis to discuss and address student needs and provide resources and materials for enrichment and challenge.

Conclusion

This report represents a series of recommendations based upon feedback from various stakeholders, guidance found in the literature base, Pennsylvania Department of Education Chapter 16 guidelines, and a contextual understanding of the Wilson School District. The recommendations serve as a guide for our staff and parents in the work that we will continue to pursue in the forthcoming years as we strive to develop a best practice gifted education model.